



The Brecht yearbook.

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THE BRECHT YEARBOOK
DAS BRECHT-JAHRBUCH

44

THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

Das Brecht-Jahrbuch 44

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 CAMDEN HOUSE

In Zusammenarbeit mit der Internationalen Brecht-Gesellschaft

The Brecht Yearbook 44

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Markus Wessendorf

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CAMDEN HOUSE

For the International Brecht Society

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Cover image: Joachim Nimtz as Fatzer and Martin Schneider, Stephan Schäfer, and Felix Tittel as butchers in Manfred Karge’s 2014 stage production of Brecht’s *Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer* (*Downfall of the Egoist Johann Fatzer*) at the Berliner Ensemble. Photo: Lucie Jansch.

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Die Internationale Brecht-Gesellschaft ist nach dem Modell von Brechts nicht verwirklichtem Plan für die Diderot-Gesellschaft gegründet worden. Durch Veröffentlichungen und regelmäßige internationale Tagungen fördert die Gesellschaft freie und öffentliche Diskussionen über die Beziehungen aller Künste zur heutigen Welt. Die Gesellschaft steht neuen Mitgliedern in jedem Fachgebiet und Land offen und begrüßt Vorschläge für zukünftige Tagungen und Aufsätze in deutscher, englischer, spanischer oder französischer Sprache für *Das Brecht-Jahrbuch*.

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La Société Internationale Brecht a été formée pour correspondre à la société rêvée par Brecht, "Diderot-Gesellschaft." Par ses publications et congrès internationaux à intervalles réguliers, la S.I.B. encourage la discussion libre des toutes les idées sur les rapports entre les arts et le monde contemporain. Bien entendu, les nouveaux membres dans toutes les disciplines et tous les pays sont accueillis avec plaisir, et la Société sera heureuse d'accepter des suggestions et des contributions en français, allemand, espagnol ou anglais pour les congrès futurs et les volumes des communications qui en résulteront.

La Sociedad Internacional Brecht

La Sociedad Internacional Brecht fué creada para servir como sociedad corresponsal. Dicha sociedad se basa en el modelo que el mismo autor nunca pudo realizar, el plan "Diderot-Gesellschaft." A través de sus publicaciones y los simposios internacionales que se llevan a cabo regularmente, la Sociedad estimula la discusión libre y abierta de cualquier punto de vista sobre la relación entre las artes y el mundo contemporáneo. La Sociedad desea, por supuesto, la participación de nuevos miembros de cualquier área, de cualquier país, y acepta sugerencias y colaboraciones en alemán, inglés, francés y español para los congresos futuros y para las publicaciones de sus discusiones.

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Editorial

Markus Wessendorf

This volume opens with Gerrit-Jan Berendse's introduction to four typescripts that, following a hint by author Günter Kunert, were recently discovered in the German Literature Archive in Marbach. The four pages are the manuscript of Kunert's German translation of the opening poem of Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* from 1915, "The Hill," with handwritten corrections by Brecht. They are published here for the first time, with a transcription of Brecht's annotations by Erdmut Wizisla.

Partly inspired by the recent publication of *Brecht and the Writer's Workshop: Fatzer and Other Dramatic Projects* (ed. Tom Kuhn and Charlotte Ryland, London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2019), this volume includes a special section on "Brecht's Dramatic Fragments." André Fischer argues in his essay on *Fatzer* (1926–30) that Brecht wasn't able to finish the play because of a political dilemma the revolutionary struggle confronted him with. Fischer contrasts the individual resistance of the protagonist Fatzer, which poses an obstacle to the Leninist revolutionary project, with the false collectivism of his rival Keuner, and tries to show that Brecht modeled the latter's idea of authoritarian leadership after the Conservative Revolution of the 1920s. In her article on Brecht's *Fleischhacker* (1924–29), Phoebe von Held suggests that the play's fragmentary aesthetic is not unintentional but rather results from its thematic concerns with the radicalization of the gestural, the de-montage of its source material (Frank Norris's *The Pit*), and the breakdown of naturalist narrative as analogous to the temporality of financial transactions. According to von Held, the play's title allegorically points to the capitalist system as a tool that continually "hacks" into, disintegrates, and sacrifices the "flesh" of the social and communal body. One fragment not included in Kuhn and Ryland's collection is Brecht's play on the biblical David that he worked on between 1919 and 1921, and that was recently translated, adapted, and staged over a two-year period at Trinity College Dublin by Nicholas E. Johnson and David Shepherd. In their contribution to this volume, Johnson and Shepherd describe the genesis and process of their extended interdisciplinary "practice-as-research" that led to the performance of *The David Fragments*.

This volume also includes a selection of papers that were presented at Yale University in April 2018 as part of a workshop on "Pure Joke: The Comedy of Theater since Brecht." Christian Kirchmeier and Katrin

Trüstedt, who organized the workshop, open this section with a short introduction in which they emphasize the continuing importance of comic devices in contemporary theater, despite their theoretical marginalization. In the first essay of this section, Kirchmeier refutes the customary interpretation of the epilogue of *The Good Person of Szechwan* (1938–40) as an example of Brecht's belief in the efficacy of didacticism, which presupposes a continuous interlinkage of art and society, by arguing that the epilogue instead represents a poetics of interruption of any such continuity. In the following article, Trüstedt, following Heiner Müller's suggestion that his *Hamletmachine* (1977) should be understood as a comedy, reads the play as the attempt to create a particular "theater of affirmation" in postwar Germany, namely a type of comedy that affirms the negativity of tragedy as well as the specific form of alienation that is theater. Nikolaus Müller-Schöll focuses on the figures of the Harlequin and the chorus as negations of the possibility of closed representation and traces the historical parallelism of their respective rediscoveries in modern theater (after they had disappeared with the rise of eighteenth-century bourgeois drama) all the way to contemporary performances by Tim Etchells and Forced Entertainment. In his analysis of the campaign slogans, speeches, and posters of the fake political party DIE PARTEI, Uwe Wirth employs Jacques Derrida's notion of "grafting" in order to explain how contemporary comedy and reality-satire produce "pure fun" (Walter Benjamin) and "cool fun" (Hans-Thies Lehmann) based on performative gestures of quotation.

The next four essays are not connected thematically but provide new insights into different aspects of Brecht's work and its reception. According to Burkhardt Wolf, Brecht's unfinished novel *The Debts of Mister Julius Caesar* (1937–39) uses the backdrop of ancient Rome to narrate the rise of the capitalist system, in which everyone is indebted economically and at the same time guilty of adhering to the cult of Capital, while employing literary techniques that discredit this logic of debt and guilt. Stephan Pabst analyzes the rhetorical balancing act that Heiner Müller first developed for his interviews in West and East Germany (with their vastly different conditions of reception) and then sustained beyond 1989, particularly by referencing Brecht's Keuner figure: since Müller did not want to seem to agree with one political system by criticizing the other, his interviews could be read simultaneously as straight talk and its very revocation. Corina L. Petrescu writes about the 1962 world premiere of *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) in Yiddish translation, which was also the play's first production in Romania, and examines the extent to which this production attempted a critique of the political class similar to Brecht and Weill's original targeting of the bourgeois society of Weimar Germany. Xue Song, finally, discusses Brecht's reception of Mao Tse-tung in two of his poems and analyzes in particular why Brecht's adaptation of Mao's poem "The Snow" (1936) into

“Thoughts during a Flight over the Great Wall” (1950) came to deviate significantly from its source.

The next two volumes of the *Brecht Yearbook* will feature the proceedings of the sixteenth IBS Symposium, which took place in Leipzig from June 19–23, 2019 under the motto “Brecht among Strangers,” and will be guest-edited by Micha Braun, Günther Heeg, and Vera Stegmann.

University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Abbreviations

The Brecht Yearbook uses these standard abbreviations:

- BBA** Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.
- BFA** Bertolt Brecht, *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, ed. Werner Hecht et al., 30 vols. and *Register* (Berlin and Frankfurt am Main: Aufbau and Suhrkamp, 1988–2000).

Brecht–Masters–Kunert

Gerrit-Jan Berendse

Ein kurzer Eintrag in Brechts Notizbuch aus dem Jahr 1941 besagt: “Le[e] Masters epigramme als film. die personen der kleinen stadt rezitieren.”¹ Die Notiz hält ein Vorhaben von Brecht fest, die 1916 veröffentlichte *Spoon River Anthology* des amerikanischen Schriftstellers Edgar Lee Masters (1869–1950) als Film umzusetzen. Eine Begegnung zwischen beiden war dann in den Jahren 1944/45 geplant und sogar von Brechts Freund und “amerikanischem Mentor” Ferdinand Reyher in die Wege geleitet, fand jedoch nie statt. Masters wurde zu der Zeit in ein Krankenhaus in New York eingeliefert, in dem er für Lungenentzündung und Unterernährung behandelt wurde.² Der wichtigste Grund, dass das Projekt wie das Hornberger Schießen ausging, war Masters’ Armut: er konnte sich die Eisenbahnfahrt zur Westküste nicht leisten, berichtete Reyher, nachdem er den amerikanischen Schriftsteller und Anwalt ausfindig gemacht hatte. In seiner Studie *Bertolt Brecht in Amerika* (1980/84) behauptet James K. Lyon, Brecht habe die Rückmeldung seines Freundes missverstanden und sich eine ihm passende *story* ausgedacht, nämlich, dass Masters völlig verarmt in ein Altersheim eingewiesen worden sei. Brecht sei empört darüber gewesen, so Helene Weigel später, “wie das kapitalistische Amerika seine großen Dichter behandle.”³

Kurz nach Brechts Rückkehr nach Berlin wurde dem Projekt jedoch aufs Neue Leben eingehaucht, nämlich nachdem Günter Kunert eine Anzahl von Gedichten aus Masters’ erfolgreichstem Werk, das 1924 in deutscher Übersetzung als *Die Toten von Spoon River* bekannt werden sollte, übertragen hat. Er legte es Brecht vor, der dann mit roter Tinte Verbesserungsvorschläge machte. Diese Blätter werden hier zum ersten Mal veröffentlicht. Sowohl für Brecht als auch den jungen Kunert war die (wenn auch in Wirklichkeit nie zustande gekommene) Begegnung mit Masters und seinen Versen wichtig. Das Bindeglied der Dreierkonstellation Brecht–Masters–Kunert ist morbider Art, nämlich durch ihrer aller Vorliebe für Epigramme und Epitaphien. Masters’ *Spoon River Anthology* besteht aus 212 kurzen Grabinschriften der Toten des fiktiven Dorfes Spoon River, so genannt nach dem Fluss Spoon, der in der Nähe des Geburtsorts von Masters, Lewistown im Bundesstaat Illinois, fließt. Die Epitaphien werden selbst von den Toten gesprochen und sollen das Leben in einer amerikanischen Kleinstadt satirisch darstellen.⁴ Die Verse erinnern an die fiktiven Dialoge im

Stück für Stimmen *Under Milk Wood* (*Unter dem Milchwald*, 1954), in dem der Waliser Dylan Thomas das Leben des fiktiven Küstenortes Llareggub (rückwärts gelesen: "Bugger all") durch das Rezitieren der Träume seiner Bewohner in satirischer Weise verewigt hatte.⁵

Dass sich Brecht von den kurzen Inschriften und zugespitzten Sinngedichten des Amerikaners angezogen fühlte, ist vielleicht angesichts seiner eigenen Grabschriften, auf etwa Rosa Luxemburg und Walter Benjamin, keine große Überraschung. Bei Kunert war das anders. Von Johannes R. Becher "entdeckt" und von Brecht als einer seiner Assistenten gefördert, hat er den Amerikaner jedoch seinen eigentlichen Inspirator und "geistigen Ziehvater" genannt. In einem Gespräch mit dem Schriftsteller und Literaturkritiker Walter Höllerer 1987 im Literarischen Colloquium Berlin verneinte Kunert, Becher oder Brecht seien seine Vorbilder: "Nein! Nicht einen, keinen, nicht fünf Minuten lang" verriet der 1979 nach Westdeutschland umgezogene Lyriker. "Meine Väter heißen Edgar Lee Masters und Carl Sandburg. Sandburg ist 47 bei *Herbig* erschienen, eines der ersten Bücher nach dem Kriege, und hat mich ungeheuer beeindruckt, eine englisch-deutsche Ausgabe. Und Masters, *Die Toten von Spoon-River*, hab' ich auch in die Hand bekommen, und das war 'ne unerhörte Begegnung."⁶ Tatsächlich bekannte sich Kunert insbesondere zum Epigramm, zur Parabel und Groteske, wandte sich dann Kafka zu und ging in den 1960er Jahren vorsichtig auf Distanz zu Brecht.⁷

In Deutschland ist Masters kein Unbekannter geblieben. Bereits 1924 legte Hans Rudolf Rieder eine Übersetzung der Anthologie unter dem Titel *Die Toten von Spoon River* vor, die 1947 in der Westzone nachgedruckt wurde. Wolfgang Martin Schedes Nachdichtung der Gedichte aus der Anthologie erschien im Aufbau Verlag im Jahr 1966. 1982 gab Helmut Preißler das im Verlag Neues Leben veröffentlichte *Poesiealbum 173* heraus, das Edgar Lee Masters gewidmet ist.⁸

Anmerkungen

¹ BBA 10286/54r.

² James K. Lyon, *Bertolt Brecht in Amerika*, übers. von Traute M. Marshall (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 297–98.

³ Helene Weigel in einem Interview vom 27. Oktober 1970. Paraphrasiert in Lyon, *Bertolt Brecht's American Cicerone*, with an app. containing the complete correspondence between Bertolt Brecht and Ferdinand Reyher (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1978), 96 (Anm. 18).

⁴ Edgar Lee Masters, *Spoon River Anthology* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

⁵ Dylan Thomas, *Under Milk Wood. A Play for Voices* (London: Dent, 1954).

⁶ Kunert, Günter. "Günter Kunert: Meine Väter heißen ganz anders" Interview by Walter Höllerer. *Literarischen Colloquium Berlin*, 1987; <http://www.planetlyrik.de/gunter-kunert-ich-du-er-sie-es/2012/11/>, abgerufen am 29. Januar 2019.

⁷ Peter Bekes, *Verfremdungen. Parabeln von Bertolt Brecht, Franz Kafka, Günter Kunert* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1988), 37–38.

⁸ Masters, *Die Toten von Spoon River*, übers. von Hans Rudolf Rieder (München: Deutschland Verlag, 1924/Bad Wörishofen: Drei-Säulen-Verlag, 1947); Masters, *Die Toten von Spoon River*, übertr. von Wolfgang Martin Schede (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1966); *Poesiealbum 173: Edgar Lee Masters*, hrsg. von Helmut Preißler (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1982).

DER ~~HEINZ~~ HÜGEL.

1

Wo sind Elmer, Herman, Bert, Tom und Charley,

Des Willens Schwäche, die Stärke des Armes,
Der Spassmacher, der ^{Heimlich} Stürfer, der ^{Kämpfer} Kämpfer?

des Willens (Gesp.)
des Willens (Gesp.)

Alle, alle schlafen auf dem Hügel.

Einer verging am Fieber.

Einer verbrannte im Bergwerk.

Einer kam um beim Aufruhr.

Einer starb im Gefängnis.

Einer stürzte von der Brücke,

Schmittend für Frau und Kinder.

2. (Kämpfer
des Willens (Gesp.)

Alle, alle schlafen, schlafen ^{schlafen} auf dem Hügel.

Übersetzung von Edgar Lee Masters'
"The Hill" aus der *Spoon River Anthology*
mit Brechts handschriftlichen Korrekturen

Günter Kunert

Hanswurst Suffling Raufbold der Willensschwache
der Muskelstarke

/ Raufen
?
\ Messerstechen

, schlafen

"The Hill"¹
Edgar Lee Masters

Where are Elmer, Herman, Bert, Tom and Charley,
The weak of will, the strong of arm, the clown, the boozier, the fighter?
All, all, are sleeping on the hill.

One passed in a fever,
One was burned in a mine,
One was killed in a brawl,
One died in a jail,
One fell from a bridge toiling for children and wife—
All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill.

Wo sind Ella, Kate, Mag, Lizzie und Edith,

Die gerade Seele, das zärtliche Herz,

Die Stille, die Stolz^{Leute}, die Glückliche ?

Alle, alle schlafen auf dem Hügel.

Eine starb bei verbergner Abtreibung.

Eine durch wirk^gre Liebe.

Eine durch ein brutales Tier im Bordell.
an Bord und verlor sich in der Nacht

Eine an gebrochenem Stolz,

Auf der Suche nach unbekanten Wünschen.
an den

Eine ^{brachte sie} wurde nach einem Leben

Im fernen London, im fernen Paris
an

In ihrer K^{an}zine Wohnung (gebracht)
an

Zu Ella und Kate und Mag.

Alle, alle schlafen, schlafen ^{schlafen} auf dem Hügel.

*in Bordell
Kanzin*

Laute

? im unehelichen
 von der hand eines wüstlings im freudenhaus kindbett
 innersten
 (brachten sie)
 an und Hamburg
 n Platz ()
 , schlafen

Where are Ella, Kate, Mag, Lizzie and Edith,
 The tender heart, the simple soul, the loud, the proud, the happy one?—
 All, all, are sleeping on the hill.

One dies in shameful child-birth,
 One of a thwarted love, /
 One at the hands of a brute in a brothel,
 One of a broken pride, in the search for heart's desire,
 One after life in far-away London and Paris
 Was brought to her little space by Ella and Kate and Mag—
 All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill.

3

Wir sind Onkel Isaac und Tante Emily,
Und der ^{älteste} Towny Kincaid und Sevigne Houghton,
Und ^{Major} Walker, der noch gesprochen
Mit ^{den} ehrwürdigen Männern der Revolution?

erw. noch gelebt

Alle, alle schlafen ^{nie} auf dem Hügel.

?

Sie brachten ^{ihren} ihre toten Söhne aus dem Krieg
Und ihre Töchter, vom Leben zertreten,
Und deren vaterlose Kinder, weinend -
Alle, alle schlafen, schlafen ^{schlafen} auf dem Hügel.

Vater
()
Oberst

[]

ihnen

sie

?

/

, schlafen

Where are Uncle Isaac and Aunt Emily,
And old Towny Kincaid and Sevigne Houghton,
And Major Walker who had talked
With venerable men of the revolution?—
All, all are sleeping on the hill.

They brought them dead sons from the war,
And daughters whom life had crushed,
And their child fatherless, crying—
All, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill.

4

Wo ist der alte Fiedler Jones,
Der mit dem Leben spielte
Seine neunzig Jahre hindurch,
Die bloße Brust dem Hagel bietend,
Saufend, ^{Hande winkend} auftritteind, weder an Weiber denkend,
Noch an Sippe, an Gold, ^{noch} Liebe, ^{noch} Himmel ?

gef
^{20h} Ho ! der brabbelt von ~~langst~~ ^{langst} vergangenen Fischessen, ^{vergangen}
^{langst} Von ~~langst~~ vergangenen Pferderennen in Clary's Grove,
Und von dem, ~~was~~

Was in Springfield einmal Abe Lincoln gesagt hat.

laufend, auftritteind, neunzigjährig
Wo uns hinter Gold, Liebe und Himmel ?
Sippe

krach machend
 noch noch noch ?
 Jeh Jeh, /E ----- lange vergangenen
 Lange

 was [[durchgestrichen]]

Seufzend, aufrüttelnd, vernachlässigend
 Weib und Familie Gold, Liebe und Himmel?
 Sippe

Where is Old Fiddler Jones
 Who played with life all his ninety year,
 Braving the sleet with bared breast,
 Drinking, rioting, thinking neither of wife nor kin,
 Nor gold, nor love, nor heaven?
 Lo! he babbles of the fish-frys of long ago,
 Of the horse-races of long ago at Clary's Grove,
 Of what Abe Lincoln said
 One time at Springfield.

Anmerkungen

Der Herausgeber dieses Bandes bedankt sich herzlich für das Zustandekommen dieses Beitrags: bei Günter Kunert dafür, Thomas Combrink auf die Existenz der vier Typoskript-Blätter im Marbacher Literaturarchiv hingewiesen zu haben; bei Thomas Combrink für seine entsprechende Anfrage bei Ulrich von Bülow vom Deutschen Literaturarchiv in Marbach; bei Christoph Hilse vom Marbacher Archiv für die Suche nach und dann Bereitstellung der Typoskriptseiten; bei Erdmut Wizisla für seine Transkription von Brechts handschriftlichen Anmerkungen; und schließlich bei Gerrit-Jan Berendse dafür, sich nur wenige Wochen vor Redaktionsschluss noch dazu bereit erklären zu haben, eine Einleitung beizusteuern. (In einem Brief an den Herausgeber vom 10. März 2018 schrieb Kunert: "Ich habe Brecht bis zu seinem Tode des Öfteren besucht, er ließ sich stets meine Texte zeigen, er war ein Menschenfänger, der es verstand, andere Menschen an sich zu ziehen.")

¹ Edgar Lee Masters, *Spoon River Anthology* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), 1–2.

Fragmente für eine Dialektik des Widerstands: Fatzer, Keuner und die Revolution

Fatzer bleibt eine unaufgelöste Figur des Widerstands in Brechts Werk. Ein Grund dafür, dass der Stücktext *Fatzer* Fragment blieb, ist das Hindernis, welches die Fatzer-Figur für das revolutionäre Projekt darstellte. Zwischen dem nihilistischen Fatalismus des Frühwerks und der formalen und ideologischen Präzision der Lehrstücke steht *Fatzer* nicht nur für einen Übergang, sondern für das zentrale Dilemma, mit welchem sich Brecht konfrontiert sah. Dieser Artikel versucht, durch die Gegenüberstellung der Brecht-Figuren Fatzer und Koch/Keuner Brechts politisches Dilemma in *Fatzer* aus den gegensätzlichen Perspektiven der Konservativen Revolution und des Nationalbolschewismus zu beleuchten und neu zu verhandeln. Es geht weiterhin darum, ein allgemeines Widerstandsmodell aus *Fatzer* abzuleiten, welches sich dezidiert gegen selbsterklärte nationale Widerstandsbewegungen richtet, die der instrumentellen Logik des in Koch/Keuner dargestellten Autoritarismus folgen.

Fatzer remains an unresolved figure of resistance in Brecht's work. One of the reasons why the play *Fatzer* remained a fragment is that the anarchist figure of Fatzer represented an obstacle for the revolutionary project. Positioned between the nihilistic fatalism of Brecht's earlier work and the formal and ideological rigor of his *Lehrstücke* (learning plays), the *Fatzer* fragment represents not only a transition in his oeuvre but the central dilemma with which the revolution confronted him. By juxtaposing Brecht's figures of Fatzer and Keuner, this article tries to renegotiate the political dilemma Brecht presents in *Fatzer* and to illuminate its blind spots from the divergent perspectives of the Conservative Revolution and of National Bolshevism. Moreover, this article seeks to deduce from the Fatzer figure modes of resistance against political movements that present themselves as national resistance and follow Koch/Keuner's instrumental logic of authoritarianism.

Fragments for a Dialectic of Resistance: Fatzer, Keuner, and the Revolution

André Fischer

In Brecht's *Fatzer* fragment, which works through the relation between the individual and the collective, the revolution fails to gain traction on a very basic level. It collapses before it has even begun because the individuals cannot identify themselves with the greater cause, the transformation of the state. Only one of Brecht's characters, Koch, who is renamed Keuner in later drafts, recognizes that, in order to transform the state, they need a new kind of discipline and authority. Fatzer's anarchism, his alleged egoism, becomes an obstacle for the group and makes him the adversary of Keuner, whose authoritarian leadership, by contrast, turns Fatzer into a model of individual resistance. Brecht's *Fatzer* fragment not only stresses the notion of the individual as a political category but also as a structure of dramatic speech. Throughout the *Fatzer* text, this structure—"the *Fatzer* verse"—prevents the assignment of speech to different characters and takes on the role of the individual as that which is not to be divided. Beyond the ideological dynamics of the fragment, resistance is developed on the rhetorical level in the so-called "*Fatzer* verse" and its subversive function in the text. As this type of dramatic speech ultimately shows, Brecht's first dramatic response to Lenin's revolution remains much more ambivalent than the subsequent *Lehrstücke* and offers instead a perspective on individual resistance to the moral consequentialism of the revolution.

As I will show, resistance in the *Fatzer* fragment is performed not as a collective but against collectives. To make this more concrete, I will juxtapose this model of individual resistance to forms of authoritarian leadership that Brecht would have been familiar with in the late 1920s. As these ideological currents, generally known as the Conservative Revolution, also resonate with reactionary movements today, the *Fatzer* fragment presents us with a model case of individual resistance against false collectives.¹

I. Fatzer's Individual Resistance

In *Fatzer*, Brecht stages anew the conflict between the individual and the collective, which he already investigated in such earlier plays as *Baal* or *Mann ist Mann* (*Man Equals Man*). This time the conflict unfolds in the context of World War I and the Russian Revolution. In the third year of the war, four soldiers on the Western front decide that they have had enough of the war, desert from the army, and return home, where they hide in a small apartment trying to survive as they wait for the state to collapse and the revolution to begin. Their leader is Johann Fatzer who, in a sudden epiphany, realizes that he is fighting for the wrong cause and convinces Koch, Büsching, and Kaumann to leave the battlefield behind. Although the others are tired of fighting as well, it is only Fatzer who draws the radical conclusion to desert.

FATZER

Was ist heut für ein Tag?

KOCH

Mittwoch

FATZER

So, dann ist es ein Mittwoch, an

Dem wir genug haben. (*BFA* 10.1, 404)

Fatzer

...

What day is it today?

Koch

Wednesday.

Fatzer

So, then it's on a Wednesday that

We've had it up to here.²

The four arrive in Mülheim an der Ruhr and, instead of separating, stick together, moving into Kaumann's apartment. As the clandestine group needs to survive, Fatzer is elected to provide food for all of them. They trust him and his individual abilities:

KOCH

Aber wohin, Fatzer?

Rechts ist alles rot

Und im Rücken brennt auch alles

Und vorn ist es still

Was am schlimmsten ist.

FATZER

Links . . .

MELLERMANN

Links ist es am ruhigsten. (*BFA* 10.1, 405)

Koch

But where to, Fatzer?
To the right it's all red
Behind us it's all in flames
And in front it's silent
And that's the worst.

Fatzer

Left! . . .

Koch

Left, that's where it's quietest. (Kuhn, 90)

Exploring Mülheim on his own, Fatzer witnesses the deprivation on the home front, realizing that "the people are stupid!" and that "this way the war can never end" (Kuhn, 109). Especially in the earlier parts of the fragment, Fatzer represents the rational consciousness of the group who observes and detects the contradictions that perpetuate a war under wrong conditions. The others in the group rely on his initiative and only begin to question those conditions once they no longer benefit from them. Fatzer, on the other hand, acts on his own instead on the group's behalf, sometimes erratically, sometimes egoistically, and sometimes indifferently. He gets beaten up by a group of butchers because he asks for more meat than he is entitled to, while his fellow deserters stay in the back and deny knowing him. Solidarity is a virtue they only demand from Fatzer, not from themselves.

As Fatzer continues to disappoint them as their procurer of food—since he is mostly killing time on his aimless strolls through Mülheim and looking for trouble in the wrong places—the group decides to confine him at home. They tie Fatzer up at Kaumann's apartment, but this does not stop his hedonistic drive. He convinces Kaumann's wife to untie him, before seducing and impregnating her. As a consequence, the group members debate the question of private property and decide to offer Kaumann's wife to proletarian clients in order to win them over to their cause. In another scene, the three other group members entrust Fatzer with their passports and all their money to test if they can still trust him. They should know already that they cannot—Fatzer spends the money and throws their passports away. Finally, the three decide to take action and to execute him, though not without asking for his consent, which he obstinately refuses. Moments later, an explosion kills all of them.

BÜSCHING

. . .

Drum sollst du hingerichtet
Werden nach dem Beschluss
Von drei Menschen und einem
Toten, ohne Aufschub!
Sag, dass du

Einverstanden bist.

...

FATZER

Ich will nicht!

Bind mich los, Büsching!

Ich mach mir nichts draus

Ob ich Furcht zeig, ich

Will nicht verrecken!

Jetzt noch nicht! Und

Nie so!

Ich bin der Fatzer

Usw. (*BFA*, 10.1, 448–49)

Büsching

That's why you have to

Go, in fulfilment of the resolution

Of three men and one

Dead man, without delay!

Say that you are

In agreement.

...

Fatzer

I shan't!

Untie me Büsching!

I couldn't give a fuck if you

See I'm scared, I don't

Want to die!

Not yet! And

Not like this!

I am Fatzer!

etc. (Kuhn, 163–64)

Brecht uses the constellation of the four characters to stage variations of “false consciousness” or, rather, their shifting attitudes (*Haltung*):³ He identifies Koch with justice, Büsching with indifference, Kaumann with subjectivity, and Fatzer with hedonism. From a Leninist perspective, Fatzer is an anarchist, whereas the others represent a spectrum of revisionist ideologies. Although these schematic attributions shift as Brecht probes them in different constellations, they represent modes of collective and individual consciousness that fail to respond appropriately to their revolutionary task. The Leninist chorus informs the deserters, who are unconscious of their false consciousness, what needs to be done:

Verwandelt den Krieg der Völker in
 Den Krieg der Klassen und
 Den Weltkrieg in den
 Bürgerkrieg, also bleibt beisammen und tragt
 Den Krieg in euer eigenes Land, denn vor
 Ihr euer Bürgertum nicht vertilgt habt, werden
 Kriege nicht aufhören. (BFA 10.1, 478)

Turn the war of the nations
 Into the war of the classes and
 Turn the World War into
 Civil War—hold firm and carry
 The war back into your own country, for until
 You have driven out your bourgeoisie there
 Will be no end to war. (Kuhn, 124)

Obviously, this message comes too late and finds them disconnected from the social conflicts they want to fuel. With the help of the chorus, their playing through of the practical contradictions *vis-à-vis* their revolutionary task shall lead them to unity through consent. As Brecht accumulated scattered notes and drafts of the *Fatzer* text, he gradually resolved the conflict between political commitment and individualism by leaning towards the former.⁴ Brecht's previous concerns that socialism might "divide happiness" (Brecht, 2003, 34) by eliminating risk and opportunity have given way to a new attitude. *Fatzer* is now characterized more negatively as an egoist, whereas the figure of Koch is renamed Keuner and becomes a strict Leninist who tries to persuade workers to join their cause by reading the "Communist Manifesto" to them.⁵

Regarding the juxtaposition of community and individual, there are two dimensions in this text. The group of soldiers is a potential community, but only if they manage to connect with the masses and eventually lead them. Before a socialist community can be formed, the group needs to raise class consciousness on the proletarian home front. The spirit of the political "avant-garde" is necessary to initiate this social transformation, and Brecht sees the "asocial" qualities represented by *Fatzer* as a productive force in this process. In his practical critique of social norms, *Fatzer* indicates the reasons for the failure of the revolution. However, instead of subordinating his critical ability to the needs of the group, *Fatzer* remains the free-floating asocial intellectual who, in his opposition to the socialist community, indicates room for improvement, or even perfection. *Fatzer* acts against the injustice he sees and takes the goods that are distributed unequally. His actions are spontaneous yet seem to follow a clear strategy: undoing

inequality to make ends meet by corrupting a corrupt system. In this “proto-learning play,” Fatzer’s gang is supposed to learn from his erratic behavior about the doctrine of consent. Koch, Büsching, and Kaumann lack Fatzer’s instinct, but they know how to stay out of trouble. Instead, they send Fatzer out into the world to try his luck under hostile conditions. They become aware that the only way to change these conditions is to consent to them (cf. *BFA* 10.1, 525; Kuhn, 178). In accordance with this didactic message, the chorus gives the following advice:

Wir aber raten euch: seid
 einverstanden. Denn so geschieht es
 wie ihr hier saht, und nicht anders.
 Flüchtet nicht. Wer
 Gegen den Strom schwimmt, dem
 Fließt das Wasser ins Maul und
 Erstickt ihn. (*BFA* 10.1, 498)

Chorus

But we counsel you: Be
 In agreement. Acquiesce. For so it comes to pass
 As you have seen here, and no differently.
 Don’t try to escape. Whoever
 Swims against the current, the water will
 Flood into their mouth and
 Drown them. (Kuhn, 164)

Fatzer refuses to consent and instead resists the logic of capitalism by sabotage, desperately attempting to destroy its foundation: the commodity. Beyond consumption, he wants to spoil the scarce goods of food and water while also rebelling against the use of his own labor force.

FATZER

Ich bin gegen eure mechanische Art
 Denn der Mensch ist kein Hebel.
 Auch habe ich starke Unlust, einzig zu tun
 Von vielen Taten die, welche mir nützlich. Aber Lust
 Zu vergraben das gute Fleisch und zu spucken
 In das trinkbare Wasser.
 Dies ist nicht einfach.
 Ihr aber rechnet auf den Bruchteil aus
 Was mir zu tun bleibt, und setzt’s in die Rechnung.
 Aber ich tu’s nicht! Rechnet!
 Rechnet mit Fatzers Zehngroschen-Ausdauer
 Und Fatzers täglichem Einfall!

Schätzt ab meinen Abgrund
 Setzt für Unvorhergesehenes fünf
 Behaltet von allem, was an mir ist
 Nur das Nützliche.
 Der Rest ist Fatzer. (*BFA* 10.1, 495)

Fatzer

I refuse your mechanical ways
 A human being is no machine.
 Besides, I have a strong aversion to doing
 Of all things, only those that are useful. Instead I'll
 Shit on your good meat and spit
 In the sweet water.
 You go calculating to the fraction
 What's left for me to do, and put it in the reckoning.
 But no, I shan't do it! Keep on reckoning!
 Calculate my ruin
 Lay another five for the unexpected
 Take of all there is about me
 Only what is useful to you.
 Everything that still lives on is: Fatzer. (Kuhn, 131)

Fatzer's resistance is precarious and his destructive drive works against him. He questions the machine of distribution and redistribution even more than private property. Against the instrumental reason that turns him into a tool of either imperialism or bolshevism, Fatzer becomes a spanner in the works. Keuner may calculate the costs and benefits of the revolution, but Fatzer remains the incommensurable residue. As a by-product of Brecht's process of creating the learning plays, the *Fatzer* fragment holds on to a form of political resistance that refuses to consent to the way things are. Fatzer's failure carries two promises of socialism that are lost in Keuner's logic of real existing socialism: freedom and utopia.

II. Formal Resistance: The "Fatzer Verse"

Years after leaving the text unfinished and declaring it "unperformable" (*BFA* 26, 330), Brecht notes in his journal that *Fatzer* still represents the "highest technical standard" (*BFA* 10, 1118). Both verdicts are grounded in the fragmentary character of the work, which does not just mean that the text is unfinished or unpolished but rather that it follows a fragmentary aesthetic in which constellations change and shift with the unbalanced rhythm of the verse.

The various constellations of failing solidarity that Brecht probes in the plot are realized on a formal level in the so-called "*Fatzervers*" ("Fatzer

Verse"). Its characteristic is the belated line skips that leave thoughts half-finished and perpetuate the verse unevenly before stumbling into the next line and creating unexpected meaning, then ending abruptly. Hasting into the subsequent half-finished sentence, the verse takes the idea in another direction, piling on new meanings that often contradict the previous line. The effect is a surplus and a congestion of meaning, which makes for a breathless reader who always feels the need to catch up with the rumbling verse.⁶ The traditional device of the enjambement is revived and employed as a broken rhythm instead of a dynamization.

ÜBER DIE ABHÄNGIGKEIT DES MENSCHEN VON DER NATUR

Immer
Denkt der Mensch, er steht
In der Welt unveränderlich. Die Luft kann
Einmal voll Feuer sein, den Boden
Hat er gesehn, wie er wankte. Er stand
Ohne Änderung der nämliche und neben sich
War er gewohnt, zu sehn
Den Menschen ganz unverändert. Falsch
Boden blieb Boden bald
Luft blieb Luft, aber der Mensch
Schrumpfte hinweg vor Furcht und dehnte
Sich vor Torheit aus. (*BFA* 10.1, 399)

On Man's Dependence on Nature

Always
Man thinks, he stands
In the world unchangeably. The air can
be once full of fire, the ground
He saw, staggering. He stood
Unchanged the one in question and next to him
He was used to see
Man quite unchanged. Wrong
Ground remained ground soon
Air remained air, but the man
Shrunk away from fear and expanded
Himself in his folly. (Trans. A.F.)

The text comes to subvert itself and disorients the speaker. "Who speaks?" is the question, as observations, analyses, catchy slogans, and calls for action, often interchangeable in their ideological content, are uttered by opposing figures. This text without an assigned speaker contemplates the

emergence of “mass-man,” who is at once dependent on nature yet disconnected from it. Unable to comprehend its relation to nature, the person in the text sees change where there is permanence, and immutability where there is transformation. Dwarfed yet expanding, this new man turns into the “passive majority” that is ever-present and unidentifiable.

The chorus as well, as the collective voice *per se*, changes its roles and names: from being pluralized and numbered to the antagonism of chorus versus anti-chorus, to the choruses of the right and the left, to the FatzerChor(us) and the eventual question:

WER IST DER CHOR?

Vor dem Schluss
Aber auch er ist doch
Ein Mensch wie ihr!
Unbestimmt von Ausdruck
Frühzeitig verhärtet, vieles
Versuchend
Äußerte er viel:
Haltet ihn doch
Nicht bei dem, was er sagte, bald
Ändert er's . . .
Nichts Endgültiges saht ihr und alles
Änderte sich, vor es einging
Warum
Nehmt ihr ihn beim Wort?
Wen ihr beim Wort nähmet, der
Ist's, der euch enttäuscht! (BFA 10.1, 439–40)

Who Is the Chorus?

Before the ending:
But he too is
A man like you!
Uncertain in expression
Prematurely hardened
Attempting much
Saying many things:
Do not hold him
To what he has said, soon
He will change it . . .
It was nothing final that you saw and everything
Changed before it perished
Why
Do you take *him* at his word?

*If you take him at his word, it will be
He who disappoints you! (Kuhn, 172)*

In its performative contradiction, this anti-chorus urges the listener to disregard its advice and by extension also that of Fatzer and Koch/Keuner. Positions, identities, and ideologies change and are not to be trusted, which undermines any call for consistency and a clear political marching order. The dissociation of speech from the dramatic actors as well as the presence of various choruses leaves blocks of text next to each other, either in contradiction or in ideological alignment, depending on the reading.⁷ Instead of arbitrariness, the “Fatzer verse” effectively performs the ideological resistance of the Fatzer figure on a textual level, subverting what is taught and learned. On this level, the fragment proves to be productive in raising the issue of the collective versus the individual anew, reaching beyond the historic context of the plot.

It is important to note that the formal subversion of the Leninist discourse by the “Fatzer verse” does not lead to a plurality of voices that express themselves freely and are equally heard. Instead, the text suggests a need for objection and contradiction without suggesting a clear political strategy. In his performance of a resistant *Haltung* (i.e., attitude and posture), Fatzer objects vehemently without offering any clear ideological alternative.

I suggest that the alleged “highest technical standard” (BFA 10, 1118) of the *Fatzer* text consists in this transformation of figurative speech into a monologic discourse that performs contradiction and subverts its own proclamations. The *Fatzer* fragment is therefore not only a point of departure for postdramatic theater but, moreover, a model of performative critique, that is, the *Fatzer* text and in particular the Fatzer figure provide a model of individual resistance against authoritarian doctrine. While Lenin’s revolution served Brecht as a historic case to study this model, its practical value is not limited to the question of a proletarian revolution. This *Fatzer* model can also be used to intervene in the political discourse, wherever it identifies and collectivizes. As a fragment, *Fatzer* is the result of a necessary failure of subsuming the particular under the whole, to the same degree as the individual Fatzer resists subsumption under the collectives of warfare and revolution.

Instead of asking, as Heiner Müller did, where to locate Fatzer and his fellows today, I propose to use the text as a tentative model for subversive speech that undermines the binaries of political discourse. While Brecht used the Fatzer figure to study the pedagogy of the revolution and eventually consented with its Leninist logic, Müller identified himself with the dissident Fatzer who resisted the frozen state of socialism and also alluded to the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (“Red Army Faction,” RAF) as his contemporary Western model case. As important as Müller’s conjecture was, it is

time to transpose the *Fatzer* complex as a performative critique into current political debates, where calls for revolution, nationalist movements, and collective identities necessitate individual resistance. In its unfinished form, the text opens a potential for resistance against false consensus on one hand and imagined communities on the other.

III. Keuner's Conservative Revolution

Since Lenin's short twentieth century ended, socialism has lost its prerogative of revolution. If *Fatzer* becomes more relevant today, it is as a pedagogy of resistance against the formulation of new revolutionary doctrines and the mobilization of communities of nationalist resistance. In *Fatzer*, the disposition of the Koch/Büsching/Kaumann faction corresponds to such contemporary movements. Their acceptance of intolerable conditions leads them to passively wait for *Fatzer* to act in the interest of the collective. From the isolation of Kaumann's apartment, the group witnesses *Fatzer*'s failure from a secure distance while their call for solidarity and community remains ineffective. Instead, Koch boils Leninist doctrine down to a paramilitary class war in which his resistance movement is to face the class enemy "in heavy marching order" (*BFA* 10.1, 423), evoking Lenin's "self-acting armed organization of the people."⁸

The confrontation between *Fatzer* the anarchist and Keuner the party official resembles Brecht's own ideological struggle, as has been pointed out by Heiner Müller. However, Keuner is not just the Leninist Müller saw in him but also represents a model of authoritarian leadership that conservative authors of the 1920s and 1930s identified with Lenin and the Soviet Union. The Weimar reactionary circles which endorsed Lenin as a model for their own revolutionary goals are the opposition against which *Fatzer*'s alleged "egoism" turns out to be an effective measure. *Fatzer*'s asocial resistance against authoritarian societal forms as embodied by Keuner highlights those aspects of authoritarian revolutions that sought to emulate Leninist state politics on the ideological right. In other words, *Fatzer*'s individual resistance might still be a useful strategy against the various reactionary resistance movements forming today. In the following, I will sketch out the ideological dynamics of the Weimar period before mapping them onto the conflicts in the *Fatzer* fragment.

In June 1938, Walter Benjamin reports a conversation with Brecht on the Soviet Union in his diary. Brecht criticizes the cast of a "clerical camarilla"⁹ that has taken over Marxism and rules over the exegesis of its "holy scriptures." Brecht then sums up the crux of Marxist state politics—the withering away of the state—as follows: "The state has to disappear. Who says that? The state" (Benjamin, 1999, 336).

The necessity of state power for a revolution that eventually wants to abolish the state became canonical doctrine after the publication of Lenin's

State and Revolution in 1917. Consequently, the mastering of state politics became a central concern for Lenin and the “clerical camarilla” that followed him. Although leaving the machine of the state behind in a museum of antiquities was the eventual goal, this tendency ran into the same fallacy that Lenin had warned of in the same text, quoting from Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: “All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it.”¹⁰

The *Fatzer* fragments present us with the problem of a state within a state that rejects the notion of the state and eventually, as a “failed state,” undermines itself. The foundation of the “Fatzer Republic” is the decision of the four deserters to leave their tank, walk away from the war, and head home. The only thing that characterizes them as a political unit is their solidarity. But, as the *Fatzer* commentary foreshadows: “Sie haben nichts gelernt als ihre Solidarität, diese ist es, die sie vernichtet” (*BFA* 10.1, 388; “They haven’t learned anything but solidarity, which is what will destroy them”¹¹).

As they witness the continuation of the war on the home front as a clandestine cell, they realize, with the help of the chorus, that the war between nations must turn into a war between classes and that the world war must be turned into a civil war. Although it is already too late to successfully implement this strategy, Keuner adopts this ruthless logic of the revolution and becomes the *Leninfigur* as which Müller has described him. In response to the increasingly erratic Fatzer, Keuner emerges as his adversary. His efforts to discipline Fatzer and the others in the group gradually morph into an authoritarian leadership that favors resolutions and doctrine over Fatzer’s erratic spontaneity.

To the extent that Keuner adopts more radical positions, he becomes not a Lenin figure of the left but of the political right. During the 1920s, the somewhat distorted image of Lenin as the ruthless revolutionary was very popular among National Bolsheviks and conservative revolutionaries like Ernst Niekisch, Hugo Fischer, and Ernst Jünger. Even closer to their ideal authoritarian state came Stalin’s program of “Socialism in one country,” which they promoted against the *völkische* (ethnic) ideology of their national socialist competitors.

While the “Conservative Revolution” subsumed the various anti-democratic and anti-liberal movements of the Weimar period, National Bolshevism stands out as an ideological current that tried to combine the new nationalism with Soviet state organization. Contrary to Leninist doctrine, the National Bolsheviks emphasized the totality of the people, not just the working class, as the political force to be mobilized. For theorists such as Ernst Niekisch, Fritz Wolffheim, or Karl Otto Paetel, class struggle was merely a preliminary stage to a national struggle for which the middle class also had to be won over. When the German nationalists were looking to the communist East for ideological guidance in terms of state politics, Stalin’s Soviet Union sought to complement their materialist propaganda with

nationalist symbols and slogans. National populism accompanied the process towards a socialism in one country that Stalin wanted to implement.¹²

Such ideological transgressions were not unusual then. Already in 1923, Comintern secretary Karl Radek, in his notorious "Schlageter-Speech," insisted "dass die große Mehrheit der national empfindenden Massen nicht in das Lager des Kapitals, sondern in das Lager der Arbeit gehört"¹³ ("that the great majority of the nationalist-minded masses belong not to the camp of the capitalists but to the camp of the workers"). The subject of his speech was the case of right-wing nationalist and *Freikorps* (Free Corps) fighter Albert Leo Schlageter, who led a clandestine terrorist group that committed acts of sabotage and murder against the French occupation. After his execution by French authorities, he became a martyr for the Nazis, which culminated in countrywide stagings of Hanns Johst's play *Schlageter* in 1933.¹⁴ Radek's point was that the petty bourgeois class that had turned against the Western imperialists needed to be recruited for the cause of the Communist International. With his so-called "Schlageter course," Radek intended to open the KPD (i.e., the German Communist Party) to the non-Marxist proletariat on one hand and to elevate right-wing terrorism to the level of spontaneous anti-imperialist action on the other hand.¹⁵ Looking at *Fatzer* from Radek's perspective, Schlageter and his gang in Bottrop were much more successful than Fatzer and his crew in nearby Mülheim in fulfilling what the Leninist chorus demanded: the transformation of the war between states into a war between classes.

However unsuccessful this strategy of Radek turned out to be, it was not the last time he sought the contact of the political right. When Ernst Jünger's *Der Arbeiter* (*The Worker*) appeared in 1932, Radek was full of praise and allegedly said that attracting Jünger to the KPD would be much more important than any new voters. More than merely being outrageous, Radek's strategy actually indicated an ideological affinity regarding concepts of national resistance to global imperialism as well as the rapprochement between Germany and the Soviet Union.

In his essay, in which he coined the buzzword of "total mobilization,"¹⁶ Jünger theorizes how the shift in military organization affected postwar society as a whole. From his national-revolutionary angle he considers the transformation of the world war into a civil war as a precondition for a revolution. The process by which this can be achieved is the militarization of the everyday world, in particular of the work space. The post-human figure of *der Arbeiter* is the incarnation of essentialized alienated labor, devoid of any remnants of bourgeois individuality. Jünger sees this vision of the future already partially realized as a social program in the Soviet five-year plan, and he writes in approval: "Die 'Planwirtschaft' als eine der letzten Folgen der Demokratie wächst über sich selbst hinaus zur Machtentfaltung überhaupt" (Jünger, 1960, 132; "Planned economy is one of the last consequences of democracy and outgrows itself as a pure expansion of power").

To end the endless debates of parliamentary democracy was a goal that Jünger shared with National Bolsheviks such as Ernst Niekisch, in whose journal *Widerstand (Resistance)* he published regularly.¹⁷ Jünger described the profile of the journal as being “gegen die Weimarer Republik, gegen das Diktat von Versailles, gegen die Bourgeoisie, gegen die westliche Welt und ihre ökonomischen und kapitalistischen Imperative”¹⁸ (“against the Weimar Republic, against the diktat of Versailles, against the Bourgeoisie, against the Western World and its economic and capitalist imperatives”). Niekisch, a former SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) and USPD (Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany) member and leader of the Bavarian Soviet Republic of 1919, promoted a resistance movement against liberal democratic parliamentarism which he expected to lead to a Prussian version of socialism in one country.

Within the obscure spectrum of the National Bolshevik movement, Hugo Fischer’s 1933 monograph *Lenin—Der Machiavell des Ostens (Lenin—the Machiavelli of the East)* stands out as a systematic attempt to connect nationalist power politics with Lenin and historic Bolshevism.¹⁹ A close friend of Jünger’s who lectured in philosophy at Leipzig University and also published regularly in Niekisch’s *Widerstand*, Fischer describes Lenin as a new type of politician. Just as *der Arbeiter* for Jünger was a new type that emerged from the conditions of total mobilization, Lenin, in Fischer’s eyes, became someone who guided and dictated the direction of this social mobilization.

This Machiavellian Lenin is unaffected by any ideology but acts purely on the basis of logical political analysis.²⁰ Rational sobriety, calculation, and the will to political deed characterize this total politician and his new state. Under his rule, the soldier and the worker, who Jünger had depicted as tellurian revolutionary forces, are fused into one to transform the war of nations into a war of classes. The goal of this new type of worker is not to destroy the state but to sever it from its capitalist and institutional ties, creating a total state that becomes identical with the people in the end.²¹

While the new type of worker executes the orders dictated by a technological modernity, Fischer’s Lenin is the new politician that articulates these orders detached from any party alignment or ideological passion. He calculates the costs and benefits, evaluates necessities, and forms his rational judgments on the basis of empirical evidence. This Lenin is a technocratic decisionist who would help any revolution succeed.²² It is this Lenin of the right and its respective state politics that I now would like to map onto the Keuner figure that Brecht created in the *Fatzer* fragment.

IV. Resisting the Revolution: Fatzer versus Keuner

In his essay on Brecht, Benjamin describes the Keuner figure he encountered in *Versuche (Experiments)* from 1930 as a “leader” and a “thinker.”²³

He then goes on to compare Herr Keuner to Paul Valéry's Monsieur Teste, claiming that even though both have "Chinese features," Keuner "differs entirely from his French counterpart in that he has a goal he never forgets for a single minute. This goal is the new state" (Benjamin, *Selected Writings* 2.1, 367).

The Keuner figure Benjamin encountered in the *Versuche* is already a condensed version, derived from the *Fatzer* fragment where he emerged as an antagonist to Fatzer. The protagonist of *Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* (*The Stories of Mister Keuner*) is a logical positivist, operating in the realm of theory, whereas the Keuner of the *Fatzer* fragment finds himself in the midst of a political struggle. His reason is tested immediately and his decisions lead to concrete consequences. However, as Benjamin discerned, Keuner represents as much as any other character developed by Brecht a political model and is as such to be probed in political and dramatic constellations.

In the chosen constellation in *Fatzer*, the question is how to organize this new state that is under pressure from outside and from within. Barely able to survive, the four deserters need to transform themselves or wither away. Alexander Karschnia has suggested Giorgio Agamben's notion of "bare life" to describe the precarious status of the group between the imperialist war they are escaping from and the civil war they are supposed to instigate. Karschnia argues that they are in opposition to "den Bürger, den 'Massemenschen': den Bloom, der seit der Totalen Mobilmachung 1914 hegemonial gewordene (nach)geschichtliche Typus, ein 'Mann ohne Eigenschaften,' 'Letzter Mensch,' Monsieur Teste oder Herr Keuner"²⁴ ("the bourgeois, the 'mass-man': to Bloom, who has become the hegemonial (post-)historical type since the total mobilization of 1914, a 'Man without Qualities,' 'Last Man,' Monsieur Teste or Herr Keuner").

Out of the technicized modernity that Jünger calls "total mobilization" arises not only the faceless shape of the worker but also the shapeless face of "mass-man": Keuner.²⁵ His rule is determined by the necessities of total mobilization and responds to Fatzer's consistent failure to provide the means for the group to survive. Fatzer's failure triggers the criticism and suspicion of Keuner:

KOCH plötzlich:
Es ist einer unter uns
Der isst und tut nichts.
Den kennen wir noch nicht.
Aber es ist eine Zeit, wo
Wir alle kennen müssen.
Denn es weiß niemand
Ob wir morgen noch auf der
Welt sind! (*BFA* 10.1, 419)

Koch (*suddenly*)

There's one amongst us
 Eats, and does nothing.
 We can't know him for sure yet.
 But the time is coming when
 We shall have to know everyone.
 Because no one can know
 Whether tomorrow we'll still be of
 This world! (Kuhn, 137)

Keuner wants to test Fatzer and entrusts him with their last belongings. Keuner proposes that if Fatzer fails again to reward their trust, “dann muss man diesen Aussatz auskratzen” (*BFA* 10.1, 420; “we must scratch [this leper] out” [Kuhn, 138]). This Keuner is not yet a fascist nor a Bolshevik. He is a *Kleinbürger* (petit-bourgeois), on the lookout for his own benefit, but with little to invest. What he lacks in power he compensates with rigorous morality, and Brecht initially characterized him as the righteous one in the group. Keuner is the concerned citizen who will not tolerate violations of his moral code. With the help of the chorus, however, Keuner is able to learn and to adjust his moral code to a new attitude or stance (*Haltung*).²⁶

In what Benjamin and others have referred to as the “Chinese features”²⁷ of Keuner, Fredric Jameson recognizes Brecht’s transition from an ethical dispute between individuals towards a political theory that is primarily associated with Machiavelli and Lenin.²⁸ The dramatic structure of *Fatzer* indeed frays out into monologues, choruses, comments, and passages of unassigned speech, and makes way for a theatrical pedagogy directed at its author.²⁹ What gets articulated are radical political positions that are taken to their extremes. Describing the critical edge of revolutionary politics, Keuner’s measures to domesticate Fatzer—“the beautiful animal” (*BFA* 10.1, 427)—become ever more drastic and his instructions regarding the necessary steps towards the revolution increasingly authoritarian.

Hans-Thies Lehmann claims that these two stances of Fatzer and Keuner effectively converge in nihilism but does not distinguish between active and passive nihilism.³⁰ Fatzer’s nihilism, though hedonistic and joyful, is clearly of the passive kind—“Ich scheiße auf die Ordnung der Welt / Ich bin verloren” (*BFA* 10.1, 394; “I shit on the order of the world. I am lost” [Kuhn, 89])—while Keuner’s nihilism still has a goal, namely to change the order of that meaningless world. Therefore, this Keuner of the later fragments is much closer to the affirmative nihilists of the Conservative Revolution. Neither the plot nor the dramatic voices offer any ethical orientation *vis-à-vis* what is to be done, beyond the Leninist doctrines provided by the chorus. Fatzer’s anarchism is the only effective counterpart to Keuner, the everyman-turned-revolutionary. As Lehmann points out:

Die Gefahr seiner Theaterutopie, die Brecht nicht entgangen ist, bestand darin, dass [durch den] Entzug der Thesis das Theater, seine Artikulation, allem Missbrauch, der Manipulation und der Ausfüllung der Lücke durch autoritäre Setzung offensteht. Auf dieser Ebene, nicht in der vordergründigen und immer überschätzten Didaxe ist sein Theater, sind dessen Grenzen zu befragen. Es lässt sich ein obskurantistischer, irrationalistischer und terroristischer Gebrauch denken, den man von dieser Ästhetik machen kann.³¹

The danger of his utopian theater did not escape Brecht and consisted in the possibility that the withdrawal of the thetic might open the theater and its articulation up towards any kind of misuse, manipulation, and the closing of the resulting gap through an authoritarian positing. His theater and its limits need to be questioned at this level, not with regard to its ostensible and always overrated didactics. It is conceivable that his aesthetic might be used for obscurantist, irrational, and terrorist purposes. (Trans. A.F.)

The *Fatzer* fragment is not a play but, as Brecht puts it, a *Lehrgegenstand* (teaching tool) (*BFA* 10.1, 514), intended to educate its author. When reading it as a playbook instead of a play, that is, as sourcebook for political strategy,³² the manipulation Lehmann cautions against is not a matter of interpretation on the part of an audience but already configured within the text, helping its author to understand the shifting political constellations he entertains. When Keuner is taking over the Koch figure, the lack of ideological direction of the four deserters is compensated for by Keuner's authoritarian positing:

Furchtzentrum des Stücks. Während der Hunger sie anfällt, geht das Dach über ihren Köpfen weg, verlässt sie ihr bester Kamerad und spaltet sie der Sexus. Hin und her schwankende Entschlüsse. Anarchie, Verwirrung. Dann konstituiert sich eine Art Sowjet. Die Uneinigkeit führt zum System der Stimmenmehrheit: "Zu schwach, uns zu verteidigen, gehen wir zum Angriff über." Unter dieser Devise kämpft Koch angesichts des drohenden Interesses der Umwelt für sie immer verzweifelter für revolutionäre Tätigkeit. (*BFA* 10.1, 428)

Kuhn edits and translates this passage as two sections into verse:

Chorus

This is the fearful pivot of the play.
While hunger falls upon them like a beast
The roof falls in over their heads
Their best comrade abandons them and
Sexual jealousy sows dissent. (Kuhn, 142)

The text continues a few pages further with:

Chorus

And so the overheated discussions continue
 Day and night. New
 Resolutions. Immediately overthrown. Ever new
 Constellations.
 This way and that the decisions sway.
 Anarchy?
 Barbarism?
 A kind of soviet emerges.
 Disunity leads to system of majority voting.

Koch (*shouts*)

Too weak to defend ourselves we move over
 To attack! (Kuhn, 149–50)³³

The play is centered around the fear of anarchy, which Keuner, however, fuels to follow his own revolutionary logic. The deserters, who had given up on their existence as soldiers, are too weak to defend themselves. They are tired of defending a political cause they are no longer committed to. Keuner thus calls to move over to attack and to form that “special body of armed men” (Lenin, 46) required for his revolutionary state.

KOCH

Wir werden den Tag nicht
 Mehr schauen, aber wir
 Werden ausgerüstet sein
 Und feldmarschmäßig bis
 In die Nieren, wenn sie
 Uns treffen, vor wir
 Gefunden werden. Dafür fress
 Ich Rotz und
 Schlaf nicht. (BFA 10.1, 423)

Koch

We will not see
 The day, but we
 Will be equipped
 In heavy marching order
 Deep into our kidneys, when they
 Hit us, before we
 Are found. For this
 I eat snot and
 won't sleep. (Trans. A.F.)

Keuner wants to turn the deserters back into a paramilitary force, ready to execute their strike against the existing order. Bereft of any concrete political cause, his militant agency becomes the abstract decisionism the Conservative Revolution glorified and projected onto Lenin. From private to deserter, from reactionary to revolutionary, this is Keuner's last metamorphosis in this text: into the petit-bourgeois fascist that Radek heralded as an anti-Western, anti-Imperialist force to be reckoned with.

In his review of Jünger's 1930 collection of essays titled *Krieg und Krieger* (*War and Warrior*), Benjamin acknowledges the new warrior type which Jünger claims to be a product of World War I, as "the proven activist in the class struggle" (Benjamin, *Selected Writings* 2.1, 319). The war volunteer turned "mercenary of the postwar" is, according to Benjamin, "the dependable fascist class warrior" (Benjamin, *Selected Writings* 2.1, 319). The dependable and predictable Keuner who we see in the *Fatzer* fragment reveals exactly this potential when he is fighting not for a nation but for a new state. He is committed to turn the global war into a civil war at all costs. This conviction however, does not, as Benjamin suspects, necessarily derive from a Marxist analysis but from an arbitrary decisionism paired with a heroic attitude (as in the Brechtian sense of *Haltung*).

Unlike the warrior type of the Conservative Revolution, future generations will, according to Benjamin, "refuse to acknowledge the next war as an incisive magical turning point, and instead discover in it the image of everyday actuality. And they will demonstrate it when they use their discovery to transform this war into civil war, and thereby perform that Marxist trick which alone is a match for this sinister runic nonsense" (Benjamin, *Selected Writings* 2.1, 320). As Benjamin was writing this, Brecht was already one step ahead, testing in the *Fatzer* fragment the potential commensurability of proletarian and fascist class struggle.

Fatzer's individual resistance, his alleged egoism, is an obstacle for the socialist revolution he sets out to lead. His failure is productive as a counter-revolutionary resistance model. Through the various stages of the fragment, his adversary Keuner morphs from a morally guided to a politically conscious and finally authoritarian character. Keuner's interpretation of the Leninist chorus is, in the final analysis, a conservative one—an interpretation that I have tried to contextualize in the ideological twilight of the Conservative Revolution and National Bolshevism. Brecht clearly took the Keuner figure in a completely different direction later, but within the constellation of the *Fatzer* text Keuner embodies a virulent type of authoritarian politics against which Fatzer's anarchism proves to be an effective antidote.

Notes

¹ The term "Conservative Revolution" was coined by Armin Mohler in his 1950 monograph *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932*, which subsumed a range of conservative, nationalist, and fascist writers and public intellectuals

under this label. Besides the general anti-democratic, anti-Enlightenment ideology, the main unifying motif of this heterogeneous group of authors was the general affirmation of technology as a means to transform the social order. Jeffrey Herf suggested the term “reactionary modernism” in his 1984 monograph, which focuses on the idea of technology as a means for social transformation. Along the lines of such social engineering, these new nationalist movements drew inspiration from early Stalinism and the total organization of the state. Besides the National Revolutionary Ernst Jünger and the National Bolshevik Ernst Niekisch, Hugo Fischer and his work on Lenin explore this relation the furthest and represent the historical background to my analysis of the Koch/Keuner figure in Brecht’s *Fatzer* fragment. In recent years, National Bolshevism has been revived in Russia by figures like Aleksandr Dugin and Eduard Limonov, and informs in parts the ideology and rhetoric of Vladimir Putin: “Highly reminiscent of the national Bolshevism that came to dominate Soviet ideology and mass culture under Stalin, th[e] rhetoric [of Ziuganov and Putin] is at its heart intimately connected with the formation of a modern sense of Russian national identity during some of the most difficult years of the twentieth century” (David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002], 240–48, here 248). Cf. Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932*, 3rd enl. ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989); Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism—Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

² Bertolt Brecht, “Fatzer,” trans. and ed. Tom Kuhn, in *Brecht and the Writer’s Workshop: Fatzer and Other Dramatic Projects*, ed. Tom Kuhn and Charlotte Ryland (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2019), 94.

³ The Brechtian concept of *Haltung* captures both the attitude of a character and the posture by which it is conveyed. The *Haltung* of a character varies in response to different social situations.

⁴ Bertolt Brecht, “On Socialism,” in *Brecht on Art and Politics*, ed. Steven Giles and Tom Kuhn (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2003), 34.

⁵ Cf. Stefan Mahlke, “Zwangslagen: Brechts Fragment *Der Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer*,” in *Brecht Yearbook 20: Brecht Then and Now = Brecht damals und heute*, ed. Marc Silberman et al. (Madison: The International Brecht Society, 1995), 190.

⁶ Cf. Mahlke, 193: “Die dramatische Rede ist dem gewohnten Sprachfluss nicht einzuverleiben, der Sprung erfolgt fast immer ‘zu spät.’ Immer wieder setzt Brecht das ‘und’ ans Versende, ein signifikanter Bruch mit der Alltagssprache (kein normaler Satz darf auf ‘und’ enden). Unterstützt von Ausklammerungen, wird so der Redefluss gestaut.”

⁷ Nikolaus Müller-Schöll identifies this technique as a theater without audience, referring to Brecht’s statement that *Fatzer* to him represents the “highest technical standard.” Cf. Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, “Bruchstücke eines (immer noch) kommenden Theaters (ohne Zuschauer). Brechts inkommensurable Fragmente *Fatzer* und *Messingkauf*,” in *The Brecht Yearbook 39: The Creative Spectator*, ed. Theodore F. Rippey (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2016), 38.

- ⁸ Vladimir Lenin, *State and Revolution* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 46.
- ⁹ Walter Benjamin, "Diary Entries 1938," in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 3: 1935–1938, ed. Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 336.
- ¹⁰ Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 607.
- ¹¹ Trans. A.F.
- ¹² Cf. Brandenberger (2002), 27–29.
- ¹³ Qtd. in Wolf-Dietrich Gutjahr, *Revolution muss sein. Karl Radek—Die Biografie* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2012), 573–74.
- ¹⁴ Hanns Johst, *Schlageter* (Munich: Langen-Müller, 1933).
- ¹⁵ In reference to the historic figure of Albert Leo Schlageter and his reception by Martin Heidegger, Micha Brumlik derived the notions of "hardness" and "clarity" in the resistant character. These qualities were pointed out by Heidegger when addressing his students on the subject of Schlageter and national resistance. Cf. Micha Brumlik, "Resistance—Carl von Ossietzky, Albert Leo Schlageter, and Mahatma Gandhi," in *Resistance: Subjects, Representations, Contexts*, ed. Martin Butler, Paul Mecheril, and Lea Brenningmeyer (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017), 21.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Ernst Jünger, "Die totale Mobilmachung," in *Werke*, vol. V: *Essays I—Betrachtungen zur Zeit* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1960), 123–47.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Ernst Jünger, *Politische Publizistik 1919–1933*, ed. Sven Olaf Berggötz (Stuttgart: Klett, 2001).
- ¹⁸ Qtd. in Helmuth Kiesel, *Ernst Jünger: Die Biographie* (Munich: Siedler, 2007), 289.
- ¹⁹ Hugo Fischer, *Lenin—Der Machiavell des Ostens* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2018).
- ²⁰ Fischer, *Lenin*, 175.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 205.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 96.
- ²³ Walter Benjamin, "Bert Brecht," in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2.1: 1927–1930, ed. Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 367.
- ²⁴ Alexander Karschnia, "BEHEMOTH vs. LEVIATHAN—Anleitung zum Bürgerkrieg," in *Mühlheimer Fatzerbücher I—Kommando Johann Fatzer*, ed. Alexander Karschnia and Michael Wehren (Berlin: Neofelis, 2012), 24.
- ²⁵ Judith Wilke points out that Brecht tests the idea of a modern *Massemensch* in a theatrical constellation in which the fascist tendencies of mass society are disrupted by Fatzer's subjectivity. Cf. Judith Wilke, *Brechts "Fatzer"-Fragment—Lektüren zum Verhältnis von Dokument und Kommentar* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 1998), 187.
- ²⁶ Cf. Reiner Steinweg, *Lehrstück und episches Theater—Brechts Theorie und die theaterpädagogische Praxis* (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes und Apsel, 1995), 62.
- ²⁷ Apart from Benjamin, Hanns Eisler also characterized Keuner as a "Chinese character." Cf. Stephen Parker, *Brecht: A Literary Life* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), 260.

²⁸ Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso, 1998), 36.

²⁹ Cf. *BFA* 10.1, 514: “Der Zweck, wofür eine Arbeit gemacht wird, ist nicht mit jenem Zweck identisch, zu dem sie verwertet wird. So ist das Fatzerdokument zunächst hauptsächlich zum Lernen des Schreibenden gemacht.” (“The purpose for which a work is created is not identical with the purpose of its later utilization. This means that the Fatzer document is first of all made to facilitate the learning process of the writer.” [Trans. A.F.]

³⁰ Hans-Thies Lehmann, “Versuch über Fatzer,” in *Das politische Schreiben* (Berlin: Verlag Theater der Zeit, 2012), 251–61.

³¹ Lehmann, “Versuch über Fatzer,” 260.

³² A playbook, as the term is used in sports, above all in American Football, and is figuratively often used in other contexts, contains all the plays (*Spielzüge*) of a team and is thus a collection of different tactics. Instead of a book containing a play (*Theaterstück*), I suggest reading the *Fatzer* fragment as a set of different tactics to carry out a political strategy of resistance against conservative revolutions.

³³ The formatting in Kuhn’s translation often differs significantly from Brecht’s original manuscript, which Kuhn justifies as a necessary step to provide a somewhat coherent dramatic structure. Cf. Kuhn, 77: “The selection and positioning of the Choruses is not Brecht’s, but he does appear to have had at least three sorts of Chorus in mind: as commentary, speaking to the audience; as an intervening player in the action, speaking to the characters; and as the antiphonal Chorus/Anti-Chorus, presenting an argument. Some sections which exist only in narrative in the drafts are ascribed in our version to a Chorus, whereas it is unclear in fact how far Brecht might have intended to realize these in dialogue.”

In den Fleischhöfen der Finanz: Brechts Ästhetik der Fragmentierung in *Fleischhacker*

Brecht beschrieb rückblickend die Arbeit an *Fleischhacker* (1924–29) als signifikanten Wendepunkt in seiner Entwicklung als Dramatiker. Die Frage, wie die Gesetzmäßigkeiten des Kapitalismus, im Speziellen die des Finanzhandels an der Weizenbörse Chicagos, darzustellen wären, wurde Anlass seiner ersten Marx-Lektüre und begründete den Ursprung seiner Konzeption des epischen Theaters. Doch das Projekt selbst, durch welches diese bahnbrechende Neuorientierung in seiner Ästhetik befördert wurde, blieb Fragment—unvollendet und zu Brechts Lebzeiten uninszeniert. Was erhalten geblieben ist, umfasst ein reichhaltiges Archiv von Einzelszenen und metatextuellen Materialien, die jeglicher bindenden Makrostruktur entbehren: *Fleischhacker* ist ein Fragment, das sich durch ein Höchstmaß von innerer Zersplitterung auszeichnet. Mein Artikel untersucht, ob diese dispersive Beschaffenheit als Ausdruck einer intendierten Ästhetik gelesen werden kann, die aktiv von Brecht und Elisabeth Hauptmann (seiner Projekt-Mitarbeiterin) verfolgt wurde. Ich arbeite mehrere Motive heraus, die ein Argument für eine bewusst eingesetzte Ästhetik der Fragmentierung in *Fleischhacker* befürworten: Die Radikalisierung des Gestischen; die Demontage von Frank Norris' *The Pit* als Hauptquelle und dekonstruktive Spur in *Fleischhacker*; Walter Benjamins Konzept des "destruktiven Charakters" als Motor im Arbeitsprozess; der Abbau der naturalistischen Erzählweise als "finanzieller Form"; und eine Dramaturgie des "Zerhackens" als Bestandteil einer weitangelegten allegorischen Textur, die sich am Titel und Namen der Hauptfigur aufhängt.

Looking back, Brecht defined *Fleischhacker* (1924–29) as a crucial milestone in his development as a dramatist. The question how to represent the workings of capitalism, as seen through financial trading at Chicago's Commodity Exchange, prompted him to read Marx and constituted the inception of epic theater. Yet the project itself, through which this major aesthetic shift was mediated, remained a fragment—unfinished and unstaged in Brecht's life time. What remains is a rich archive of disparate scenes and metatextual materials with hardly any macrostructure to contain them: this is a fragment marked by an excessive degree of internal fragmentation. My article investigates whether this dispersive constitution can be considered a positive expression of methodologies of fragmentation that were in fact actively pursued by Brecht and Elisabeth Hauptmann (his collaborator on the project). I extrapolate several possible motives to support an argument for an intentional fragmentary aesthetic employed in *Fleischhacker*: The radicalization of the "gestural"; the "de-montage" of Frank Norris's *The Pit* as a main source and trace of deconstruction; Walter Benjamin's notion of "destructive character" as an impetus in the working process; the breakdown of naturalist narrative as "financial form"; and a dramaturgy of "hacking" as part of a wider allegorical texture anchored in the title and name of the main protagonist.

In the Stockyards of Finance: Brecht's Aesthetics of Fragmentation in *Fleischhacker*

Phoebe von Held

In retrospect in 1935, Bertolt Brecht described his attempt to write a play about Chicago's wheat exchange as an "industrial accident" ("Betriebsunfall") in his working methods as a professional playwright.¹ Brecht had started the work on *Fleischhacker* in 1924 and abandoned it around 1929, yet he emphasized that his literary accident resulted in fact in a productive crisis: "The drama I had planned was not written, instead I began reading Marx, and it was only then that I read Marx."² Despite Brecht's hyperbolic claims, the project had been prolific, comprising 270 documents that were later collated in the *Fleischhacker* files at the Bertolt Brecht Archive in Berlin. Indeed, these documents are so fragmented they conjure up the vivid scene of an accident, a collision, or explosion perhaps, leaving behind a pile of debris and shards. Moreover, the *Fleischhacker* materials include two separate play fragments: *Jae Fleischhacker in Chikago* and *A Family from the Savannah: A History in Eleven Tableaus*.³ Both complexes draw on a major turn-of-the century literary work that explored the sociology of the wheat trade in America: Frank Norris's *Epic of the Wheat*, an incomplete trilogy of novels in the vein of Emile Zola's naturalism.⁴ *Jae Fleischhacker* borrowed substantially from Norris's second part of the trilogy, *The Pit: A Story of Chicago* (1903). *A Family from the Savannah* adopted several themes from *The Octopus: A Story of California* (1901), the first part of Norris's trilogy.⁵

What is astounding in the overall collection of materials is that it denies any attempt to reconstruct a coherent organization that would show how the disparate components belong together. The archive is internally fragmented to an extreme degree, consisting of incomplete dialogues, group scenes, monologues, poetic narrations, dramaturgical reflections, research notes, character lists, plotlines, newspaper cuttings on finance, hand-drawn sketches, and other visual materials. If there are plotlines, these can hardly be matched up with the actual scenes that were written. Moreover, much of the material remains ambiguous as to its textual status, raising the question whether texts were intended for performance or simply as dramaturgical notes. In short, the main impression instilled by the collection is that the *Fleischhacker* working process was never driven by any interest in constructing a coherent play governed by the laws of durational performance. Rather, its aesthetic impetus seemed to have been fueled by an interest in deconstruction, if not even destruction.

This then raises the question in how far fragmentation in *Fleischhacker* is in fact not at all a symptom of incompleteness or failure but a constitutive poetic form aligned with Brecht's revisions of the dramatic genre through which he aimed to represent the complexities of modernity, in particular, the socio-economic operations of finance. This article will thus explore the motivations, quests, and impulses that may have led to a sustained pursuit and heightened aesthetic of fragmentation in *Fleischhacker*. It will suggest that the piece's fragmentary status can be seen as part of a larger de-constructive logic within Brecht's avant-garde experimentation of the second half of the 1920s; as a radicalized reaction to naturalist narrative, and as a formal response to the question of how to represent the mechanisms, qualities, and nature of global capitalism.⁶

Indeed, opposite the above reference to the project from 1935, which points to the insufficiency of *Fleischhacker*'s political underpinnings, we have a number of references more synchronous with the actual working period which implicitly and explicitly explain the fractured aesthetics that Brecht experimented with in *Fleischhacker*. These form part of Brecht's discussions with the Marxist sociologist Fritz Sternberg and involved an attack on the dramaturgy of classical drama, or the "dramatic" element in naturalism, as inadequate for the representation of capitalist modernity. *Fleischhacker*, with its global economic subject, attains an exemplary status in this, as the obscure complexities that marked the collective interactions of financial markets stood in clear contrast to the relative simplicity of classical drama's dramaturgy: linear plotlines that followed the journey of an isolated individual. "A play taking place at the wheat exchange can no longer be done in the great form of drama. . . . How should our great form be? . . . Epic. It must report. It mustn't assume that it is still possible to access our world through identification. Our subjects are colossal, our drama must consider that."⁷ In a diary note from July 1926, Elisabeth Hauptmann, Brecht's close collaborator on the project, explicitly spells out the crossroads that *Fleischhacker* signified in fostering the innovation of the epic: "the most important reorientation during the work took place during the revisions on *Joe Fleischhacker*." Brecht knew that the "(great) form of drama was no longer appropriate for the representation of modern processes such as the distribution of global wheat. . . . In the course of these studies Brecht formulated his theory of epic drama."⁸ The "epic" would span an array of new formal devices, including the interpolation of narrative with dramatic discourse, historicization, *gestus*, the report, and the juxtaposition of different media to open up dialectical thinking in the spectator. But what all these new aesthetic means had in common was the use of fracture to interrupt dramatic suspense in order to prevent the spectator's uncritical immersion in a subject-centered story. In *Fleischhacker*, I argue, we can see the momentum and intensity of that fracturing mechanism maximized to the point that it leads to the dissolution of any dramatic coherence.

Multiplied Fractures: Epic of Gesture rather than Montage

Hauptmann's diary gives insight into some of the key moments of *Fleischhacker's* enigmatic working process, indicating that the project must have set out from the start with a proliferation of snapshots, disregarding the requirements of coherence and narrative sequencing that usually build a dramatic plot and producible play. In February/March 1926 Hauptmann writes they had found a "solution": "Combine *Fleischhacker* and hurricane piece!! Seems to be the solution."⁹ The double exclamation marks signal relief, which is endorsed by another comment shortly later, expressing her aim to motivate Brecht to work on longer "proper" texts, not only "essays, . . . short stuff, scraps [*Fetzen*], half-finished texts."¹⁰ They now produce two scene plans (A9 and A12)¹¹ that combine *Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago* and *A Family from the Savannah* in a montage that symmetrically alternates between the two pieces. Here, we can see a similar model of epic dramaturgy in place as the one realized a year later in the montage of *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, which Brecht in his accompanying reflections elaborates as the dramaturgical macrostructure of epic theater: If in "dramatic theater" each scene builds accumulatively on the previous one, in the epic montage each scene stands by itself.¹² *Mahagonny* exploits the episodic structure of tableaux so as to hold back on the suspense generated by story-telling. Before the spectator becomes too carried away by the narrative, the scene is interrupted. This narrative *caesura* is usually accentuated by a change in the modalities of genre, scenography, and performance—for example, by a transition from spoken word to song, or from dramatic speech to epic narration.

The montage drawn up for *Fleischhacker* was to provide a container for the erratic dispersion that had marked *Fleischhacker's* scene sketches to this date. It opened up the sociological spectrum by combining the narrative of the bourgeois futures trader Jae Fleischhacker with the perspective of a destitute working-class family, potentially showing the economic and sociological effects of financial speculation on both groups. An initial montage plan minimized any causal interlocking between the two stories. A second one eliminated direct interconnections altogether, thus demonstrating how, without concrete individual interaction, an economy based on financial speculation could have the profoundest effects on all sections of society. The final montage sketch (A12) thus unveils an episodic narrative in the broad brush strokes of eleven tableaux, with a clear separation between both narrative strands.

Yet what is curious is that despite their supposed "solution" Brecht and Hauptmann did not follow up with producing the remaining scenes that would have fleshed out their montage model. We therefore need to ask whether that "solution," though having promised completion and thus a producible play, did perhaps not deliver on aesthetic satisfaction, a satisfaction

that precisely ran into the opposite direction, into further and further fragmentation. From the fractures of an episodic, modular dramaturgy we are thus moving on to a much smaller measure of fragmentation: the gestural.

If we consider that the moment of progress that marks Brecht's juxtaposition of dramatic and epic theater is one in which the ascending flow of dramatized narrative is interrupted and replaced by a tableau-like exposition of sociological process, then the *Fetzen* of scenic fragments that had been produced prior to the *Fleischhacker/Savannah* combination plan offered in fact a far more radical version of anti-narrativity. Even if montage reduces dramatic suspense, it still adheres to the principle of a consecutive chronology and thus constitutes a step back in terms of the rigorous anti-narrative impetus that had been pursued originally. Given that Hauptmann's "solution" of combining the two story-lines was never properly executed by filling in the necessary scenes, it is worth considering that the perceived momentum of innovative production lay elsewhere, namely in a rhythm of fracture that exceeded the large-scale episodic breaking points of the montage.

In this context it is significant that neither Brecht nor Hauptmann include montage in their references to *Fleischhacker's* innovation of the epic. Indeed, in March 1926—around the time when they experiment with the montage idea—Hauptmann remembers Brecht's "new formula of epic theatre" not as montage but as "the gestural" (*das Gestische*), a form that cites the most memorable gestures and stances that can be retained from a past situation.¹³ In 1929, in "Letzte Etappe: Ödipus," Brecht avows "the gestural" as the adequate form of expression for the representation of "the great topics of modernity" and explicitly addresses *Fleischhacker's* topic of the wheat exchange. The "gestural" redeems theater from the pitfalls of "the dramatic": "The great materials of modernity . . . must have the character of the gestural. They must be organized according to the relations between human individuals and groups. But the traditional form of the dramatic is not appropriate for the materials of today."¹⁴ Yet the introduction of the "gestural" equals a far more radical means of interruption than montage, as it is profoundly at odds with the durational organization of drama. It suggests an aesthetic model that is spatialized and inherently more fragmented. The viewer encounters the different gestures of a social process as strewn across a space, as if the overall time connecting all represented actions had been frozen and then exploded into myriads of splinters. The time of represented action is separated from the time of reception. In the domain of the ever-splintering principle of the gesture, fragmentation is accelerated and intensified. The more complex the subjects of theater, the more atomized its representational particles. This ever-refracting quality of the gesture is also the principle that Walter Benjamin gives heightened attention to in his essay on epic theater: "the more often we interrupt someone in [the] process of action, the more gestures we obtain."¹⁵ Beyond a theater of montage

that disrupts narrative suspense through an episodic form of representation, there comes a theater of isolated gestures that no longer constructs any narrative chronology at all. What emerges is a palimpsest of disparate gestural moments—an impossible theater, perhaps, that sacrifices the durational element of theater for the sake of a more profound dialectically organized perceptual space explored by the microscopic gaze of science:

[The actor's] gesture demonstrates the social significance and applicability of dialectics. . . . The difficulties which a director meets in rehearsing a play cannot be resolved without concrete understanding of the body of society. But the dialectic which epic theatre sets out to present is not dependent on a sequence of scenes in time; rather, it declares itself in those gestural elements that form the basis of each sequence in time. These gestural elements are not elements in the strict sense of the word, as in fact they are not simpler than the sequences they are based upon.¹⁶

The gesture precedes all social preconditions that may unfold within the sequencing of historical time. Although it is an “element” extracted from “the body of society,” it concentrates in itself a socio-historical complexity that exceeds the causalities played out in durational time. The gesture as fragment can say more than a segment or even a longer sequence telling a story in durational time. Benjamin's emphasis on a metonymic logic—the attempt to convey complexity through distillation—captures well the insistence on fragmentation we can witness in *Fleischhacker*. In “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” Benjamin elaborates further on the value of these “surgical” aesthetics and their potential to grasp complex realities. The gesture's *pars pro toto* capacity is here explicated within the optical framework of cinematography. Like a surgeon, the cinematographer penetrates into the body's tissue to lift out probes that give profound scientific insight into the functioning of the whole body. The metaphor of surgery applies to a cinematographic approach that stitches together disparate, multi-perspectival snapshots, combining close-ups, jump cuts and freeze frames in an aesthetic that is unafraid of discontinuity and gaps:

The surgeon abstains at the decisive moment from confronting his patient person to person; instead, he penetrates the patient by operating. . . . The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, whereas the cinematographer penetrates deeply into its tissue. The images obtained differ enormously. The painter's is a total image, whereas that of the cinematographer is piecemeal, its manifold parts being assembled according to a new law.¹⁷

In *Fleischhacker*'s assertion of an aesthetic of the fragmentary snapshot, Brecht and Hauptmann similarly penetrate into the body of capitalist

society by examining its fundamental conditions. Snapshot by snapshot they capture internal and external attitudes that characterize the realm of finance and its effects on wider society: insatiable greed for enrichment beyond need, the social habitus of traders amongst themselves, the ruthless functionalization of human relations, the megalomaniac illusion of individual control over highly complex socio-economic processes, the melancholia that follows financial ruin.

De-montage of *The Pit*: Epic Adaptation as Destruction

Yet in their production of scenic fragments, Brecht and Hauptmann do not only excise from the body of society. Their penetration into the tissue of capitalist society is mediated through their adaptation of Norris's *The Pit*. We therefore need to consider a twofold process of "surgery," one which looks directly at capitalist society, and another one which probes into the texture of the novel, using it as a source to understand and represent the particularities of futures trading. It is in the latter process of examining the novel that their surgical violence reaches a level that is all the more visceral. On the one hand, they rely strongly on *The Pit* as a quasi-objective encyclopedia of futures trading, on the other hand, they slaughter it as a work of naturalism.

Although they dismantle its naturalist detail and narrative (which will be discussed later), they are in fact deeply interested in the novel's naturalist empirical dimension, in particular the factual wealth that Norris had accumulated in his research of the famous historical case of the Joseph Leiter corner of 1897–98.¹⁸ *The Pit* serves them as a textbook for learning the technicalities of futures trading: its jargon and temporal cycles, the different strategies of speculation; how to make and calculate a profit, and who the different players and agents are in finance: bulls, bears, brokers, the press; the grain exchange as an institution that sets the rules. They write summaries of *The Pit* to gain a clear understanding of how to corner a market. Yet whilst *The Pit*'s narrative is laid out over hundreds of pages with great dramatic aplomb, unfolding the engrossing tale of Curtis Jadwin, a futures trader who is lured from real estate into finance because of a weakness for gambling, Brecht and Hauptmann tear this story of rise and fall into pieces. Norris's meticulous chronological account of all the different stages of cornering a market, which is textured with the utmost detail of Chicago's bourgeois milieu, is reduced to the bare minimum. With the elimination of ambience also comes a reduction in the subjectivist appeal of the main protagonist who, in *The Pit*, is represented as the victim of an addiction to financial speculation, ruining not only his wealth and mental health but also his marriage. Brecht and Hauptmann's representation of the financial trader is much harsher, exploiting to full effect the cut-throat background of Chicago's stockyards. Curtis Jadwin, knick-named J., becomes Jae

Fleischhacker, a trader who rises from the stockyards rather than from real estate. In contrast to Jadwin's maverick ingenuity, *Fleischhacker's* typology of the trader paints the picture of a soulless butcher of human relations, dejecting any sympathy and identification.

The overriding method of adaptation in *Fleischhacker* is thus furthest removed from a direct inter-genre abridgement from novel to stage. Hauptmann reports of the impossibility of a simple "Umdichtung" ("poetic reworking") that may well have applied to the adaptation process of *The Pit* and not only to the transposition of the subject of financial speculation into literature.¹⁹ The traces of a twofold process of "re-presenting" useful material yet destroying the novel's naturalist apparatus are salient in the outcome. We can still see some of the *The Pit's* key motives, social constellations, and economic narratives shining through, but these are now butchered, fragmented, and repackaged in the highly condensed gestural snapshots of *Fleischhacker*. Instead of a new dramaturgical model that binds all gestural moments together, we are highly aware of the traces of *de-montage*, the process of unmounting another art work. What Brecht describes with hindsight as "Betriebsunfall" is also the collision with another literary work, now fractured into a multiplicity of pieces.

Can we consider the traces of destruction in *Fleischhacker* as representing an aesthetic that is not just processual residue but explicit iconoclast statement? Perhaps this would be going too far, but nevertheless it seems crucial to acknowledge the anarchist thrust of Brecht's innovative explorations at the time and to relate it to *Fleischhacker's* adaptation process. This opens up yet another context that explains the fragmented state of the material. Brecht's development of epic theater as a revision of naturalism was propagated through a forceful rhetoric of destruction, arguing that innovation could only be achieved by way of destruction, not reconstruction, of traditional form. Brecht's polemics in his exchange with Sternberg in 1927 couple sociological reforms of theater with an aggressive rhetoric of annihilation, propagating the new through the destruction of the old: "If I asked you to comment on drama from the perspective of sociology, I did so because I expect that sociology will liquidate the drama of today. Sociology . . . should provide the reasons why drama no longer has any right to exist."²⁰ The modernist innovator sees himself in the role of an executioner of the old. Innovation is not just an incremental process of reconstruction, it is about the radical extinction of the genre of drama as such—even involving Brecht's own drama. It is about the exploration of a theater beyond recognizability. Boris Groys explicates this discourse of bellicosity as characteristic of the modernist movement. In the name of the new, the avant-garde operated through strategies of war and destruction: "If we believe the manifestos of the historical avant-garde, their cause was a war between life and death. In one way or another, all artists and theoreticians of the historical avant-garde commended themselves as the fighters for an art of

vitality against the dead conventions of the past.”²¹ Although Groys refers to the Russian avant-garde, we can find in Brecht the same bellicose rhetoric in place, in which old form is not simply replaced by forms that are better adjusted to modern conditions but in which the avant-garde returns to “point zero.” By dwelling in the moment of the destruction of the old, Brecht’s rhetoric similarly aimed to inspire new life into art. Once viewed through the liquidation maneuvers of the avant-garde, the disintegrated state of *Fleischhacker* begins to make more sense. The bellicose metaphors of the avant-garde create a framework that casts the adapted material of *The Pit* as a battlefield of ruins and war trophies. The old, which could not be directly appropriated as the new, is simply erased, *liquidated*. The traces of destruction are celebrated. The writing process stopped short before the moment of re-construction, seizing and expanding the moment of destruction and approaching “point zero,” but not crossing it.

Benjamin’s 1931 essay “The Destructive Character” has been related to Brecht by several scholars and may here serve to shed further light on reading *Fleischhacker* as an exploration of the aesthetics of destruction.²² Erdmut Wizisla, for example, endorses a link between the essay and Brecht, as for Benjamin Brecht’s innovative “barbarism” “demonstrated that the activity of ‘constructors’ involved necessarily destructive energies.”²³ Brecht, in Benjamin’s analysis of epic theater, operates like an engineer who builds, takes apart, drills into, demolishes, and reconstructs.²⁴

Indeed, “The Destructive Character” reads like a “how-to manual” of *Fleischhacker*’s enigmatic working methods and its resistance to completion. It vividly elucidates a working process amounting to a joyous act of barbarism, ignited in the energizing activity of dismantling another work. Acts of destruction are dynamic and speedier than construction and thereby invigorate the destroyer, Benjamin observes.²⁵ Moreover, the essay captures well the strategies of erasure applied *vis-a-vis* Norris’s lavish photographic realism. *Fleischhacker* annuls *The Pit*’s attempt to give insight into finance by transporting the reader inside the locations of Chicago’s topography. Whilst *The Pit* abounds in detailed descriptions of the opera house, the pit as the futures trading floor, the buzzing commodity exchange at large, the turn-of-the-century street life, and the domestic interiors of bourgeois houses and mansions, *Fleischhacker* eclipses almost any reference to place and milieu: “the destructive character knows only one watchword: make room. And only one activity: clearing away.”²⁶ If we follow this characterization through to its ultimate end, then the heightened sense of space around the snapshots that Brecht and Hauptmann retain from *The Pit* must be read not just as a lack of new contextualization and continuity but as an aesthetic affirmation of the vacuum that remains after annihilation: “The destructive character has no vision before him. He has few needs, and the least of them is to know what will replace what has been destroyed. First of all, for a moment at least, empty space—the place where the thing stood

or the victim lived.”²⁷ *The Pit* as an aesthetic instance of destruction—one might term it “destruct”—is made tangible in its absence, as a place-holder of the traces of the old. The *jouissance* of having created space for the new outdoes an interest in filling that space with new creations. Yet this connects closely with the “zero-point” aesthetics that Groys describes in relation to Russian constructivism and its fascination with “irreparable destruction.”²⁸ Groys explicates the avantgardist celebration of the death of traditional art as an art work itself through a statement by Kazimir Malevich: in “On the Museum,” Malevich invokes the idea that the ashes of a Peter Paul Rubens painting spark an imaginary process livelier than the one inspired by the art work itself.²⁹

Benjamin’s analysis of the destructive character also highlights the avant-garde’s epigonic status, that is, its dependency on tradition: “The destructive character stands in the front line of traditionalists. Some people pass things down to posterity, by making them untouchable and thus conserving them; others pass on situations, by making them practicable and thus liquidating them. The latter are called the destructive.”³⁰ Benjamin thus puts his finger on a dialectic that distinguishes *Fleischhacker*, namely that Brecht’s attempt to write a play on the wheat exchange always remains indebted to *The Pit*—and thus preconditioned on naturalism. Whilst *Fleischhacker* puts into relief naturalism’s failure to represent finance in a truly critical way, thus “making practicable” *The Pit*’s representational shortcomings, it remains locked in that critique, fostering an aesthetic that perhaps can never surpass the status of an archival collection of documents. The archive that resulted from the project, however, allows us concrete insight into the different practical steps undertaken by Brecht and Hauptmann in their critical, deconstructive intervention.

Finally, Benjamin’s analysis provides not just a neutral structural account of the destructive character of *Fleischhacker*’s working process, it also articulates and thereby could be seen to problematize implicitly the violence involved in the avant-garde’s liquidation maneuvers on aesthetic traditions. Even if the avant-garde may only have targeted art works, these maneuvers suggest a disturbing affinity to the colonial-expansionist and fascist rhetoric of their time that celebrated violence as a systematic program of opening routes to hegemonic dominance.³¹ The image of *Fleischhacker* as an infinite work-in-progress that takes place within a speculative topography represented by *The Pit*, a topography that is to be exploited and then smashed into ruins, is conjured up in the final paragraphs of “The Destructive Character”:

The destructive character sees nothing permanent. But for this very reason he sees ways everywhere. Where others encounter walls or mountains, there, too, he sees a way. But because he sees a way everywhere, he has to clear things from it everywhere. . . . Because he sees

ways everywhere, he always stands at a crossroads. No moment can know what the next will bring. What exists he reduces to rubble—not for the sake of the rubble, but for that of the way leading through it.³²

De-montage of Literary Capitalism

Whilst the previous section considered the anarchist, iconoclast thrust at work in *Fleischhacker*, leading to a format that prioritizes exhibiting the ruins of the old over committing to the new, the final two sections will demonstrate how the dispersive state of *Fleischhacker* can be understood as a direct attack on the capitalist conditions of literature itself.

Claire La Berge's account of the interactions between finance and literature in the 1980s offers, despite its focus on the far more recent context, illuminating insights into the radical anti-narrative approach that marks *Fleischhacker*, suggesting that a finalized form could perhaps have been more easily achieved within a postmodernist rather than modernist frame.³³ La Berge's account of the interrelations between 1980s fiction and finance spans a complex, multi-layered argument, and I will here only lift out one aspect, namely her understanding of the interpolated nature of finance and narrative. Rather than treating literary fiction as a sphere that reflects the reality of finance in a supplementary relation to capitalist reality, La Berge treats fictional texts as part and parcel of the sphere of financial transactions. She thus proposes a definition of "financial form" which constitutes "simultaneously a narrative and economic construction." Crucial to "financial form" is a particular temporality that "bridge[s] the real temporal disjuncture between intention, production and consumption,"³⁴ a continuum of transactions that typically "produces time" and involves money as a site of mediation. La Berge exemplifies this economic logic in the transferal of loans: "If I take out a loan for ten years, both the description of that loan and the time and space between now and the ultimate repayment of that loan constitute finance."³⁵ La Berge furthermore describes this kind of contract through a temporality that "dwells for most of its duration in a state of becoming, a movement toward realization. When the process is complete, when it has been realized, its potentiality has been objectified as either money or commodity and, most likely, it has been routed through a text where something about it has been recorded and will now be remembered as it had been previously anticipated."³⁶ Narrative is thus the substructure that scripts the actual temporal and formal process of economic transaction. In its value-producing operation, such narrative always "palpates a future: when to access it, how to avoid it, and what to profit of."³⁷ Drawing on the etymology of the word finance, as derived from the Latin *finis*, La Berge demonstrates how financial transactions always involve a narrative that is suspended towards a future endpoint in which promised value is redeemed. This logic of futurity behind financial contracts such as mortgages, loans,

or investments is paralleled by an expectation within the realm of literature according to which narrative similarly precipitates towards an endpoint, promising an increase in value through the expansion of meaning and pleasure at the conclusion of the narrative: "Both finance and realist narrative promise their participants that an end will come."³⁸ Anti-realist approaches also depend on this projection towards an endpoint, but they are marked by tactics that deliberately frustrate such anticipation.

La Berge's interpolation between finance and narrative provides an excellent framework to comprehend *Fleischhacker's* state of dispersion and its radical resistance to creating narrative continuum, suspense, and closure. The subject of *The Pit* is the attempt and failure of cornering the futures market in wheat at Chicago's commodity exchange. Futures trading as a financial procedure is governed by a stringent temporal narrative. In line with La Berge's concept of "financial form," it opens up a future perspective with a clearly demarcated endpoint: a futures contract is an agreement to buy or sell a particular commodity for a set price at a specified time in the future. Buyer and seller of a futures contract take on the obligation to buy or provide the underlying asset on a fixed expiration date of the contract. However, financial speculators such as Jadwin in *The Pit* make a profit from selling their contracts before expiration in order to make a gain either from falling or rising market prices. Whilst the temporal structures of speculation in wheat futures follow an exact schedule set by the commodity exchange and the cycle of wheat harvests, various factors such as weather, the outcome of harvests, the availability of wheat on a global level, the political situation, as well as various other factors create fluctuations in price and thus make the final outcome of a speculation unpredictable. The temporal conditions of futures contracts thus follow a clearly prescribed schedule and narrative, yet the outcome of a trade is suspended in uncertainty. In *The Pit*, it is precisely the synchronization of the futurity implied in the financial trades with the forward leaping movement of realist narrative that produces a maximum of dramatic suspense towards an unknown outcome. The projected endpoint of the financial bet—the success or failure of the corner—and the conclusion of the narrative structure are made to coincide. The readers' suction into the narrative and their concomitant identification with the main protagonist are facilitated by a perfect and simple alignment. Reader and trader are at one in their speculation over the final outcome of their "investment." Narrative suspense is even increased by two further unknowns which are contingent on the outcome of the corner: the continuity of Jadwin's marriage and the maintenance of his mental health.

In his critique of classical drama in "The New Drama" (a scripted discussion with Sternberg from 1929), Brecht critiques exactly that kind of realist narrative that maximizes "dramatic" suspense. Narrative perspective is anchored in an individual protagonist who the recipient can easily identify with on their journey towards an uncertain end. Brecht

compares the “futurity” of the dramatic form to an “oat field waving in the wind. The first sentence of the tragedy only exists for the second one, and all other sentences only exist for the final one. Passion keeps this gear box in action, and the purpose of this gear box is that of the great individual experience.”³⁹ In the *Mahagonny* notes, this structural, dramaturgical critique is then expanded into a broader analysis of the culture industry that exploits linear narrativity precisely to sell art within a capitalist market. An audience pays most for a psychological experience of controlled uncertainty, followed by a marked sense of closure and emotional release. The audiences, as consumers, are “intoxicated” by their aesthetic experience for the duration of the play, yet immunized against critical reflection or political engagement outside the theater. But it is already in his adaptation of *The Pit* that Brecht faces directly the problematics of Norris’s naturalism, a naturalism that, while aiming at the critique of finance, produces the financialization of the reader. *The Pit*’s perfect alignment of the futurity implied in futures trading with its narrative construction helps to turn it into a best-selling novel. Finance capitalizes on the assumption that endpoints can be recognized and thus invested in. Analogously, realism constructs narratives in which the recipient is rewarded with an unequivocal moment of closure and certainty.

La Berge’s notion of “financial form” makes Brecht’s reaction to *The Pit*’s representation of futures trading appear the next logical step. To break the mechanisms of a realism that entailed the “financialization” of the reader, its narrative form had to be exploded, atomized, and pulverized. *Fleischhacker*’s most drastic adaptive intervention thus consists in the reconfiguration of the narrative plotline as the backbone of *The Pit*—in the subversion of chronological linearity and suspense towards final closure. The linear chronology that governs the financial bets carried out in *The Pit* is not just simplified into a montage but it is shuttered. The most “dramatic” part of the novel, the middle section in which Jadwin becomes caught up in his corner, remains undramatized in *Fleischhacker*. What Brecht and Hauptmann focus on instead are scenes inspired by an imaginary beginning and end of a speculation story. The beginning scenes paint the picture of a megalomaniac, inhumane, and violent financial speculator in overly optimistic anticipation of his triumphant success. The end scenes are situated around the moment of Fleischhacker’s downfall when we know that his corner has already failed and his downfall is sealed. In several scenes, which lament his loss of financial power and depict the disconnected state of his emotional life and relationship, we can find some of the clearest borrowings from *The Pit*, at least on a structural level. With these retrospective scenes, written in a melancholic tone, the spectators are invited to look back, not only at irredeemable personal loss but also at the story of a financial

disaster with global ramifications, a disaster which in its dramatic unfolding they never had a chance to experience. Brecht thus clearly eclipses the most “dramatic” narrative terrain in which, in La Berge’s words, “the social potential and anxiety . . . that dwells for most of its duration in a state of becoming, a movement towards realization,” unfolds.⁴⁰ Instead, Brecht introduces a temporal perspective that reflects back on the state of becoming from an angle after the final “transaction,” opening up a perspective that looks at events and interactions with historical distance. The futurity of realism is substituted with the posteriority of the epic, opening up, in the words of Matthias Rothe, a new “temporality of critique.”⁴¹ The corner narrative itself and the linear temporal organization of the overall novel are un-coupled, and torn apart. The narrative itself is isolated, condensed, reduced, and refunctionalized in the form of various summaries and fictional newspaper reports. Whilst we can only speculate about the status of these summaries (A4 and B40),⁴² there is a good case to be made that these skeletal timelines of futures trading may have been meant to be inserted into the performance material as epic narratives rather than constituting plot models for dramatization. Certainly, the newspaper reports (B21), which tell us the story of Jae Fleischhacker’s rise and downfall as a trader, can only be understood in this function of a framed narrative:

The massive wheat *baisse* of the last few days can be traced back to the machinations of Joe Fleischhacker. . . . Until Spring 19 . . .⁴³ Joe Fleischhacker was a member of the Barnes Baisse Group, which had ruled the Chicago wheat market for three years. Unexpectedly, Fleischhacker then switched to the opposite camp, which turned out to be immensely profitable, as he was soon considered the strongest of the bulls. The entire Pit had been unaware that Fleischhacker was planning a corner. In the autumn, however, enormous purchases were made by an unknown bull, whom many . . . identified as Joe Fleischhacker. Fleischhacker had, alas, miscalculated his corner.⁴⁴

The plot structure, which originally hosted the overall narrative content of *The Pit*, now reappears in miniature as a framed “quotation.” It exposes but also mutes a whole genre of realist narrative, a genre that sensationalizes the financial scandal in order to maximize profit from it. In *Fleischhacker*, *The Pit*’s highly dramatic corner case is quoted as one amongst many other snapshots or gestures as part of a larger archive of capitalist social relations. Within this interpretational trajectory, the high degree of fragmentation of *Fleischhacker* cannot be seen as a random side effect of its unfinished nature. It denotes, on the contrary, a new aesthetic that is systematically construed to undermine realism as an intrinsically capitalist structure.

**Fragmentation on the Plane of Allegory:
Fleischhacker as “Hacking Machine”**

There is yet another argument to be made for an intended aesthetic of fragmentation in *Fleischhacker*, which is rooted in the play’s title and relates to the symbolical, expressionist form the project explored. “Fleischhacker” as project title and name of the main protagonist announces the reign of a larger metaphorical landscape of capitalism captured in the image of the stockyards. In the final section of this article I will suggest that this is a device which is not only employed at the level of metaphor, gesture, and narrative content but also structurally, leading to a “hacked up” kind of dramaturgy.

The metaphorical world of the stockyards is a motif that Brecht unpacked throughout his writing in order to critique the violence intrinsic to capitalist relations. In *Fleischhacker*, the main protagonist’s concrete background as an entrepreneur who emerges from Chicago’s stockyards initiates a broader aesthetic texture of meat metaphors that recur throughout the scene material. In one of the key scenes, “Wheat Exchange” (B26), we learn about Fleischhacker’s promotion from stockyard entrepreneur to futures trader in a scenario which shows him “giving the axe” to one of his most loyal former employees, Matthew Milk:

Jae

For now the milk glass face of this Chicago
Is turned to me, Jae Fleischhacker
I shall obey the wish of the immense Chicago
At such a height to change
To gain in virtue and
Before rising any further, to test myself, how
Good my health is and thus
(Approaches Milk.)

I will now hack you, my right hand
Though useful still today, once indispensable
My dirty hand from troubled times, today I’ll hack you off

Shaw

It’s more than we expect, Jae

Brown

It’s good

Table

It’s dangerously good.

Jae

It’s dangerous to rise. Leave Milk. Your hand
Though in my service rough for seven years
It bears the stench from far below. Along with you
I shrug off the slaughterhouse’s brutal blow and go on fighting
WITH MY HEAD⁴⁵

Fleischhacker's emancipation from the crude, gory milieu of the stockyards and his arrival in Chicago's respected financial sector, paradoxically, is marked by a gesture of butchery, by a gesture of cutting and dividing. In order to wash himself clean from the vulgar stigma of the stockyards he severs the bond with his former companions. Human connections that have grown over time are sacrificed; bonds of loyalty and solidarity are broken. Violence against the animal is exchanged with inter-human violence. The shift from real to metaphorical butchery as social division also heralds a new level of abstraction in relation to the realm of finance that Fleischhacker now enters. Moreover, the gesture of dismemberment is not just represented as an act of violence committed against the other but it constitutes a gesture of self-harm: Fleischhacker "hacks off" his own "right hand," that is, he dismembers his own body.

We can find in this scene the foundation for a dual metaphorical construction of "meat" and "hacking" that unfolds throughout the fragment but is first of all expressed in the title *Fleischhacker*. The recurrent references to "Fleisch" ("meat" or "flesh") not only reveal the rough violence behind the clean face of finance, they also tap into an iconography familiar from the new testament of the bible. Although Brecht certainly was not interested in providing a religious message, the religious context did not stop him from exploiting the rich metaphorical and archetypal associations founded in Christianity's incarnational symbolism.⁴⁶ In this he has recourse to the Sermon of the Mount, in which Christ alludes to himself as the materialization of God's spirit in his own "flesh": "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. . . . And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."⁴⁷ The early Christian doctrine of the Eucharist develops this incarnational symbolism further into the belief that the bread consumed during the holy communion is the "bread of life," which equals "the flesh of Christ."⁴⁸ The sharing of the bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ becomes the foundational moment of the Christian community, a community that is composed of different members, yet unified through their shared ritual of transubstantiation: "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ."⁴⁹

In the above *Fleischhacker* scene, Jae's move from the stockyards to the world of finance manifests a cut into his own body and flesh. The disconnection from his former companion Milk is expanded into the sacrifice of the communal body whose different members had formed a unity. The capitalist system, into which Fleischhacker is initiated, is one in which the body of the community becomes disintegrated. Its logic is the knife that continually hacks into society, causing social division. What B26 epitomizes in its heightened gestural poetics—the hacking off of one body part—is reinstated in several other scenarios. For instance, Fleischhacker's financial ruin entails the separation from his wife and his companions.⁵⁰ In B16, which is a companion scene to B26 above, Milk says: "You're sending

me away, me who / Drank with you for one long year / From one cup and ate from / *One hand*.”⁵¹ In B15, an anonymous “She” states: “For not as many as came here with you will leave with you from here.”⁵² Also, the Family from the Savannah will become subject to “decline and disintegration.”⁵³ Capitalist society fosters a type of collective in which division is structural. Conveyed through yet another profoundly Christian metaphor, “the net,” this is a collective which is intrinsically hierarchical, enforced, and destructive: “And thus I see: I can / Destroy them all but / Not choose who I destroy. / Crush them all underfoot but spare no one. / This net does not choose its fish”⁵⁴ (B41).

Brecht consistently returns to variations of this symbolism of the communal flesh and body being severed, hacked, ripped into, objectified, and devoured. For instance, the image of the insatiable capitalist as a greedy eater of minced or raw meat recurs several times: “Again he puts a breakfast / Together of flesh from over-gorged bulls and / Tear-soaked dollars / ‘Tis quite a lot in the offering: for two days / He’s eaten nothing but raw flesh”⁵⁵ (B31). The idea of an irrational and unbalanced economy that fluctuates between excess and shortage is extrapolated through the image of meat in B30: “the more we rushed our meals / The more meat there was on the table,”⁵⁶ as well as B44: “There’s fear inside me that I’ll starve / Not having cheap bread instead of expensive meat / But *no bread*.”⁵⁷ Meat comes to represent surplus, in opposition to bread as staple food. Aptitude for the profession of the financial trader is tested by the question “How often do you eat meat during the week”⁵⁸ (B46). Crucially, the trope of cut meat unites both parts of the fragment. The family from the Savannah come to Chicago “To bet a penny and cut off / Our pound of flesh / And show them how we make money at home”⁵⁹ (B2). The lines, which are adapted from Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, in which Shylock demands “a pound of flesh to be cut off” from Antonio’s breast, are also voiced by Fleischhacker in a description of Chicago’s competitive financial trading milieu: “All ‘round each one cuts off their pound of flesh”⁶⁰ (B48). Finally, capitalism turns human “flesh” into a commodity that can be turned into profit. In *Savannah*, one scene (B4) thus shows the son Calvin prostituting his sister Kate: “Hey man, it’s my sister. I’ll calculate the / Share of usage / And pay the price.”⁶¹

But if the name and title *Fleischhacker* symbolizes the blade of capitalism that hacks into society, dismembering and commodifying it, we also need to consider the possibility that the scraps (*Fetzen*) which Hauptmann, according to her diary notes, wanted to bring into a more unified shape, were not simply traces of randomness. The fragmentation of the scene material then could be seen as a poetic form that recreates dramaturgically and haptically the harsh, jerky motions of the capitalist knife harming society. Brecht and Hauptmann become “meat-hackers” themselves, recreating and performing the gestural logic they observe to be inherent in capitalist social

relations. Their working process and the resulting dramaturgical structure become yet another layer in the project in which the gesture of hacking meat as an overriding poetic is manifested and made tangible.

Of course, this interpretation is speculative, but it considers that Brecht and Hauptmann, in their intense study of futures trading, to a certain extent came to identify with the role of the financial trader. A14 contains a section which could either have been intended as the first line of a speech or as a dramaturgical note describing the results of Brecht and Hauptmann's writing process: "That hacking machine that we have made"⁶² ("Die Hackmaschine, die wir da gemacht"⁶³). If the latter was the case, then we can interpret the line as a self-referential reflection on the fragmentary dramaturgy of the text at large. It describes a writing process that operated like a meat grinder. This brings out an interesting ambiguity in their approach to their subject. On the one hand, they saw themselves as detached critics of the devastating effects of the financial markets; on the other hand, they included themselves by making the gesture of hacking the methodological signature of the piece. No one stands outside capitalist relations.

The result is, of course, an unruly, impossible text, a text which never comes together and which resists a straightforward staging in the theater as a durational medium. But if the appeal of a fragment is founded in its potentiality, then we can also see that it was perhaps only the modernist historical context that hindered its completion. The notion of *Hackmaschine* cannot but conjure up Heiner Müller's *Hamletmaschine*, or Pina Bausch's choreographic montages, both opening up the medium of performance to higher levels of fragmentation. Last but not least, *Fleischhacker*'s bewildering double gesture of at once critiquing and reproducing the object of its critique reappears in Gustav Metzger's performative events and manifestos of "auto-destructive art." By featuring performance art works that destroyed themselves, Metzger reenacted as well as polemicized the self-destructive processes inherent in capitalism: "Auto-destructive art re-enacts the obsession with destruction, the pummeling to which individuals and masses are subjected. . . . Auto-destructive art is the transformation of technology into public art. The immense productive capacity, the chaos of capitalism and of Soviet communism, the coexistence of surplus and starvation. . . . Auto-destructive art is an attack on capitalist values and the drive to nuclear annihilation."⁶⁴

Notes

¹ "Entwurf einer Vorrede für eine Lesung," *BFA* 22.1, 138. All translations from Brecht and other German sources are mine unless otherwise stated.

² *Ibid.*, 139.

³ Bertolt Brecht with Elisabeth Hauptmann, *Fleischhacker*, trans. and introd. Phoebe von Held and Matthias Rothe, in *Brecht and the Writer's Workshop: Fatzer and*

Other Dramatic Projects, ed. Tom Kuhn and Charlotte Ryland (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2019), 24–67.

⁴ Only the first two parts of the planned trilogy were realized.

⁵ Frank Norris, *The Octopus: A Story of California* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1901); *The Pit: A Story of Chicago* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1903).

⁶ A version of this article was originally planned in collaboration with Matthias Rothe and as part of discussions surrounding our joint translation of *Fleischhacker*. This article can be understood as an extension of our introduction to *Fleischhacker* in *Brecht and the Writer's Workshop*. I wish to thank Matthias Rothe specifically for the reference to Leigh Claire La Berge's *Scandals and Abstraction*, discussed later in this article.

⁷ "Letzte Etappe: Ödipus" (1929), *BFA* 21, 279. For an English version in context see "Latest Stage: Oedipus" in *Brecht on Theatre*, 3rd ed., ed. Marc Silberman, Steve Giles, and Tom Kuhn; trans. Jack Davis et al. (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), 44.

⁸ Elisabeth Hauptmann's diary extracts quoted in Sabine Kebir, *Ich fragte nicht nach meinem Anteil: Elisabeth Hauptmanns Arbeit mit Bertolt Brecht* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2006), 61.

⁹ *BFA* 10.2, 1071.

¹⁰ Kebir, *Ich fragte nicht*, 43.

¹¹ *Fleischhacker*, 64–66.

¹² *BFA* 24, 79. For an English version in context see *Brecht on Theatre*, 65.

¹³ Elisabeth Hauptmann, *Julia ohne Romeo: Geschichten, Stücke, Aufsätze, Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1977), 172.

¹⁴ *BFA* 21, 278. For an English version in context see *Brecht on Theatre*, 44.

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, "What Is Epic Theatre (Second Version)," in *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock, introd. Stanley Mitchell (London: Verso, 1998), 20.

¹⁶ Benjamin, "What Is Epic Theatre (First Version)," in *Understanding Brecht*, 12. Translation modified.

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings et al., trans. Edmund Jephcott et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008), 35.

¹⁸ In the true spirit of naturalism, Norris had based his writing of *The Pit* on research into the recent history of commodity speculation in wheat. The scenario of the failed corner was adopted from the Joseph Leiter finance scandal. Leiter was a young businessman who, like his fictional successor Jadwin, suffered from an addiction to gambling, squandering millions of his father's fortune in an attempt to corner the wheat market in 1897–98. It is unlikely that Brecht and Hauptmann knew anything about this factual source, as they were keen to support their reading of *The Pit* with non-fictional research, yet the *Fleischhacker* archival files do not contain any references to the Leiter corner. On the Leiter corner and *The Pit*, see Charles Kaplan, "Norris's Use of Sources in *The Pit*," *American Literature* 25 no. 1 (1953): 75–84.

¹⁹ Kebir, *Ich fragte nicht*, 61.

²⁰ “Sollten wir nicht die Ästhetik liquidieren?” *BFA* 21, 202. For an English version in context see “Shouldn’t We Liquidate Aesthetics?” in *Brecht on Theatre*, 36.

²¹ Boris Groys, “Im Namen des Lebens,” in *Am Nullpunkt: Positionen der russischen Avantgarde*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve in collab. with Anne von der Heiden, trans. Gabriele Leupold, Annelore Nitschke, and Olga Radetzka (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016), 11.

²² Walter Benjamin, “The Destructive Character,” in *The Selected Writings, Vol. 2: 1927–1935*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999), 541–42.

²³ See Erdmut Wizisla, *Benjamin and Brecht: The Story of a Friendship*, trans. Christine Shuttleworth (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 105–6. As a reference for Benjamin literally characterizing Brecht’s personality as destructive, Wizisla refers to a note from 1938: “Brecht’s destructive character . . . always calls into question what he’s just accomplished.” Benjamin, *The Selected Writings, Vol. 3: 1935–1939*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Marcus Bullock, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002), 339.

²⁴ Wizisla, 104–5.

²⁵ Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Vol. 2*, 541.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. Translation modified.

²⁸ Groys, “Im Namen des Lebens,” 20.

²⁹ Groys, 19. The reference is to Kazimir Malevič, “O muzee,” originally published in *Iskusstvo kommuny*, No. 13, 1919. Reprinted in German translation in *Am Nullpunkt*, ed. Boris Groys and Aage Hansen-Löve, 203–10.

³⁰ Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Vol. 2*, 542.

³¹ Five years later, in the final passages of “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility” (41–42), Benjamin explicitly problematizes the glorification of destructiveness implied in Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s futurism. How this critique would reflect on strands of the avantgarde, which he saw himself aligned with, would require further elaboration elsewhere.

³² Ibid.

³³ Leigh Claire La Berge, *Scandals and Abstraction: Financial Fiction of the Long 1980s* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³⁴ La Berge, *Scandals and Abstraction*, 26.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 27.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “Neue Dramatik,” *BFA* 21, 272.

⁴⁰ La Berge, *Scandals and Abstraction*, 27.

⁴¹ Matthias Rothe, “The Temporality of Critique: Bertolt Brecht’s Fragment ‘Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago,’” *Brecht Yearbook* 40 (2016): 29–53.

⁴² *Fleischhacker*, 30–31.

⁴³ Ellipsis in original.

⁴⁴ *Fleischhacker*, B21, 37.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁶ Brecht is explicit about his experimentation with a Biblical linguistic style in *Fleischhacker*. See for example A17, *Fleischhacker*, 24.

⁴⁷ John 6:51. In the German Lutheran Bible, “flesh” is translated as “Fleisch.”

⁴⁸ Ignatius of Antioch writes in a Letter to the Romans about AD 106: “What I want is God’s bread, which is the flesh of Christ, who came from David’s line; and for drink I want his blood: an immortal love feast indeed!”

⁴⁹ Corinthians 12:12–27. The German parallel is Korinther 12:12–27: “Denn wie der Leib einer ist und hat doch viele Glieder, alle Glieder des Leibes aber, obwohl sie viele sind, doch ein Leib sind: so auch Christus.”

⁵⁰ See B48, *Fleischhacker*, 46–48.

⁵¹ *Fleischhacker*, 26.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 35. Brecht’s “pound of flesh” reference to Shylock, in the context of a critique of finance, risks being read as an antisemitic trope. This would deserve a longer discussion beyond the scope of this article.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶³ *BFA* 10, 280.

⁶⁴ Gustav Metzger, “Auto-Destructive Art: Demonstration, 3 July 1961,” pamphlet accompanying one of his acid action painting happenings at South Bank (London: St. Martins’ Printers, 1961). Reprinted in Andrew Wilson, “Gustav Metzger’s Auto-Destructive Art: An Art of Manifesto, 1959–1969,” *Third Text* 22 no. 2 (2008): 185.

Eine Aufführung der *David Fragmente*

Zwischen 1919 und 1921 arbeitete Bertolt Brecht an einem Stück zum biblischen David. Bemerkenswert ist, dass Brechts fragmentarisch skizzierter David nur wenig mit der biblischen Figur gemeinsam hat, was Fragen in Bezug auf Brechts eigene Interpretationen, Quellen und Ideen hinsichtlich der Funktionsweise des Theaters sowie der Rolle und des Einflusses der Bibel auf seine Arbeit in den frühen 1920ern aufwirft. Die erste englische Übersetzung der *David-Fragmente*, eingerahmt in eine Bühnenadaption mit dem Titel *The David Fragments*, wurde zwischen 2015 und 2017 am Trinity College in Dublin erarbeitet. Dieser Artikel untersucht die Ursprünge, Methoden und Ergebnisse dieses erweiterten Projekts praxisorientierter Forschung (*practice as research*). Das Projekt zeigt, dass es von erheblicher Bedeutung sein kann, Brechts Fragmente durch interdisziplinäre, praxisorientierte Forschung zu erfahren und dabei die Möglichkeiten körperbasierter Ensemblearbeit zu nutzen, um so die Tragweite der Quelltexte zu verstehen und gegebenenfalls zu erweitern.

From 1919 to 1921, Bertolt Brecht worked on a play about the biblical David. Notably, Brecht's David appears to have little in common with the biblical figure, raising interesting questions about Brecht's own inspirations, sources, and thinking in the early 1920s about the function of the theater as well as his use of the Bible. The first English translation and staging of the *David* texts, framed within an adaptation with the title *The David Fragments*, was undertaken at Trinity College Dublin between 2015 and 2017. This article explores the origins, methods, and results of this extended practice-as-research project—a project which shows that there can be significant value in exploring Brecht's fragments through interdisciplinary practice-as-research, using the affordances of embodied ensemble praxis to comprehend and extend the implications of the source texts.

The David Fragments in Performance

Nicholas E. Johnson and David Shepherd

In the tenth volume of the *BFA*, the editors attribute nineteen fragments, predominantly from Brecht's notebooks of 1919–21, under the title *David*. Eight of these fragments (A1–A8) are essentially notes toward possible structures of an envisioned *David* play about the life of the biblical king, while eleven (B1–B11) are mostly fragments of dialogue. The range of styles contained among the B-fragments is broad: some are as short as a paragraph (such as the B5 “Absalom” fragment, which reads more like a snippet of poetry), while the longest fragment, B10, includes dozens of characters and runs to more than three thousand words in the German. Arguably the most “complete” scene is B9, a dialogue between David and Saul, probably written (as shown below) in direct response to the David and Saul scene composed by Otto Zarek in 1920, which he read to Brecht in July of that year, according to Brecht's diary.¹ Though Brecht had many irons in the fire at the Münchner Kammerspiele, the text was never performed at the time; Brecht's own engagement with the David story resurfaced in the period 1937–44 in the (also unfinished) *Goliath* opera project with Hanns Eisler.² The David texts were first staged in German in 1995 at the Hebbel Theater in Berlin, in a production entitled *David* and directed by Brigitte Grothum. This production used the Old Testament account as a chronological structuring principle for the arrangement of the texts and also drew upon some of the later *Goliath* materials, as well as newly written “framing” material. Though the fragments were discussed by David Jobling in his biblical scholarship, the Trinity College project generated the first complete English translation and English-language performance of the *David* material.³

This article will explore the 2017 production *The David Fragments*—staged at the Samuel Beckett Theatre (Dublin) and the Greenwood Theatre (London)—from multiple perspectives. First, it will address the impact of the Bible on Brecht as a young writer and some of his reference points for *David*, noting the divergence from the biblical tradition that is apparent in Brecht's handling of the characters. Second, it will identify the dramaturgical sources and methods used to create the new adaptation. Third, it will identify the methods of ensemble-based practice-as-research (PaR) that were used to explore these challenging texts through rehearsal and performance. Finally, it will reflect on how Brecht's theatrical and philosophical

legacy might be developed through such interdisciplinary and ensemble-based research practices.

Brecht and the Bible

The Bible exerted a strong influence on Brecht throughout his life, and its stories reappear continuously in different contexts. Writing in his diary on October 20, 1916, Brecht shows an early interest in the David story in an entry that begins: "I am reading the Bible. I am reading it out loud, chapter by chapter, but without stopping: Job and the Kings. It is incomparably beautiful, powerful, but an evil book. It is so evil that one becomes evil and hard oneself, and knows that life is not unjust, but rather just, and that this is not comfortable, but rather terrifying."⁴ When Bertolt Brecht was asked in a 1928 interview with the Berlin magazine *Die Dame* which work of world literature had exerted the greatest influence on him, he answered: "You will laugh: The Bible."⁵ That Brecht expected the interviewer to find such an answer laughable says much about Brecht's own awareness that the Bible's influence on the plays for which he had already become well-known was neither conspicuous nor uncomplicated. In *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Threepenny Opera*), for instance, which had premiered in Berlin barely a month earlier, while the Bible is referred to and quoted not infrequently, the tone is satirical and the setting contemporary. Yet Brecht's interest in the Bible and attraction to it is evident in his very earliest work, where it features much less obliquely. Indeed, his first play, published in the pages of an Augsburg student magazine in 1914 while Brecht was still only fifteen, was entitled simply *Die Bibel* (*The Bible*). Set in the Netherlands during the Thirty Years War, this one-act play is—perhaps predictably—saturated in biblical quotations, gently problematizing a young girl's Christ-like desire to sacrifice herself for her town but robustly rejecting the religious legalism of the grandfather who succeeds in thwarting her.⁶ That the Bible should have made a deep impression on the young Brecht is not surprising given how prominently it featured in his school curriculum, which served to acquaint Brecht and his fellow pupils with the biblical David amongst other characters.⁷ Yet the journal entry of October 20, 1916 also reflects Brecht's willingness to depart from the canonical David of his school curriculum: "I believe David killed the son of Bathsheba himself, of whom it was said that he was killed by God (who could do nothing about the sins of David), because David feared God and wanted to calm the people. It is evil to believe that; but the Bible may believe it too, it is full of deceit, as true as it is."⁸ By March of 1919, it was known in Brecht's circle (and specifically recalled by his friends Caspar Neher and Otto Münsterer) that Brecht had begun writing a "new drama" focused on David, Bathsheba, and Absalom.⁹ The fullness of Münsterer's description suggests not only that the considerable amount of material Brecht had already produced by December of

1919 included Bathsheba falling in love with Absalom,¹⁰ but also that this material was related to, but not overlapping with, the fragments which were found in his notebooks, which seem to have been written between January and the summer of 1920.¹¹ While the *BFA* lists the collection under the title "David," a variety of other titles appear in the notebooks: first "Absalom und Der Beauftragte Gottes" ("Absalom and God's Chosen One") and "David und Bath-Seba: Absalom" ("David and Bathsheba: Absalom") appear in 1919, followed by "David bei den Adlern" ("David among the Eagles") and "Der Sieger und der Befreite" ("The Victor and the Liberated") from 1920 onward.¹²

That the stories relating to David and Saul had captured the imagination of Brecht may be explained in part by the general fascination these traditions exerted over playwrights whom the young Brecht admired and, in some cases, knew personally. Perhaps the one playwright Brecht revered most, Frank Wedekind, was waylaid by the book of Judges (*Simson*; publ. Müller, 1914), but Lion Feuchtwanger, whom Brecht had sought out in Munich in early 1919, had by that time already staged short dramas about Saul (*König Saul/King Saul*) and Bathsheba (*Das Weib des Urias/The Wife of Uriah*).¹³ Perhaps even more significant was Brecht's acquaintance with the biblical plays of André Gide. While Brecht's estimation of Gide and his work in later years was badly affected by Gide's eventual disaffection with the Soviet experiment, Gide's own biblical play *Bethsabé* made a very positive impression on the twenty-one-year-old Brecht, judging from his review of Gide's play which appeared in the Augsburg newspaper *Volkswille* on October 21, 1919:¹⁴ "Surprisingly beautiful, Andre Gidé's *Bathsheba*, a fine painting of an ivory tower with roots in the soul of a shocking profundity. Here culture, literature, and consciousness end in a marvellous unity of pure harmony."¹⁵ If, as seems likely, the young Brecht read Franz Blei's German translation of Gide's *Bathsheba* (published in 1908 in the journal *Hyperion* and republished by Kiepenheuer in 1920), then it is quite possible that he also read Felix Paul Greve's translation of Gide's other play based on the books of Samuel: *Saul* (1903).¹⁶ What makes this more than probable is the remarkable similarity between Gide's scene of Saul and David and Brecht's own effort.¹⁷ All of this suggests that when Brecht writes on August 23, 1920, "Den David im Schädel"¹⁸ (in Willett's translation, "Can't get David out of my head"¹⁹), it surely reflects the fact that David was also very much "in the air."

In the fragments that don't contain full scenes or indicate that Brecht is still working through possible outlines, there is a considerable (though not exclusive) interest in Absalom, while in the more fully-fledged scenes (B9 and B10) the protagonists are Saul and David respectively. In all cases, the approach to the biblical characters often departs noticeably from the biblical tradition. For example, while Brecht's interest in Absalom includes especially the latter's extraordinary death in the forest of Ephraim as

recounted in the eighteenth chapter of the biblical 2 Samuel, A1's scheme of scenes appears to collapse events concerning David, Uriah, and Bathsheba with Absalom's rebellion, despite the latter having nothing to do with either Uriah or his wife in the biblical tradition.²⁰ In B9, David's playing of the lyre before Saul reflects the biblical tradition, as does Saul's attempt to kill David. However, the ire of the Brechtian Saul caused by David's spurning of Saul's homoerotic overtures owes more to Gide than the biblical tradition. Similarly, in B10 the Brechtian David's disinterest in fighting against Philistines, insolence toward his father, and general celebration of indolence suggest not merely interpretation of the biblical tradition but rather subversion of it.

The findings of the initial dramaturgical research into the genesis of Brecht's *David* suggested the terrain that we then sought to explore with the ensemble, and in a sense conditioned the research questions that we brought into the studio. Our ensemble praxis sought to identify embodied approaches that would "stage" three hypotheses: 1) The young Brecht was deeply affected and influenced by the Bible (though this is obvious from any reading of his diaries and demonstrated convincingly by Eberhard Rohse and others, we wished to test these resonances "in the wild" as the fragments were performed); 2) Brecht interpreted the biblical tradition in strategic and personally/emotionally justified ways, using it to his own non-conformist ends in a manner associated both with the German tradition and aesthetic modernism: namely, the irreverent rewriting of canonical works; 3) Brecht identified layers of contemporary German history as somehow tied into the Biblical narrative and imbricated these into certain conflicts, relationships, settings, and actions of the fragments. Even the place-name of Gad, named in the fragments as a site of battle with the Philistines and perhaps derived from the Tribe of Gad on the east side of the Jordan River c. 1050 BCE, seems to echo in Brecht's later use of "Ga" as a stand-in for "Germany."²¹

Expanding Sources

There is a traditional style of performance that is automatically counted as part of our cultural heritage, although it only harms the true heritage, the work itself; it is really a tradition of damaging the classics. The old masterpieces become, as it were, dustier and dustier with neglect, and the copyists more or less conscientiously include the dust in their replica. What gets lost above all is the classics' original freshness, the element of surprise (in terms of their period), of newness, of productive stimulus that is the hallmark of such works.²²

A long-standing challenge to staging the work of Brecht, especially in the Anglophone world, is that Brecht himself has now attained the status of a classic author, with a widely taught—if not wholly accepted or universally

agreed-upon—set of theoretical practices and staging conventions. Writing at the end of his life about his own irreverent approach to staging classics, Brecht recognized a trap set by the “routine-bound way [of looking] common to the theater of a depraved bourgeoisie,” while also seeking to avoid “purely formal and superficial ‘innovations’ that are foreign to the work.”²³ The fact that Brecht’s *David* has no substantial performance tradition somewhat liberated the ensemble from falling into standard tropes, but there were still two considerable forces exerted on such a process: first, the Bible itself and the impressions or habits that a mainly Irish ensemble might bring to the table when performing characters from Israelite antiquity; second, the theatrical theories of Brecht, which were articulated long after the creation of the *David* texts, but which nonetheless continue to powerfully influence contemporary directing and dramaturgy in Europe. There is always a risk that a “paint-by-numbers” approach to directing Brecht—in brief, putting up a half-height curtain with projected titles and scene introductions, exposing lighting instruments and costume changes, and interpolating a *Gestus* or a V-effect at every possible moment—might worm its way into a process merely by association with the author, rather than as a considered aesthetic response to a text’s inner need. There is also the further danger when staging Brecht’s published and/or translated plays professionally that the restrictions imposed by the contract with the copyright holders and their agents will limit the degree of artistic freedom that can be applied. In other words, one classic author who will not generally withstand the Brechtian treatment of the classics is Brecht himself.

Given this background and the constant danger of creating a “routine” Brechtian work, the *David* project was unusually liberated by both text and context. Since the unfinished fragments are mutually incompatible in terms of structure and inconsistent in narrative and style, they are hardly able to generate prescriptive stage directions. Furthermore, their sequence is the product of editorial rather than authorial intelligence; this meant that the order in which we might set them could be our own, as was the decision about which pieces would be included or excluded. The context of a university theater, fitting the *David* work into ongoing interdisciplinary creative arts practice at Trinity College Dublin, also ensured a supported framework for whatever innovations might have emerged, including a bulwark against the inevitable permissions question. Both European and Irish law are clear on the point that practical research undertaken on the grounds of universities enjoys substantial protection, even if it includes material that is protected by copyright; though publication and public dissemination are more complex, one certainly has the right to work freely with these texts in a studio as part of pedagogy and practice-as-research.

Though its script was intentionally not consulted in the development of our own *David*, the 1995 Berlin production also provides some precedent for not performing the *David* fragments alone. From the reviews and

program notes of that production, it was clear that the Brechtian scenes were interpolated into an Old Testament chronology; our dramaturgical research and directorial compass suggested that this was the wrong approach for us. Though early ensemble workshops explored the atmosphere of the biblical street as a method to enter the world of a text like fragment B10, especially as it related to a community in which violence was a relatively common experience, we discovered early on that the temporal frame of our production was not to be an exclusively biblical one. Reading the Brecht diaries and considering the churn of artistic production among his friends, the fierce intellectual debates in Arthur Kutscher's Munich theatre seminars, Brecht's wild parties, his involvement with the Kammerspiele, and the welter of post-WWI and post-Spartacist Bavaria, we found the context of the texts' composition to be the most engaging touchstone. Finally, a third temporal frame was introduced, never to be forgotten throughout the process: that of 2017, when an audience would be in the room with us to seek to understand why this performance should matter to them and how the issues at stake for Brecht in the Weimar era might resonate with our own time and place.

This tripartite temporal frame led to a more diverse set of textual sources. The first of these to be introduced were the diaries of Brecht from 1919 to 1921, which not only illuminate the origins of the text and speak to his aspirations for the *David* project but also place our work on the play in its social, familial, and political context. For example, writing on September 6, 1920, Brecht notes: "In *David* the real motions of the play need to be linked directly to the political events; all the psychology should be dissolved in action [*Handlung*],—because politics is too interesting to serve as mere props. The audience's palate must be treated so that it relishes whatever is put before it; and this must be done by catering to its pleasures down to the last one. The plot [*Handlung*] has become far too clear and rational."²⁴ The diaries also reveal a probable origin moment for the David and Saul scene that constitutes fragment B9: Brecht relates with disdain his fellow playwright Otto Zarek's reading of a scene between David and Saul from Zarek's own five-act *David*, which would also remain unperformed but was published by Müller Verlag in 1921. On July 27, 1920, Brecht wrote: "Sie sei ihm blutsauer geworden, er habe sie durch eine Intrige möglich gemacht"²⁵ (which Willett translates as "Apparently it had turned sticky and he had made it work by means of plotting"²⁶). Brecht wrote his own Saul-David scene the following day.²⁷ This direct competition between the two writers working on the same material was, it seems, not happening for the first time. Hedda Kuhn, who had introduced Brecht and Zarek around a year before in the context of the Kutscher seminar, reports on a similar competition held over *Karl V* (*Charles V*), in which (again) Zarek offered a pre-written text from his own play of that name, and Brecht wrote a new and strikingly different scene, now lost.²⁸ As many biographical accounts

from the period confirm, Brecht felt himself destined for greatness and was certain of his genius, yet Zarek at the time had the trappings of success: a role as dramaturg at the Kammerspiele and a published play. Our ensemble became interested in the drama inherent in this competition for recognition as well as in the fact that the biblical story was a vehicle for seeking status among two young playwrights of the period. Deploying our ensemble of early-career artists (roughly the same age as Brecht and Zarek at the time), we explored the process of mind whereby a creative (but perhaps egotistical) young artist might enter the identical terrain as another, convinced that they can exploit it to greater effect. We translated Zarek's scene from the published version—also rendering it for the first time into English—and performed its leaden, poetic tone to contrast sharply with Brecht's charismatic singing of his psalms.

Additional sources, then, arose as part of the textual basis for *The David Fragments* during the actual rehearsal and development process. Textually speaking, the dramaturg created three new dramatic scenes centered on the Kammerspiele: the first, a conflict between Brecht and Zarek (related in the diaries); the second, a conflict between Brecht and Hedda Kuhn (biographically related to this period); the third, an address from Otto Falckenberg, artistic director of the Kammerspiele at the time, before an invented “work-in-progress” showing of fragment B10. New material also entered the process, however, through the ensemble practice itself: ideas discussed at meetings with designers, physical explorations from studio work with the cast, and improvisations with physical prompts from the more poetic and oblique A-fragments. It is difficult in such cases to identify a specific genesis, and yet the integration of such “transitional” material is the life-blood of the final work's structure. Often the translated source text or a fragment of historical research brought in by the dramaturg would be a prompt for action, and in a form of what Roman Jakobson called “intersemiotic translation,” this action would enter the performance text.²⁹

Table 1 lists the scenes and sources included in the final adaptation, entitled *The David Fragments*. As this sequence reveals, the final structure remained somewhat fragmentary and variable, in keeping with the source material. As a matter of principle, we did not pursue the dramatic arc of a single chronological narrative, seeking instead a productive tension—or, as it appears in contemporaneous notes, “poetic friction”—between the content of the *David* texts, Brecht's own creative milieu circa 1920, and the live ensemble and audience present at the event in 2017. This interplay between temporal frames was a constant in the performance, generating concomitant variation across styles.

Upon entering the Samuel Beckett Theatre in Dublin, where the first week-long run of *The David Fragments* took place in June 2017, the audience might identify 1920s German jazz music, but they would quickly notice that a contemporary beat and turntable scratch had been added.

Table 1. Structure of the final performance text of *The David Fragments* (2017) with sources

Scene Title	Source Material / Key Performance Systems
Prologue	Brecht's <i>David</i> , A1 / physical improvisation based on textual prompts and rehearsal games
Party	Brecht's <i>David</i> , A2–A6 / physical improvisation progressing, Young Brecht writing
Clowns	Brecht's Diaries / direct audience address from two clowns (entry of September 1, 1920)
Zarek	Composed from research; elements of Zarek's <i>David</i> and Brecht's poetry (in song form)
Brecht's Anonymous	Brecht's Diaries / improvisationally performed by ensemble as though in group therapy
Saul and David	Brecht's <i>David</i> , B9 / staging the composition process, with Brecht writing during scene
Footnote	Composed from research; integration of biblical, 1920, and 2017 frames by ensemble
Hedda	Composed from research; elements of Brecht's diaries
The Street Scene	Brecht's <i>David</i> , B10 / staged as <i>Kammerspiele</i> private work-in-progress showing, 1920
David–End	Performative gesture composed by ensemble; previously titled “Collapse”

Eight ensemble bodies, already on stage performing the improvised “Prologue” as the audience entered, were dressed in 1920s-inspired costumes but were generating a biblically inspired atmosphere, responding communally to physical prompts based on the actions of Absalom, Bathsheba, and David, with the specific source material (Brecht's A-fragments and our own past workshops with them) undetectable by the audience. At the end of the prologue, only the actor playing the young Brecht remained standing (see figure 1), an image that set up a motif of Brecht's persistent survival and adaptation, echoed in the final moments of the piece.

This aggressively avant-garde and somewhat self-serious beginning of the play was immediately punctured by the rapturous applause and heckling of two clowns (visually inspired by Anita Berber and Sebastian Droste, Berlin cabaret performers of the period, but costumed in fragments of WWI uniforms) who had slipped into the theatre with the audience and were now seated among them. Enacting an idea suggested by Brecht in his diary entry of September 1, 1920—“Once I get my hooks on a theatre I shall hire two clowns”³⁰—the clowns served dramaturgically as comic relief but were also licensed to improvise, helping to bridge between temporal frames and supporting scene transitions. The adaptation script described the aesthetic



Figure 1. Young Brecht (James Ireland) with ensemble and title at the end of the Prologue (Photo © Kasia Kaminska).

of the scenography as follows: “The elements should be as simple and as specific as possible—ten wooden chairs, one table, paper, fabric. A large-scale surface for back-projection is desirable, i.e. a cyclorama on which skies, colors, and some titles/messages can be projected.”³¹ A central circle defined the playing-area, with the full ensemble always activated and present outside, even when not performing within the scene.

The first two performance aesthetics on offer—hermetic, experimental modernism and comedic audience address—were then complemented by a third: naturalism, required by this point to clarify the dramatic content setting up the fragments themselves. In the “Zarek” scene, set in the *Kammerspiele*, Brecht arrived to interrupt a flirtatious meeting between Otto Zarek and Siegfried Neuhöfer (director of the Munich publisher Georg Müller). After hearing (and insulting) a piece from Zarek’s *David*, Young Brecht displayed his noted charisma by wildly playing a composition on his guitar entitled “Mounted on the Fairground’s Magic Horses,” whose refrain—“Oh he’s so different”—exposed the audience to the persona of Brecht in this period. What appeared to be a conventionally naturalistic encounter was later somewhat estranged by the recurrence of the same actors in other roles within Brecht’s own fragments: the smarmy paternalism of Neuhöfer becomes Saul, then later Jonathan; the *Kammerspiele* “coffee girl” dismissed by Zarek resurrects later as “The Spirit of German Theatre,” revealing her coffee tray to be a Wagnerian shield. This interplay of multiplicity and malleability of identity within the ensemble is the heart of scene five, entitled “Brecht’s Anonymous” (see figure 2), when Brecht himself becomes plural.



Figure 2. The ensemble during “Brechts Anonymous”
(Photo © Kasia Kaminska).

The “Brechts Anonymous” performance system is based on the confessional and personal tone adopted in an “Alcoholics Anonymous” session, except that the state-of-being-Brecht is the addiction, and all the people in the room (except a facilitator and the clowns) are playing Brecht. Each actor had memorized the same text from Brecht’s diaries—an alarming description of a party—but the sequence and manner of line delivery was improvised each night, generating a freshness and sense of risk. Having constituted the ensemble as the *mind* of Brecht alongside the figure the audience had seen as Young Brecht, the next scene staged the writing process of B9 (David–Saul). His writing gestures amplified by a microphone under his desk, Brecht composed outside the playing area, while the ensemble within the area responded. Audible modifications (words scratched out or changed, based on the original manuscripts of B9) and pauses for contemplation were inserted and performed by the actors playing David and Saul, to firmly establish the dramaturgical relation between creator and creation.

Symbolically, the performers eventually gained the upper hand over the writer, with the whole ensemble overwhelming the writing sound with the chorus to David’s song (“Strong is the Bull”). Then the spear thrown by Saul at the end of the scene shattered the frame, accidentally hitting one of the clowns offstage, leading to a scene we named “Footnote,” in which the actors reacted (adversely) to Brecht’s writing of the David/Saul scene and his general misbehavior, until the arrival of “The Spirit of German Theatre,” who blesses him. After another scene in the Kammerspiele with Hedda Kuhn, doubling as a Bathsheba figure, and the “public” work-in-progress



Figure 3. The ensemble during "Saul and David," with Young Brecht in the foreground (Photo © Kasia Kaminska).

showing of B10, the longest of Brecht's fragments, it is the same spear that falls on the stage at the end of the show, just missing Brecht.

It might seem such a wide aesthetic range explored over a 75-minute production would only produce confusion or ennui. But the shadow of a chronology remained in the journey taken by the central figure of the young Brecht, seen first writing amid a wild party in the first scene (figure 1), then singing his poetry and listening to a poorly written Saul/David scene by Zarek in the fourth scene, then composing his own Saul/David scene in scene six (figure 3), and finally submitting a fragment of *David* for semi-public, work-in-progress consumption in the ninth and penultimate scene. All of these episodes have an approximate historical justification in Brecht's *Diaries*, which were also the source for texts performed within "Brecht's Anonymous" and "Footnote," though these two scenes operated as interstitial material in the contemporary frame and with a more post-dramatic mode of performance, in which verisimilitude is abandoned in favor of dialectic opposition between the source material and the situation on stage, and which relies on the creative intelligence and liveness of the ensemble to the event as it unfolds. The reception of the production suggested that critics were aware of the strange border on which such PaR generally exists, somewhere between the educational and the professional.³² As one review put it in *Draff*: "There is a rare and deliberate intellectual rigour at play in this piece. . . . Any number of potential virtuoso performances are channelled for the greater good. There's a comprehensive accountability in the action. This is evident in the deft details from the careful tenor of the

speech, to the organisation of the stage, to the continual element of the right surprise, as well as allowing for some exquisite moments.”³³ The next section will offer further detail about the context and methods underpinning such ensemble praxis.

Practice-as-Research and the Ensemble

From the beginning of this collaborative investigation into Brecht’s early *David* texts, we imagined that practice-as-research would be a key methodology for understanding the world of the fragments, both in terms of their origin (i.e., as written by Brecht) and their contemporary resonance (i.e., their function in performance). Though its definition and parameters are a persistent site of controversy, both within theater studies and within the institutional context of the contemporary university, the aspiration of PaR is straightforward: to use theater and/or performance techniques as a means of research. As this section will demonstrate, this is not the same as “doing a play” in a professional sense, even though the act of staging theater also involves research or may yield useful insights into the text as such, and even though projects that originate as PaR may end up in front of audiences, framed as professional performance. Rather, as we understand it in the context of recent work at Trinity College Dublin,³⁴ a PaR project is constructed specifically in the academic space (i.e., at a university or in partnership with a university theater); it begins with research questions, designing a series of “experiments” in the “theater laboratory” to be investigated; it constitutes an ensemble of theater artists to explore those questions using time, space, and the body; it sets up ways to capture, document, and reflect on the outcomes of these experiments in a light mimicry of the scientific method; finally, it works to disseminate the insights achieved through both event-based (conferences, workshops, presentations, performances) and object-based (articles, chapters, books) modes of research communication. Conceptually, it is important to position PaR as opening a “third space” between empirical/quantitative and theoretical/qualitative approaches rather than aligning it strictly with one or the other. In fact, PaR can reflect usefully on these traditional “epistemic encampments”³⁵ that often translate into divisions in universities between theory versus practice, Arts and Humanities versus STEM, or “hard” sciences versus “soft” sciences, and intervene in these discourses to call attention to the ways in which all research is, in fact, embodied. Even a biblical scholar embedded in archival work conducts research by engaging in a series of performative physical events—traveling, observing, sitting, writing, perhaps bending over to see a papyrus fragment more clearly—and exists in a social context (the “ensemble”) of networks, conferences, and collaborations. In terms of “absolute value” these are neither substantially more or less *embodied* actions than when actors are stretching, memorizing, singing, dancing, or

playing warm-up games within a community of performers. Thus, PaR at TCD entails a radical redefinition of research: "Research is the strategic deployment of an event to understand or evaluate an object." This definition is designed to apply to all researchers rather than to create a special category for those working in performance: when a physicist enters a laboratory to observe what happens when two particles collide, she draws on embodied expertise to order a complex sequence of "events" with the aim of gathering data on the "object" under analysis. A theater laboratory works in precisely the same way, although the means of validating and documenting results may not have the same precise systems of measurement, instead defining its own modes of establishing rigor and communicating outcomes. That Brecht was essential in the development of such an experimental ethos in the theater makes this method especially appropriate for the development of *The David Fragments*.

One of the characteristics of PaR in the academy, where the strictures of commercial production timetables and budgets are somewhat diminished in force, is an iterative practice of multiple workshops, often held over an uncommonly long period of project gestation. *David* was no exception. Table 2 outlines the stages of the *David* process.

The first reading that involved actors was held December 21, 2015, and it can be considered in retrospect as part of the translation process, more geared toward creating the preconditions for thinking about staging as opposed to a real rehearsal. If there was a research question for this first experiment, it was: "Can the *David* fragments (in this draft translation) be poetically or dramatically engaging?" The ensemble of readers assembled for this purpose was intentionally an experienced and trusted group of past collaborators, including an intergenerational blend of current drama students, recent alumni, and two professional collaborators with whom the director had more than a decade of working history. The moment of hearing a new dramatic translation aloud for the first time is a completely different experience than reading it on the page; it is one of the defining characteristics of translating drama that it must work in the voice of the actor, and a threshold question must be whether it can be received by the ears of an audience without requiring either 1) access to the printed text or 2) extra time for reflection in order to understand it. Branching off from the fundamental focus on how a text *sounds* in translation is the delicate question of what the desired effect of the text is, noting that certain passages could be intended to baffle, upset, or confuse an audience, as often as a text might "seek to please." This issue arises frequently in Brecht's fragments, which contain contradictory, oblique, and difficult material as a matter of course, in which any effort to "make clear" might ironically end up distorting an authorial intention to obfuscate or prevaricate. Additionally, the implications of culture and context undoubtedly change based on the time and place of performance, meaning that translation is not a question

Table 2. Stages of the *David* practice-as-research project, 2015–18

Year and Quarter	Activity
2015, Q2	First meeting between Shepherd and Johnson; initial discussion re the fragments
2015, Q3	Translation work by Johnson, shared and discussed with Shepherd
2015, Q4	First reading of work by past collaborators, assessment/revision of translation
2016, Q1	Planning, reading, and fundraising for workshops/production of <i>The David Fragments</i>
2016, Q2	Announcement of auditions and interviews, formation of ensemble
2016, Q3	First general workshops with ensemble, Output 1: Research Night translation event
2016, Q4	Second round of workshops with ensemble, development of adaptation
2017, Q1	Third round of workshops with ensemble, further adaptation and planning work Output 2: Shepherd lecture on the project at Oxford University
2017, Q2	Output 3: <i>(Un)translatable and (Un)performable</i> conference event; rehearsals
2017, Q3	Outputs 4 & 5: Public performances of <i>David Fragments</i> in Dublin and London
2017, Q4	Assessment and reflection, initial work on dissemination plans
2018, Q1	Output 6: Johnson lecture at Brecht-Tage in Berlin; research and reflection
2018, Q2–Q4	Writing for publications (Outputs 7, 8, and 9—two articles and a monograph)

of language alone. Though it is a truism that all translations occasionally require renewal and revision, for translated drama there is an inherent fidelity to the present audience that can shift the balance away from authorial control over the text.³⁶ Practice-as-research with an experimental ensemble is an expression of this de-centering of power in terms of process: instead of a director dominating a room and instructing actors based on a personal vision of the final product, the collaborators are first identified by a shared curiosity and desire to know, bonded as co-investigators through a conceptual process based on the development of mutual trust, and then introduced to atmospheric or improvisational games or open-ended exercises based on

the source material. By documenting this process rigorously, a performance text based on organic “discoveries” rather than “decisions” can be developed, in line with our understanding of what contemporary theater aesthetics and our obligation to our audience entails. It is through this ethos that we return to fundamental questions of Brecht’s philosophy in the theater and to how the implications of such a working method might be thought in terms of recent readings of Brecht’s living legacy.

Finding Flow

Translating a text that is filled with gaps, converting it into a series of events that are temporally and stylistically disjointed, and marketing the whole thing as “fragments” may seem at first—especially to a reader less informed about, or perhaps less inclined toward, contemporary theater—like a kind of folly. But our quest to ferment *David* within a willing group of reflective early-career practitioners and students, and then to share the distillate with both academic and popular audiences, has precedents within the Brechtian tradition and, we suggest, a range of philosophical, pedagogical, and political implications of interest to the field.

A strand of Brecht scholarship that is attuned to Eastern resonances, especially the work of Fredric Jameson in *Brecht and Method* and the vibrant new edition of the *Me-Ti* by Antony Tatlow, has exposed dynamics of activity—a Brechtian praxis that is at once post-Brecht and pre-Brecht™—that animated our project. Jameson notes how “Brecht is modern first and foremost by way of his discontinuities and his deeper fragmentation: from that dispersal, we can proceed on into a certain unity, but only after having passed through it.”³⁷ Tatlow writes that Brecht’s non-systematic system of aphorisms, parables, and stories in the *Me-Ti* “steps back towards the events behind the events” but also “allow[s] the contradictions they explore to speak for themselves.”³⁸ Seeking to keep faith with Brecht’s critical stance as an ongoing (and necessary) form of activity, both scholars show how an absolutist reading fails Brecht, whose opposition to absolutes in ideology is (almost) Brecht’s only ideology. That this critical stance would inform our work—both with Brecht’s biblical readings and with untranslated and unperformed fragments in general—is both biographically appropriate and geographically resonant in Ireland, where public associations with religion are contentious, and where Brecht’s performance legacy is minimal. The result is a kind of productive layering of voids: the gaps inherent in this text, when translated into embodiments or images, become more available to an audience that is also more receptive, due to their own lack of concrete expectation.

At the practical and pedagogical level, Heiner Müller points the way toward a critical engagement with Brecht within the rehearsal room. In his 2002 article on the adaptation of two lesser-known Brecht fragments by Müller, David Barnett describes a working method that resonates with our own:

The requirement to divide text among the actors encourages active negotiation in the rehearsal process. Here the pre-performance work takes the Brechtian elimination of actor and spectator to its logical conclusion. The actors are exposed to the experience of the text as a whole and are able to play, observe, re-structure and re-play without authorial restriction. . . . However, he does offer the actors and directors an opportunity to approach the text in a fashion which leaves fundamental questions open and invites actors to experiment and criticize in a manner conceptualized but never fully realized by Brecht.³⁹

Using such methods on texts that are not necessarily complete, author-approved, or intended for performance is already a recognized mode of theater teaching and of laboratory practice. Our experience suggests that these interventions also can produce research that challenges the borders between disciplines, methodologies, and institutions. In preparation, we depend on the *David von* (by) Brecht, but in performance, we cast our lot with a *David nach* (after) Brecht. His *David* fragments, polished in our circle with the *Ermattungstaktik* (tactics of attrition) of praxis, flow onward into a new work, *The David Fragments*, that we hope reflects the dialectics of our time, our place, and our ensemble: incomplete but decisive, singular but multiple, biblical but Brechtian.

Notes

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¹ See diary entry of July 27, 1920: "Mit Zarek zusammen, Bazarek. Er ist nicht so klug, als ich mir vorgestellt hatte, im Schöpferischen ist er ganz begriffstutzig. Außerdem hat er einen verflucht unplastischen Stil. Ich singe meine Lieder, und er erzählt eine Szene aus einem 'David' (David vor Saul)." This is followed by the next day's diary entry, July 28, 1920: "Die Szene *Saul-David* geschrieben." See "Tagebuch 1920," *BFA* 26, 130. Willett translates these passages: "Met Zarek, Bazarek. He's not as clever as I'd expected, creatively speaking he has a conceptual block. On top of that he has a damned rigid style. I sang some of my songs and he described a scene from his *David* (David before Saul)." The next day: "Wrote the Saul-David scene." See Bertolt Brecht, *Diaries 1920–1922*, ed. Herta Ramthun, trans. John Willett (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979), 12–13.

² In 1919 and 1920, Brecht was seeking avenues into the Kammerspiele by sharing his plays *Spartakus* and *Baal* with Lion Feuchtwanger, whom Klaus Völker names as "dramatic adviser to the Kammerspiele in Munich" (32). This resulted in Feuchtwanger sharing the (re-titled) script of *Drums in the Night* with the Kammerspiele dramaturg Rudolf Frank in 1920, leading ultimately to its first performance in September 1922 in the production directed by Otto Falckenberg. See Klaus Völker, *Brecht: A Biography*, trans. John Nowell (London: Marion Boyars, 1979), 32–33.

³ In addition to the editorial notes provided in "Kommentar: David," *BFA* 10.2, 1013, the fragments have been discussed substantially in David Jobling, "'David on the Brain': Bertolt Brecht's Projected Play 'David,'" in *The Fate of King David: The Past and Present of a Biblical Icon*, ed. Tod Linafelt, Claudia V. Camp, and Timothy Beal (London: T. & T. Clark, 2010), 229–40.

⁴ Author translation of the entry for October 20, 1916: "Ich lese die Bibel. Ich lese sie laut, kapitelweise, aber ohne auszusetzen: Hiob und die Könige. Sie ist unvergleichlich schön, stark, aber ein böses Buch. Sie ist so böse, dass man selber böse und hart wird und weiß, dass das Leben nicht ungerecht, sondern gerecht ist und dass das nicht angenehm ist, sondern fürchterlich." See "Tagebuch 1916," *BFA* 26, 107.

⁵ "Der stärkste Eindruck," *BFA* 21, 248.

⁶ See "Die Bibel," *BFA* 1, 9–15, for the text of the play; for a discussion, see *Brecht Handbuch*, vol. 1: *Stücke*, ed. Jan Knopf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), 67–69.

⁷ For extensive historical documentation and analysis of the Brecht/Bible relation, see Eberhard Rohse, *Der frühe Brecht und die Bibel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997).

⁸ Author translation of the entry for October 20, 1916: "Ich glaube David hat den Sohn der Bathseba selber getötet, von dem es heißt, dass Gott ihn getötet hat (der doch für die Sünde Davids nichts konnte), weil David Gott fürchtete und das Volk beruhigen wollte. Es ist böse, das zu glauben; aber die Bibel glaubt es vielleicht auch, sie ist voller Hinterlist, so wahr sie ist." "Tagebuch 1916," *BFA* 26, 107.

⁹ "Kommentar: David," *BFA* 10.2, 1013.

¹⁰ Hans Otto Münsterer, *The Young Brecht*, trans. Tom Kuhn and Karen J. Leeder (London: Libris, 1992), 80.

¹¹ Author translation of the comments of the editors of the *BFA* 10.2, 1014: “As far as the context permits a statement about the time of origin, the notebook entries A1–A3 and B2–B6 originate at the earliest from January 1920. Together with A4, A5, B1, B7, and B8, they belong to a first stage of work that centers on the relationship between David, Absalom, and Bathsheba and is concluded not later than mid-1920. The 1919 prose text ‘*Absalom reitet durch den Wald*’ oder ‘*Der öffentliche Mann*’ aus den ‘*Gesichten des Berthold Brecht*’ (*BFA* 19), belongs only indirectly, from the point of view of content, to this context.”

¹² See Bertolt Brecht, *Notizbücher*, vol. 1: 1918–1920, ed. Martin Kölbel and Peter Villwock (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), 370–74, for useful discussion of the project’s genesis in these years.

¹³ Our research uncovered evidence of performances in 1905 and 1906, but the publication history of these plays is disputed: Müller Verlag was meant to have published them. See Roland Jaeger, “Auf der Suche nach einem Phantom: Lion Feuchtwangers ‘Kleine Dramen,’” in *Newsletter of the International Feuchtwanger Society*, vol. 21 (2016): 13–19.

¹⁴ Münsterer notes that “In December 1920 Brecht included a brief recommendation of André Gide’s *Bathsheba* in a review for the *Volkswille*” (80).

¹⁵ Author translation of Foucart’s French translation of the German. See Claude Foucart, “L’Ulysse français et son odyssée intellectuelle: André Gide vu par Bertolt Brecht,” *Bulletin des Amis d’André Gide*, X.56 (1982): 482.

¹⁶ André Gide, “Saul,” *Schaubühne* 3, no. 32 (August 8, 1907), 105–10. Pages 105–6 are an introduction signed by the translator, Felix Paul Greve.

¹⁷ This reading is conducted in detail in David Shepherd and Nicholas Johnson, *Bertolt Brecht and the David Fragments (1919–21): An Interdisciplinary Study* (London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming).

¹⁸ “Tagebuch 1920,” *BFA* 26, 139.

¹⁹ Bertolt Brecht, *Diaries 1920–1922*, ed. Herta Ramthun, trans. John Willett (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979), 21.

²⁰ For Brecht’s interest in the death of Absalom see, for instance, A1, A2, B3, and B5 in “David,” *BFA* 10.1, 121–27; for further discussion of the resonances of Brecht’s Absalom in comparison with the biblical portrait, see Shepherd and Johnson, *The David Fragments*, forthcoming.

²¹ See the list of attributable names in Bertolt Brecht’s *Me-Ti: Book of Interventions in the Flow of Things*, ed. and trans. Antony Tatlow (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2016), 41.

²² Bertolt Brecht, “Classical Status as an Intimidating Factor,” in *Brecht on Theatre*, 3rd ed., ed. Marc Silberman, Steve Giles, and Tom Kuhn (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), 321–22.

²³ *Ibid.*, 322.

²⁴ Brecht, *Diaries 1920–1922*, 39. Cf. “Tagebuch 1920,” *BFA* 26, 157.

²⁵ “Tagebuch 1920,” *BFA* 26, 130.

²⁶ Brecht, *Diaries 1920–1922*, 12.

²⁷ See BBA 459/14r for dated title page, confirmed in the entry for July 28, 1920, “Die Szene Saul-David geschrieben.” “Tagebuch 1920,” *BFA* 26, 130.

²⁸ Hedda Kuhn is quoted: “In München, in meinem Zimmer in der Adalbertstraße, haben wir, Zarek, Brecht und ich, eine Art Sängerwettstreit veranstaltet. Jeder hat eine Szene über Karl V. zu schreiben. Zarek tat sich leicht, weil er nur etwas aus seinem gleichnamigen Stück zu nehmen brauchte. Auch Brecht hatte etwas geschrieben, darin hatte er an dem Kaiser kein gutes Haar gelassen. Ich wollte deshalb Brecht den Lorbeer zusprechen, aber wir erzielten keine Einigung. Wo die damals geschriebene Szene von Brecht geblieben ist, weiß ich nicht.” Werner Frisch and K. W. Obermaier, *Brecht in Augsburg: Erinnerungen, Dokumente, Texte, Fotos* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1986), 127–28. (Author translation: “In Munich, in my room in the Adalbertstraße, we—Zarek, Brecht, and I—staged a kind of song contest. Each one has to write a scene about Karl V. Zarek did it easily, because he just had to take something out of his play of that name. Brecht also wrote something, in which he tore the Kaiser apart. For that I wanted to judge him the victor, but we couldn’t reach agreement. Where the scenes Brecht wrote at that time are now, I don’t know.”)

²⁹ Intersemiotic translation is a key concept in our PaR, enabling the generation of performance material out of almost any type of source. Jakobson also calls this process “transmutation,” for example when a verbal sign is turned into something non-verbal. See Roman Jakobson, *Language in Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 428–35.

³⁰ Brecht, *Diaries 1920–1922*, 32.

³¹ David Shepherd and Nicholas Johnson, *The David Fragments* after Bertolt Brecht, rehearsal script (Adaptation June 6, 2017).

³² The Beckett Theatre, as a Dublin city-center venue that is also on a campus, alternately produces student work (during term) and indigenous/international professional theatre (out of term), so audiences are often unsure what type/level of practice they might encounter there. Our ensemble blended established professionals with current students and recent alumni; the total production budget of €17,000 and the presence of compensation strongly hints at a professional production, though the university funding and research-oriented context differentiates it from most state-sector or independent-sector projects.

³³ Martin Sharry, “Review of *The David Fragments*,” *Draff*, June 29, 2017. <https://www.draff.net/the-david-fragments.html> (accessed January 5, 2019).

³⁴ Major TCD PaR projects with interdisciplinary elements that preceded and informed the *David Fragments* project include the Samuel Beckett Laboratory (founded in 2013 but conducting ongoing research, with publications to date in *Journal of Beckett Studies* and *Research in Drama Education*), *Enemy of the Stars* after Wyndham Lewis (2014–15, publication in *BLAST* at 100), and *Love à la Mode* after Charles Macklin (2017–18, publication forthcoming).

³⁵ Jonathan Heron and Nicholas Johnson, “Critical Pedagogies and the Theatre Laboratory,” *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 22.2 (2017), 282.

³⁶ For an elaboration of this argument in terms of dramatic translation, see Nicholas Johnson, “On Translating Ernst Toller’s *Die Maschinenstürmer*,” *Trinity Journal of Literary Translation*, Vol II (2014): 76–91.

³⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso, 1998), 6.

³⁸ Tatlow, “Introduction,” *Me-Ti*, 39.

³⁹ David Barnett, “Heiner Müller as the End of Brechtian Dramaturgy: Müller on Brecht in Two Lesser-Known Fragments,” *Theatre Research International*, 27.1 (2002): 52.

Introduction: Pure Joke

Christian Kirchmeier and Katrin Trüstedt

This special section on comedy since Brecht argues that the rise of performativity and theatricality that we have experienced over the past century was largely enabled by what we might call a comic *dispositif*. This comic *dispositif* forged beyond the illusionistic dramatical and cultural forms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and has greatly shaped the performative strategies of modern theater, such as dispensing with illusionistic representation, breaking with realistic role-playing, foregrounding various media instead of hiding them, playing with self-reflexivity, and calling on the diverse community within the theatrical space. It is astonishing how influential comedy has been and how it has nonetheless remained theoretically marginalized.

The papers in this section examine the function of comic devices in theater since Brecht. They explore theoretical and philosophical concepts of comedy, explore comedy's impact on contemporary theater, reflect on comic traditions (from Old Greek Comedy to *commedia dell'arte* and Romantic comedy), and show how these traditions continue to inform modern plays. In doing so, they not only examine theater in recent history but also investigate how the comic can tell us something about the aesthetical, philosophical, and political implications of theater today.

There have been very few theories of comedy that have not been, in one way or another, grounded in a theory of tragedy. Yet these theories moved beyond tragedy to develop influential concepts—like the concept of improvisation and “free play,” or the call to break down the fourth wall. Ludovico Riccoboni's history of *commedia dell'arte*,¹ Justus Möser's defense of Harlequin,² Adam Müller's lecture on Aristophanes,³ Friedrich Schlegel's concept of “beautiful joy” (“schöne Freude”),⁴ G. W. F. Hegel's “end of art” thesis,⁵ and Alenka Zupančič's contemporary philosophy of comedy⁶ are among the rare attempts to probe the essence of the comic on stage.

Things would obviously be different if Aristotle's book on comedy had not been lost. One can easily imagine that the poetics of drama would have developed quite differently if we had not had to rely quite so much on concepts such as *mimesis* and *katharsis* to describe dramatic texts and theater. The dominance of the tragic tradition is still noticeable in Walter Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. And yet, as Benjamin writes, even in the mourning play, the comic is hidden on the inside:

"Comedy—or more precisely: the pure joke—is the essential inner side of mourning which from time to time, like the lining of a dress at the hem or lapel, makes its presence felt."⁷

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, playwrights and theater artists have been influenced by the tradition of stage comedy more than by theories of comedy. They have taken up a tradition rooted in Aristophanes and the *commedia dell'arte*, rather than Terence or the German *Lustspiel*. Bertolt Brecht is a key figure in this development. During his early years in Munich, he performed with Karl Valentin, whom he described as Germany's Charlie Chaplin, and who proved a great influence on Brecht himself as well as on Samuel Beckett. It might not be surprising that shortly before his death in 1956, Brecht told Giorgio Strehler (another towering figure of modern comedy) that epic theater should always be staged in the style of a comedy.⁸

Further examples for the comic tradition in theater since Brecht are ready at hand: Luigi Pirandello chose comedies and humor to reflect upon modern drama;⁹ Friedrich Dürrenmatt stated that comedy alone would be suitable for societies after World War II;¹⁰ Heiner Müller characterized most of his plays as "relatively comic";¹¹ and comedic elements are, of course, ubiquitous in the plays of Thomas Bernhard, Botho Strauß, Tom Stoppard, Yasmina Reza, and many others. Even in the postdramatic theater of authors such as René Pollesch and Elfriede Jelinek, many characteristic theatrical devices can be traced back to various comedic traditions.

The aim of this section is to explore how comic devices became influential in the theater of the past century, and to discuss why modern theater so often disrupts the dramatic plot, breaks the fourth wall, demands improvisation, addresses the audience directly, or deploys metatheatrical self-reflection. Furthermore, it tries to show how these devices, which revive distinguished comic traditions, have become vital not only for the aesthetics of contemporary theater but also for the place of theater at large in modern and (post-)postmodern societies.

Notes

¹ Luigi Riccoboni, *Histoire du théâtre italien*, 2 vols. (Paris: André Cailleau, 1730–31).

² Justus Möser, *Harlekin oder Verteidigung des Groteske=Komischen*, in *Sämtliche Werke. 1. Abteilung: Dichterisches Werk, philosophische und kritische Einzelschriften*, vol. 2: *Gedichte, Drama: Arminius, Vermischte Schriften, Teil I*, ed. Oda May (Oldenburg: Stallung, 1981), 306–42.

³ Adam Müller, "Ironie, Lustspiel, Aristophanes," in *Kritische, ästhetische und philosophische Schriften I*, ed. Walter Schroeder and Werner Siebert (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1967), 233–48.

⁴ Friedrich Schlegel, “Vom ästhetischen Werte der griechischen Komödie,” in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, vol. I/1, ed. Ernst Behler (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1979), 19–33.

⁵ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik III* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 572.

⁶ Alenka Zupančič, *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), 125–26. In the German original, Benjamin writes about the comic (“Das Komische”), not about comedy, as the translation suggests.

⁸ Cf. Bertolt Brechts *Dreigroschenbuch: Texte, Materialien, Dokumente* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1960), 134.

⁹ Cf. Pirandello’s trilogy of the theater in the theater (*Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* [Six Characters in Search of an Author], *Ciascuno a suo modo* [Each in His Own Way], and *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* [Tonight We Improvise]) and his essay on humor, *L'Umore* (Lanciano: Carabba, 1908).

¹⁰ Friedrich Dürrenmatt, “Theaterprobleme,” in *Theater. Essays, Gedichte und Reden* (Zurich: Verlag der Arche, 1980), 62.

¹¹ “Nun, ich finde ja fast alle meine Stücke relativ komisch” (“Well, almost all of my plays seem relatively comical to me”). Heiner Müller, “Was ein Kunstwerk kann, ist Sehnsucht wecken nach einem anderen Zustand der Welt” (“A work of art can awake a longing for a different state of the world”), in *Werke*, vol. 10: *Gespräche I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 277.

“. . . und alle Fragen offen”: Über den Epilog des *Guten Menschen von Sezuan* und Bertolt Brechts Poetik der Unterbrechung

Der Epilog zu *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* wurde oft als Exempel für Brechts “Didaktik” gelesen. Dagegen schlägt dieser Beitrag vor, ihn als Entfaltung des Problems zu verstehen, wie eine solche Didaktik des Theaters überhaupt möglich ist. Dazu werden zwei historische Typen des Epilogs unterschieden: Mit dem ersten Typus versucht das Theater eine soziale Wirkung zu erzielen, indem der Epilog eine möglichst gut übertragbare Moral eines Stücks wiederholt. Die Epiloge des zweiten Typus erfüllen hingegen nur die Funktion, das Ende der Aufführung zu markieren und so einen deutlichen Bruch zwischen Theater und Welt zu erzeugen. Brecht zitiert den ersten Typus, wenn er den Sprecher des Epilogs nach einer moralischen Wirkung des Theaters suchen lässt. Doch wenn er auf seiner Suche nach einem “guten Schluss” scheitert, wird die Ähnlichkeit des Epilogs zum zweiten Typus offenbar: Das Theater kann Gesellschaft lediglich stören, es bleibt aber ohne moralische Konsequenzen. An die Stelle einer moralischen Lehre tritt bei Brecht somit eine Poetik der Unterbrechung—die allerdings gerade die Didaktik Brechts ausmacht.

The epilogue of *The Good Person of Szechwan* has often been interpreted as an example of Brecht’s “didactics.” This article, by contrast, proposes to understand the epilogue as the unfolding of the problem how the possibility of such a didactics of theater can be conceived of in the first place. To that end, this article distinguishes between two historical types of epilogue: With epilogues of the first type the theater tries to achieve a social effect by repeating the easily communicable moral of a play, while epilogues of the second type mark the end of the performance and thus create a clear break between the play and the world outside of the theater. Brecht invokes the first type when he makes the speaker of the epilogue search for the moral impact of the play. But when the speaker fails in the search for a “good ending,” the similarity of this epilogue to the second type becomes apparent: The theater can only disrupt society, but it will never have long-term moral consequences. In Brecht’s work moral teachings are thus superseded by a poetics of interruption—which exactly constitutes Brecht’s didactics.

“ . . . All Questions Remain Open”: On the Epilogue of *The Good Person of Szechwan* and Bertolt Brecht’s Poetics of Interruption

Christian Kirchmeier

The epilogue to Bertolt Brecht’s¹ *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* (*The Good Person of Szechwan*) has significantly helped to define the paradigm of epic theater:

Epilog

*Vor den Vorhang tritt ein Spieler und wendet sich
entschuldigend an das Publikum mit einem Epilog.*

DER SPIELER

Verehrtes Publikum, jetzt kein Verdruss:
Wir wissen wohl, das ist kein rechter Schluss.
Vorschwebte uns: die goldene Legende.
Unter der Hand nahm sie ein bitteres Ende.
Wir stehen selbst enttäuscht und sehn betroffen
Den Vorhang zu und alle Fragen offen.
Dabei sind wir doch auf Sie angewiesen
Dass Sie bei uns zu Haus sind und genießen.
Wir können es uns leider nicht verhehlen:
Wir sind bankrott, wenn Sie uns nicht empfehlen!
Vielleicht fiel uns aus lauter Furcht nichts ein.
Das kam schon vor. Was könnt die Lösung sein?
Wir konnten keine finden, nicht einmal für Geld.
Soll es ein andrer Mensch sein? Oder eine andre Welt?
Vielleicht nur andere Götter? Oder keine?
Wir sind zerschmettert und nicht nur zum Scheine!
Der einzige Ausweg wär aus diesem Ungemach:
Sie selber dächten auf der Stelle nach
Auf welche Weis dem guten Menschen man
Zu einem guten Ende helfen kann.
Verehrtes Publikum, los, such dir selbst den Schluss!
Es muss ein guter da sein, muss, muss, muss!²

Epilogue

A Player steps in front of the curtain and, apologetically, addresses the audience with an epilogue.

THE PLAYER

Dear audience, don't be displeased:
We know, this wasn't much of a conclusion.
We had in mind: The Golden Legend,
Which, underhandedly, came to a bitter end.
We stand here, disillusioned, and are stunned to see
That even though the curtain has been closed, all questions remain
open.
And yet, we do depend on you
To feel at home—and to enjoy yourselves—with us.
We sadly can't deceive ourselves:
If you won't recommend us, we'll go bankrupt!
Perhaps, because of fear, we couldn't think of anything.
That's happened on occasion. Though what might be the answer?
We couldn't find one, not even for money.
Should it be a different kind of person? Or a different world?
Perhaps just different gods? Or none?
We're battered, and this is no pretense!
The only way to exit this adversity would be:
For you to contemplate immediately
How the good person could be helped
To reach a good conclusion.
Dear audience, go, and look for it yourself!
There must be a good ending—must, must, must!³

The play is a parable (a "Parabelstück," as the subtitle notes) that explores whether there can be (as Theodor W. Adorno put it) a "right life in the wrong one,"⁴ or, more precisely, whether one can lead a good life in a society based on economic exploitation. Yet Brecht's play disappointingly concludes that there is no solution. It provides little hope for its protagonist, Shen Te, who neither succeeds in becoming the good person of Sezuang nor is rescued by her *alter ego*, Shui Ta. To make matters worse, even the gods vanish, spirited away as *dei ex machina* on a pink cloud when they fail in their quest to find a good person.

The situation is rather dire when the curtain falls. The play then concludes with an epilogue which has been interpreted by many literary critics as a typical instance of Brecht's didactic theater. The audience is supposed to grasp the play's ethical contradictions and conclude that the underlying problem is not personal agency but capitalism.⁵ This idea is elaborated in the *Brecht Handbuch* by Jan Knopf, who comments on the play's demand for change:

Die mögliche Veränderung aber findet nicht mehr—das wäre bloßes Wunschenken und seinerseits Ideologie—auf der Bühne statt, sie kann nur den Zuschauern, welche die Konsequenz erkannt haben, übereignet werden, wie es der Epilog auch tut. Der “offene” Schluss verweist demnach darauf, dass die Kunst ihre Grenze an den real herrschenden Verhältnissen, die für die Zuschauer gelten, findet und sie sich weder mit Wirklichkeit noch gar mit gesellschaftlicher Praxis verwechselt. Was sie lediglich kann, ist, in einem Modell oder Experiment, das der Offenlegung der Funktionsgesetze der Gesellschaft dient, die real gegebenen Widersprüche ästhetisch zur Anschauung zu bringen und damit zu helfen, sie für die Zuschauer erkennbar werden zu lassen.⁶

The potential change does not take place on stage—that would be mere wishful thinking and a return to ideology. It can only be assigned to the spectators, who have realized the consequences, just as the epilogue does. The “open” end thus points to the fact that art reaches its limits when it arrives at the true conditions of hegemony which govern the spectators, and cannot mistake itself for reality or social practice. Art can only produce a model or experiment that discloses the functional laws of society and thereby lays bare actual systemic contradictions in an aesthetic manner, making them recognizable to the spectators. (Trans. C.K.)

This interpretation raises a few questions. One might wonder, for example, whether “potential changes” ever took place on stage in the history of theater. Most bourgeois dramas satisfied their audiences by portraying the downfall of a tragic hero who left the world of the play unchanged. One could also challenge Knopf’s implicit separation of art and reality. On one hand, he suggests that there is a wide gulf between both spheres by claiming that art “cannot mistake itself” for reality. On the other hand, the play can only produce its intended critical effect if spectators “mistake” the fictional world for reality and identify similar functional laws in both realms. Without making this mistake, they will not be able to recognize “real” social contradictions—and this is, of course, what Knopf indicates with the concept of an aesthetic “model” or “experiment” that mediates between the reality of the spectators and of the play. If Brecht were simply repeating the same “experiment” over and over again, Gert Ueding would be right in calling the permanent repetition of the same ethical problem “undialectical” and “schematic.”⁷ In this case, Brecht’s didactic theater would reproduce ideology in a similar manner to bourgeois theater.

In this article I will demonstrate that the intricate relationship between art and reality (or rather between staged reality and the reality of the “real world”) is at the heart of the epilogue of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* and is crucial for Brecht’s epic theater as a whole. Brecht’s theater is didactic

not because it transfers moral lessons from the stage to the real world, but because it uses theater as a medium to interrupt the orthodox understanding of social normativity. The first part of my argument will focus on the concept of the word "epilogue" itself; I will then continue to its rhetorical use and examine two types of epilogue in the early history of drama before rereading Brecht's text.

Logos and Praxis

Epilogues had long been established rhetorical devices before they came into use as concluding pieces of plays, novels, and films. This heritage is important because literary epilogues contain a problem that stems from this rhetorical tradition: every rhetorical epilogue is in itself a *logos-epi-logos*, a speech-on-speech. In other words, rhetorical epilogues are self-referential because they use language to refer to language.

The rhetorical epilogue thus troubles the relationship between signifier and signified. Put simply, we tend to think that the way in which language refers to an object maintains a separation between language and world. But when language is used to refer to other products of language, the strict separation between language and world dissolves, since language is signifier and signified at the same time. In the case of *ἐπίλογος*, which most broadly refers to any speech related to an action, this self-referentiality challenges the separation of the referential and performative functions of language, or *logos* and *praxis*.

This becomes clearer when we turn to the earliest instances of the word *ἐπίλογος*, which relate to its rhetorical use, predominantly in forensic speech. In court, speeches are used to induce non-verbal consequences such as punishment or acquittal. Put in traditional rhetorical terms, forensic speech is not just *narratio*, a locutionary act that reconstructs the case. The whole point of forensic speech is the *peroratio*, the perlocutionary effect in which consequences are demanded. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle quotes the epilogue to Lysias's speech against Eratosthenes to exemplify the switch from *narratio* to *peroratio*: "I have spoken; you have listened; you have [the facts]; you judge."⁸

It is not by coincidence that the final word in the speech is *κρίνατε*, "you decide." In forensic speech, the epilogue marks the moment of decision, the moment when language leads to action and *logos* turns into *praxis*. One could call this the "Carl Schmitt effect," since Schmitt developed a theory of decision to address concerns about never-ending talk and the unbridgeable hiatus between speech and action.

To mediate between *logos* and *praxis*, the epilogue must combine two modes of speech that I will tentatively call "continuity" and "rupture." On one hand, the epilogue uses textual repetition to simulate continuity between speech and consequential action. On the other hand, the epilogue interrupts

the speech to open up a space for decision-making, thus emphasizing the rupture between the "What has been said?" of *logos* and the "What is to be done?" of *praxis*.

A comprehensive theory of the epilogue would have to deconstruct its paradoxical structure and invert the opposition of *logos* and *praxis* (because every utterance of *logos* is in itself *praxis* and every *praxis* has an implied *logos*). It seems to me, however, that in the history of the epilogue as a theatrical device, all epilogues address the problem of the relation between *logos* and *praxis* in a way that tells us something about the aesthetic paradigm of their time. This history will help to illuminate the aesthetical and political function of Brecht's epilogue.

Continuity and Rupture

The history of the theatrical epilogue is marked by discontinuity.⁹ From early modern drama until the eighteenth century, prologues and epilogues were considered integral components of drama, particularly in Reformation and post-Reformation England.¹⁰ However, German classical drama chose to dispense with the epilogue,¹¹ and the 1830 *Brockhaus* denounced it as "a stopgap inasmuch as it says something about a work of art that the work of art does not articulate by itself."¹² Throughout the nineteenth century, the epilogue was considered old-fashioned (except in popular theater, which had a separate, distinct aesthetic) and only returned on stage at the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly in the plays of Brecht.

The key to understanding the development of the epilogue lies in the tradition of the religious drama of the Middle Ages and its hermeneutic-kerygmatic function.¹³ Nativity plays, Easter dramas, and passion plays establish continuity between salvation history and the presence of the performance by presenting biblical episodes framed with an epilogue. Here, the epilogue functions as a device that points out the allegorical, moral, and anagogical meaning of the plot which contributes to the salvation of the audience.

The most extreme form of continuous epilogue can be found in the school plays of the Reformation era, which reconfigure the allegorical practices of the Catholic religious plays of the fifteenth century. Paul Rebhun's *Susanna* (1535) concludes with an epilogue of no less than 142 verses. It outlines the moral of the play for as many people in the audience as possible—judges, council members, women, widows, parents, servants, and children. Here is a short excerpt:

Der Beschluß.

...

An knecht und meid man das betracht,
Wie yhn gebûr, das sie in acht

Wol han und mercken gute lehr,
Die yhn fûrgibt fraw oder herr;
Yhr gschefft auch treulich richten aus,
Was yhn bevolen wirdt im haus!¹⁴

The End.

...

By observing the servants, one shall see that it behooves them to respect and follow the good lesson that their masters give them; they shall also fulfill their duties reliably and do what is commanded in the household. (Trans. C.K.)

This epilogue functions through the principle of repetition. It retells the play, but strips it of all particular elements so that only the universal moral doctrine remains. This universal doctrine applies to both the fictional and the real world, uniting them under a continuous hermeneutical and ethical horizon. Thus, the play's allegorical meaning seeps out, transgressively, into the real world.

This practice is so common that we tend to forget how much it takes for granted. Allegorical meaning is transferable only when the normative order of the world on stage structurally resembles our own. If we were unable to recognize the order of our world in the play, the play would not produce an effect on the audience, and we could not learn from it.

This logic presents a major problem, however: if we need to recognize our world in the play, theater can never portray a moral order that substantially differs from the world we live in. Theodor W. Adorno's reflections on aesthetic autonomy acutely problematize this issue. Because a continuous epilogue always emphasizes the common ground of art and society, it can only stabilize a given social order (in *Rebhun*, servants are supposed to be well-behaved) and make use of this order to justify theater itself (theater is useful because it teaches servants to be well-behaved).

It is more difficult to identify a type of epilogue that functions through interruption. From the sixteenth century on, the socially stabilizing function of the continuous epilogue dominated all theatrical genres, even comedies like those by Hans Sachs. It is necessary to return to the carnival plays of the fifteenth century to find epilogues that do not moralize or proclaim continuity between the play and the real world but instead contain a moment of rupture. This interruption has much to do with the staging of these plays (if it can even be called "staging").¹⁵ When a group of journeymen moved from one carnival party to the next to perform their short plays, they strove to *delectare* rather than *prodesse*. In this pragmatic context, prologue and epilogue functioned first and foremost as interruptive devices. First, the prologue interrupted the festivities: the speaker of the prologue attempted to hush the gathering and to draw a separation between a stage frame and an

audience frame, to use Erving Goffman's terms.¹⁶ The epilogue then interrupted the communicative order of the play to reinstate the festive community—in other words, to get the party started again.¹⁷ An example of an interruptive epilogue can be found in an anonymous carnival play of the fifteenth century titled *Ein Paurenspil mit einem posem altem Weib* (*A Peasant's Play with a Wicked Old Woman*):

DER AUSSCHREIER ODER PRECURSOR:

Alde mit guter nacht darvan!
 Hab wir unzucht bei euch getan,
 Das sult ir uns haben vergut,
 Wann man itzo gern nerrisch tut
 Zu vasnacht mit mangerlei schimpf.
 Herr wirt, habt uns fur kein ungelimpf
 Unser grobhait und nerrisch parn!
 Got muß euch haus und hof bewarn.¹⁸

THE CRIER OR PRECURSOR:

Farewell and good night! If we have behaved poorly, you shall not blame us, because during carnival one enjoys being foolish and doing all kinds of tomfoolery. Dear host, don't chide us for our rudeness and foolish behavior! God shall protect your house and household. (Trans. C.K.)

The elements of this epilogue are typical for the carnival plays: the speaker of the epilogue (the "Ausschreier" or crier who "shouts out" the end of the play) excuses the company for their foolish and often grotesque jokes by referring to carnival season, and he expresses gratitude to the host for allowing the journeymen to interrupt the festivities. These elements were so common that Shakespeare (at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) can have Theseus say to the mechanicals: "No Epilogue, I pray you—for your play needs no excuse."¹⁹ Often, the speaker of the epilogue would also begin a dance that would include both players and audience to recreate the bodily unity of the carnival celebration and he would ask the host for a reward. The rupture of the comic epilogue thus changes the *personae* back into persons, into the actors of a play.

The carnival and the school play thus illustrate the opposition between the epilogues of early-modern secular and religious dramas. While religious drama culminates by invoking a moral sphere that reaches beyond the confines of the play, secular drama apologizes for its immorality by restoring (or even creating) a this-worldly community. Continuous and interruptive epilogues assume two very different relationships between theater and reality: the former focuses on the continuity between both ontological spheres, while the latter emphasizes the rupture between the order of the mimetic

and the real. Put more abstractly, the two epilogues develop the concept of the radical sameness or otherness of art and society.

As Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque suggests, the rupture and otherness of the carnivalesque does not mean that it lacks normative force.²⁰ But its normativity derives from the community that is brought together by the performance, not from the separation of stage and audience frame. It rests on the complete alterity of the play's moral order to the regular order of society. Because the world of the carnival is completely different from the real world, it allows us to recognize the contingency of our own norms.

Thus, the two types of epilogues represent two different poetic and political modes. The repetition performed by the continuous epilogue attempts to stabilize a given social structure (even though it claims to criticize the immorality of the world), while the interruptive epilogue engenders a community that precedes social differentiation. In terms of contemporary political theory, the first mode belongs to the order of politics, while the second belongs to the order of the political.²¹

Without going into detail on the epilogue's extinction, it has often been said that its disappearance had much to do with the use of the theater curtain, the invention of playbills, and the concept of theatrical illusion.²² But several poetological reasons exist in addition, such as the classical concept of the "closed" drama (which also explains why some of the more "open" Romantic dramas do include epilogues). It might also be worth noting that the introduction of poetic justice within the plot supplanted the continuous epilogue because it solved the problem of allegory. But for us, the important question is: what did Brecht see in it?

Brechtian Didacticism and the Poetics of Interruption

While Brecht uses epilogues in several of his plays, there is room for debate on what can rightfully be called an epilogue. Parabolic epilogues (sequences at the end of a play in which the audience is addressed directly) and sequences that Brecht designated as "epilogues" can be found in *Die Ausnahme und die Regel* (*The Exception and the Rule*), *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* (*The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*), *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (*Schweyk in the Second World War*), *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* (*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*), *Der Hofmeister* (*The Tutor*), in a typescript of *Die Gewehre der Frau Farrar* (*Señora Carrar's Rifles*), in Peachum's monologue at the end of *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Threepenny Opera*)—though this epilogue is followed by the mock "Dreigroschenfinale"—arguably in *Die Maßnahme* (*The Decision*), and, of course, in *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*.

The final lines of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* constitute Brecht's most complex epilogue; one might question whether it is characteristic for his dramatic work or not. This question is further complicated by the fact

that Brecht drafted a different, much more conventional version of this epilogue, in which his main concern was to prevent the audience from mistaking the fictional province of Sezuan for the historical Sichuan.²³ In the end, however, he restored the famous twenty-two lines, which therefore can claim a fair amount of textual authenticity in his oeuvre.

The epilogue abruptly ends the play at a highly suspenseful moment. Just as Shen Te has fallen silent in despair, standing amidst her “torturers,”²⁴ the curtain falls and a “player” comes on stage to address the audience. The choice to name the speaker of the epilogue “player” or “actor” was uncommon before Brecht—the speaker would have either been a figure within the play (like Puck in the epilogue to Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*) or a generic speaker, like the “Ausschreier” of the carnival plays or the “Beschluss” or “Epilogus,” a term which named the scene and speaker at the same time.

Brecht’s insistence on naming the speakers of his prologues and epilogues “players” and placing them in front of the curtain (as he does in several plays) might lead the audience to believe that they are real people who are not playing roles, who might even be more “authentic” than the *dramatis personae* of the main play. One could even assume that the “player” is an actor speaking in the name of the playwright. However, the opposite is the case: the player is a character much like anyone else on stage before him, and the rhyming couplets, which are the traditional form of the epilogue, emphasize the highly artificial character of his speech. The speaker of the epilogue is not simply a player: he or she is a player playing a player.

This fact alone should signal that we must view the player critically—indeed, the epilogue reveals at various points that the player is everything but a reliable narrator. The main difference between the mimetic, dialogical, and dramatic parts of Brecht’s plays and the prologues, epilogues, interludes, and parabases lies in their communicative framework, not in the distinction of characters from actors. The figures in the play communicate within the stage frame, while the speaker of the epilogue extends the frame of the communication to the audience. This formal shift plays on the relation between the play’s open and closed nature, which is also the main thematic concern of the epilogue.

The stage directions characterize the player’s gesture as “apologetic.” This gesture is characteristic for the interruptive epilogue, which means that it first and foremost recalls the epilogue of a comic play.²⁵ The crucial difference here is the object of the apology. Obviously, the player does not apologize for making grotesque jokes or interrupting a party, as is common in the tradition. Instead, the epilogue elaborates the reason for the apology in twenty-two lines that deserve close reading. It is worth noting that this short text has a very strict structure: it is divided into three parts of six, ten, and six lines, thus adding another layer of symmetry to an already carefully structured, symmetrical play.²⁶

The first part of the speech marks the shift in the communicative order from "dialogue" to "discourse," to use the terms of Andrzej Wirth.²⁷ Instead of addressing other figures within the play, the player addresses the audience, thus breaking the fourth wall for a last time in the play. The player does not simply speak for himself but uses the first-person plural to represent all of the actors of the play as well as the theatrical institution at large.

The key term of the first section of the epilogue is "goldene Legende" ("Golden Legend") or *legenda aurea*. According to this claim, the actors intend for the play to produce a similar effect to a martyrology. The play, so the player claims, is meant to portray the value of clinging to morality even under circumstances that punish faith and morality with death. Shen Te, however, cannot become a martyr because she shows no sign of believing in a transcendent afterlife. While the salvation of the martyr in the *legenda aurea* is perfectly obvious (or, to use a German idiomatic expression, "liegt auf der Hand"), Shen Te's story finds its bitter end "unter der Hand" ("underhandedly").

The player apologizes for this failure of poetic justice and thus curiously inverts the traditional structures of the continuous and the interruptive epilogue. The player's apology invokes the interruptive epilogue, but because he apologizes for the lack of a moral doctrine, he reveals that he was aiming for a continuous epilogue. This leaves the audience with no moral to transport into social reality.

The fifth and sixth lines notoriously aggravate this problem even further. The players "stehen selbst enttäuscht" ("We stand here, disillusioned"). They are disappointed about the bitter end, about the subversion of allegory. Yet, in a more literal sense, they are also "ent-täuscht" ("dis-illusioned"): they stand outside of theatrical illusion, they have left the mimetic reality of the stage and the sphere of representation. Only now can they actually see the fourth wall, the closed curtain behind them.

Many critics have challenged the player's declaration that the play leaves all questions open. Since the play ends with Shen Te's complete abandonment by society and the gods, it is apparent that this phrase is not very accurate.²⁸ In fact, all the relevant questions about the plot have been answered. The only question left open is the matter of the epilogue itself: the question of how art can influence society.

The second part of the epilogue (lines 7 to 16) shifts the focus from the reflection on the play towards the institution of the theater. Brecht revives an idea that goes back to his notes on *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (*The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*), which were a cornerstone for the development of his concept of epic theater. In his remarks on *Mahagonny*,²⁹ he develops a kind of "apparatus theory" of theater: we are accustomed, Brecht argues, to inquire whether an artwork is appropriate for the theater apparatus, but we never question whether the apparatus is appropriate for the artwork. Though the producers of this apparatus believe that

their aesthetic inventions are not subject to external constraints, they create only “*Genussmittel*”³⁰ (“means of pleasure”: luxury food and culinary delights, tobacco and drink). The speaker of the epilogue finds himself in the same situation: he does nothing but produce *Genussmittel*.

In his examination of Friedrich Schiller’s concept of the theater as a moral institution, Brecht recognizes that the moral of the story is just another *Genussmittel*.³¹ According to Brecht, bourgeois audiences enjoy recognizing their own moral values in dramatic texts. And one only needs to extend this argument a bit further to see that even if theater produces critique, this critique is first and foremost just another means of enjoyment. Thus, bourgeois theater can serve the crucial function of assuaging its audience by making it believe that it is there to solve the moral problems of the real world. Brecht is certainly highly suspicious of this notion.

For the player in the epilogue, a parable that fails to provide the audience with moral reassurance threatens the economic institution of the theater apparatus (this is the meaning of “bankrott” and “nicht einmal für Geld”). Bourgeois theater depends upon a morally consistent framework in which the tragic hero meets his downfall and the comic hero is rescued. To be enjoyable, the moral of the play must affirm the morality of the real world and can therefore never really change it. This is why all of the four options the player discusses (lines 14–15) do not apply: (1) a different person would have failed just as Shen Te did; (2) a morally different fictional world would not be enjoyable for the audience, which would be incapable of aligning theatrical and social morality; (3) different gods would be needed to provide an assurance of transcendent salvation that modernity does not offer (as in the *legenda aurea* or in martyr dramas), or they would at least have to intervene in the world’s socioeconomic order (the gods in the play explicitly refuse to do so); (4) had there been no gods, Shen Te would never have received the money in the first place and therefore would never have met her downfall.

The players are indeed “*zerschmettert*” (“battered”) by the imminent disempowerment of the theater apparatus and its failure to provide moral enjoyment. If they fail to provide enjoyment they would lose their audience and thus their economic basis. They would be shell-shocked, not just “*zum Scheine*” (“this is no pretense”), that is, not just as characters within the realm of theatrical illusion. By the end of the second part of the epilogue, the play’s unsolved ethical problem has grown into a threat to the institution of the theater itself.

In the last part of the epilogue, the players attempt to find a way out of their crisis by handing the ethical problem of the play over to the audience. The final six lines meticulously correspond to the first six: the rhetorical apostrophe to the audience—“*Verehrtes Publikum*” (“Dear audience”)—is found both in lines 1 and 21. “*Jetzt kein Verdruss*” (“don’t be displeased”) is echoed by “*Ungemach*” (“adversity”). The “*bitteres Ende*” (“bitter end”;

line 4) provokes the actors to call on the audience to search for a "gute[s] Ende" ("a good conclusion"; line 20); and the realization "das ist kein rechter Schluss" ("this wasn't much of a conclusion") in the second line leads to the call "los, such dir selbst den Schluss" ("go, look for it [i.e., the good conclusion] yourself") in the second-to-last line. The epilogue even starts and ends with the same rhyme. But while the first part focuses on the "wir" of the players, the final part centers on the "Sie" (line 18) and the more familiar "Du" (line 21).

This is where the didactic interpretations of the epilogue come into play. In Volker Klotz's influential reading, Brecht's "true answer" to the audience is to create "eine andre Welt" ("a different world").³² Klotz declares, "'A different world' for him [i.e., Brecht, C.K.] means a different social order. The existent, depicted one needs to be changed. This implicit answer is to be accepted by the audience, which becomes a potential *deus ex machina*."³³

Every didactic interpretation must assume that Brecht's didacticism presupposes continuity between art and society. However, when one considers the formal complexity of the epilogue, there is reason to question that the epilogue is a direct call to action. It is unclear if Brecht would have found it "sufficient" to produce a didactic effect on his audience, as Reinhold Grimm argues.³⁴ The final line of the epilogue calls this into question: "Es muss ein guter da sein, muss, muss, muss!" ("There must be a good ending, must, must, must!"). This threefold repetition takes the syntactic form of a spell. It is based on the belief that language can change reality if the incantation is repeated three times. This implies that it would be superstitious to expect the theatrical performance to change the world—even by means of the audience.

By invoking the traditions of the continuous and interruptive epilogue and playing with their differences, the text unfolds an alternative meaning that differs substantially from the speaker's own intentions. The epilogue undermines its speaker by turning the poetics of continuity into a poetics of interruption. Brecht's play is not an experiment in a closed theatrical setting that exposes deplorable circumstances and demands change in the real world. Instead, it reveals the closed work of art to be ideological. No moral in the play can pass into the real world. The play can only affirm the rupture between the aesthetic sphere and reality.

This interpretation hews to Brecht's reflections on dramatic naturalism and realism. Brecht embraced the idea that art should depict social conditions, but did not accept that these milieu conditions should be considered natural and thus unchangeable.³⁵ "Der echte Realismus"³⁶ ("real realism") is supposed to expose the laws of social life as contingent, and this is precisely what his *Guter Mensch* does. But Brecht was primarily concerned with how art could influence social reality. In this respect, all art can do is to offer the experience of a rupture in everyday life.

This rupture has political effects, however. The interruptive epilogue creates a different kind of theatrical community than mimetic theater with its separation of stage and audience frame. The speaker of the epilogue does not call the audience to action. He does not challenge the audience to leave the theater and change the world according to the lesson they have learned. Instead, he stresses their ability to exercise intellectual agency (“Sie selber dächten nach”/“For you to contemplate [yourself]”), and emphasizes the space of reflection (“auf der Stelle,” on the spot). This spot is the theater auditorium. Thus, the institution of the theater becomes a space for public political reflection.

This has little to do with a conventional understanding of didacticism. The text uses a continuous epilogue to challenge the idea that literature can contain transferable moral teachings. It thereby stresses the rupture between the mimetic and the real. The political dimension of the play does not address ethical paradoxes in our society, but instead asks how theater can affect the world without reverting to an ideology in which art is simply a corrective mechanism. Brecht thus sets the stage for a new aesthetics of theater. Instead of adhering to a representational aesthetics that champions the similarity or otherness of art and reality, he explores a third option: an aesthetics that centers on the moment of interruption without abandoning the artwork’s commitment to morality. This aesthetics believes in the theatrical space and in the co-presence of actors and observers as a political force.

Brecht thus fundamentally reconsiders the role of art in society. He has moved far beyond the epilogue of the comic tradition and has arrived at the core of epic theater. Though he seems to develop a dialectics, his epilogue does not posit a synthesis between rupture and continuity, or art and society. His player proceeds pragmatically on his search for the “only way to exit this adversity.” By laying bare this pragmatism and by not even attempting to transmit moral content, the play provides an answer to the question about art and society that substantially exceeds the order of representation. Hans-Thies Lehmann, in his recent monograph on Brecht, points to this fact: “dass das wirklich Politische der Kunst in der Form zu suchen ist, nicht in ihrer inhaltlichen Setzung”³⁷ (“that the true political thrust of art is to be found in its form, not in its choice of content”). In this sense, Brecht’s plays permanently oscillate between representation and participation, formulating an aesthetics of mediation. As a medium, theater may not give us a critical program to execute in the real world but, instead, opens up a space for critical reflection that is not bounded by the representational content of the drama.

This interpretation does not completely dispense with the notion of Brecht’s theater as didactic. But it does outline a more differentiated concept of Brechtian didacticism, perhaps even more so than Brecht’s own theoretical texts. Ever since he began to create learning-plays, Brecht no longer considered art a sphere of knowledge that could directly affect the

real world. If anything, Brechtian didacticism means challenging the reflex to provide simple answers to complex problems. Extending far beyond the form of the epilogue, theater is not (and should not be) an art form that seamlessly integrates with social reality; instead, it resists deadening continuity through the moment of disruption.

Notes

¹ Any reference to the author “Brecht” (especially with regards to *Die Dreigroschenoper*) should be understood as a reference to a “brand” by “Brecht & Co.”—cf. Thomas Wegmann, “Marken, Medien und Management: Vorschläge zur Lektüre eines Klassikers,” in *Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956)*, ed. Walter Delabar and Jörg Döring (Berlin: Weidler, 1998), 11–29; John Fuegi, *Brecht and Company: Sex, Politics, and the Making of the Modern Drama* (New York: Grove Press, 1994).

² *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*, BFA 6, 278–79.

³ Translation by Markus Wessendorf.

⁴ This is the most literal translation by Dennis Redmond (<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1951/mm/ch01.htm>) of Adorno’s famous aphorism: “Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen.” Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 43.

⁵ Cf. Wolfgang Jeschke’s annotation in Bertolt Brecht, *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 168; see also Mathias Meyer’s similar interpretation in Meyer, *Nachträgliche Wahrheit: Der Epilog auf der Bühne des Lebens* (Freiburg: Rombach, 2007), 45.

⁶ Jan Knopf, “Der gute Mensch von Sezuan,” in *Brecht Handbuch*, vol. 1: *Stücke*, ed. Jan Knopf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), 428.

⁷ Gert Ueding, “Der gute Mensch von Sezuan,” in *Brechts Dramen*, ed. Walter Hinderer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995), 132, 144.

⁸ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 282 (= *Rhet.* 3.19, 1420b).

⁹ For an overview of the history of the epilogue see Christopher Laferl, “Epilog,” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, vol. 2, ed. Gert Ueding (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994), 1286–91; Fritz Peter Knapp, “Epilog,” in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft*, vol. 1, ed. Harald Fricke et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 463–65.

¹⁰ See the extensive editions of English prologues and epilogues by Pierre Danchin, *The Prologues and Epilogues of the Restoration: 1660–1700*, 4 vols. (Nancy: Publications Université Nancy II, 1981–88), and Pierre Danchin, *The Prologues and Epilogues of the Eighteenth Century*, 3 vols. (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1990–97).

¹¹ Even though Goethe planned to end his *Faust* with not one, but three epilogues (see Mayer, *Nachträgliche Wahrheit*, 39–42).

¹² "Der Epilog ist mithin zuweilen eine Art von Nothbehelf, insofern er von einem Kunstwerke Etwas sagt, was dasselbe nicht durch sich selbst ausspricht." *Allgemeine deutsche Real=Encyklopädie für die gebildeten Stände (Conversations=Lexikon)*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1830), 605–6. (Trans. C.K.) See also Meyer, *Nachträgliche Wahrheit*, 13.

¹³ For the kerygmatic function of religious plays see Rainer Warning, *Funktion und Struktur: Die Ambivalenzen des geistlichen Spiels* (Munich: Fink, 1974).

¹⁴ Paul Rebhun, *Ein Geistlich Spiel, von der Gotfurchtigen und keuschen frawen Susannen, gantz lustig und fruchtbarlich zu lesen*, in *Das Drama der Reformationszeit*, ed. Richard Froning (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1895), 179.

¹⁵ See Eckehard Catholy, *Fastnachtspiel* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1966), 18–20.

¹⁶ See Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 124–55.

¹⁷ For the functions of the epilogue in the carnival play see Catholy, *Fastnachtspiel*, 22–26, and Edwin Zellweger, *Prolog und Epilog im deutschen Drama: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte deutscher Dichtung* (Leipzig: Franz Deuticke, 1906), 27–31.

¹⁸ Anon., *Ein Paurenspil mit einem posem altem Weib etc.*, in *Fastnachtspiele aus dem fünfzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, ed. Adelbert von Keller (Stuttgart: Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins, 1853), 52.

¹⁹ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. John Dover Wilson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 72.

²⁰ "As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions." Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 10.

²¹ See Oliver Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

²² See e.g., Hans Schauer and Ursula Gauwerky, "Epilog," in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, vol. 1, ed. Werner Kohlschmidt and Wolfgang Mohr, reprint (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 380.

²³ *BFA* 6, 440.

²⁴ Bertolt Brecht, *The Good Person of Szechwan*, trans. John Willett (London: Methuen, 1985), 107.

²⁵ Peter Christian Giese has identified a number of comic elements in *Der gute Mensch* and throughout Brecht's plays. See Peter Christian Giese, *Das "Gesellschaftlich-Komische": Zu Komik und Komödie am Beispiel der Stücke und Bearbeitungen Brechts* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974), 80–82, 95–96, etc.

²⁶ See Knopf, "Der gute Mensch von Sezuan," 423–24.

²⁷ Andrzej Wirth, "Vom Dialog zum Diskurs: Versuch einer Synthese der nachbrechtschen Theaterkonzepte," in *Theater heute* no. 1 (1980), 16–19.

²⁸ See Knopf, "Der gute Mensch von Sezuan," 427.

²⁹ "Anmerkungen zur Oper 'Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny,'" *BFA* 24, 74–86.

³⁰ *BFA* 24, 76.

³¹ In "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater" ("Theater for Pleasure or Theater for Instruction") *BFA* 22.1, 115, Brecht writes: "Er [sc. Schiller, C.K.] kannte nichts, was amüsanter und befriedigender sein konnte, als Ideale zu propagieren." ("He [sc. Schiller, C.K.] knew of nothing that could give greater amusement and satisfaction than the propagation of ideals" [*Brecht on Theatre*, 3rd ed., ed. Marc Silberman, Steve Giles, and Tom Kuhn (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), 115].)

³² Volker Klotz, "Der gute Mensch von Sezuan," in *Bertolt Brecht: Versuch über das Werk* (Bad Homburg: Verlag Gehlen, 1967), 22: "Die wahre Antwort, die Brecht seinem Publikum gibt, ist: 'eine andre Welt,' andere 'Verhältnisse.'"

³³ Klotz, "Der gute Mensch von Sezuan," 23: "'Eine andre Welt' heißt für ihn eine andere Gesellschaftsordnung. Die dargestellte, bisherige, ist zu ändern. Diese unausgesprochene Antwort ist vom Publikum, dem möglichen deus ex machina, anzunehmen." (Trans. C.K.) Klotz's limitation for his didactical interpretation does not apply to the structure of the play but only to a possible audience. If the play would be performed in front of a "non-socialist audience," it might doubt that Shen Te's conflict is only bound to the social order of capitalism. In the same vein as Klotz is Klaus-Detlef Müller, *Bertolt Brecht: Epoche–Werk–Wirkung* (Munich: Beck, 2009), 164: "Die Lösung muss in der Wirklichkeit selbst entdeckt und realisiert werden, sie ist also vom Zuschauer zu finden, so dass sich aus dem ästhetisch vermittelten Wissen eine Handlungsanweisung ergibt." ("The solution needs to be discovered and realized in reality itself, it has to be found by the spectator, so that the aesthetically mediated knowledge results in an instruction on how to act." [Trans. C.K.]

³⁴ Reinhold Grimm, for example, states: "[D]ie ausweglose Tragik [i.e., Shen Te's conflict of self-preservation and altruism—C.K.], hinter der bereits das Sinnlose lauert, leitet Brecht . . . von gesellschaftlichen Missständen ab, die man bisher nur zu beheben versäumt hat. Dadurch soll sie zum bloßen Versehen, zur bloßen Unterlassung und folglich sofort korrigierbar werden. Es gibt einen Ausweg—den 'guten Schluss'—, den freilich nur der Zuschauer findet. Das genügt aber Brecht" (Reinhold Grimm, "Zwischen Tragik und Ideologie," in *Strukturen: Essays zur deutschen Literatur* [Göttingen: Sachse & Pohl Verlag, 1963], 256). ("Brecht deduces the inevitable tragedy [i.e., Shen Te's conflict of self-preservation and altruism—C.K.], behind which the senseless is already lurking, from social grievances that have so far only been neglected to be remedied. It should thus become a mere lapse, a mere mistake, and should therefore be instantly correctable. There is a way out—the 'good ending'—which, of course, only the spectator can find. Yet this is sufficient for Brecht." [Trans. C.K.]

³⁵ See e.g., "Über die Verwertung der theatralischen Grundelemente," *BFA* 21, 232.

³⁶ *Der Messingkauf*, *BFA* 22.2, 792.

³⁷ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Brecht lesen* (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2016), 10.

Affirmation and Alienation: Heiner Müllers *Hamletmaschine* als Komödie

Entgegen der Tendenz, Heiner Müller als Tragiker und *Die Hamletmaschine* als Tragödie zu deuten, will ich sein Stück in diesem Beitrag als eine spezifische Form von Komödie lesen—als das Experiment einer Komödie nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg und nach Brecht. Statt einer Komödie jenseits von Tragik, Entfremdung und Negation kann *Die Hamletmaschine* als Versuch gesehen werden, im Angesicht diverser Alienationserfahrungen dennoch eine Affirmation zu behaupten: eine Affirmation der Möglichkeiten des Theaters und seiner eigenen Formen und Verfremdungen. Während Hamlet (bzw. Hamletdarsteller) in seiner Treue zur Negativität sie nur so zu affirmieren versteht, dass er resignativ in ihr verharret, bejaht und steigert Ophelia die Negativität bis zum Punkt ihrer Selbstauslöschung. Das Scherzo wiederum bezieht sich auf diese beiden Figuren einer resignativen und einer destruktiven Affirmation und zelebriert eine Affirmation, die Alienation und Tragik wenden kann, ohne sie hinter sich zu lassen.

Against the tendency to regard Müller as a tragedian and his *Hamletmaschine* as a tragedy, I will read his play as an experiment on the possibility of comedic theater after Brecht. *Hamletmaschine* can thus be understood as an attempt to affirm the possibilities of theater and its own forms of estrangement without abstracting from tragedy, alienation, and negativity. The play contains three such models internally connecting alienation and affirmation: while “Hamlet” in his commitment to the negativity of a lost tragedy can only affirm it by resigning himself to it, “Ophelia” affirms and enhances negativity to the point of her self-extinction. Finally, the “Scherzo” refers back to these two models and finds a way to celebrate a form of affirmation that proves capable of transforming alienation and tragedy, without leaving them behind.

Affirmation and Alienation: The Comedy of Heiner Müller's *Hamletmaschine*

Katrin Trüstedt

OPHELIA: Do you want to eat my heart, Hamlet.
Laughs.

—Heiner Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, 548/55

Heiner Müller's 1977 play *Die Hamletmaschine* starts with the gesture of a Western intellectual figure turning its back on the ruins of postwar Europe: "I was Hamlet. I stood on the coast and spoke with the surf BLABLA, in my back the ruins of Europe."¹ What kind of a beginning, and what type of an entrance is this? If entering—the stepping on stage of an actor—is the theatrical gesture par excellence,² this act of Hamlet whereby he enters into appearance is at the same time an act of exiting. The actor enters the stage as the one who has been and who no longer is Hamlet: "I was Hamlet." And instead of stepping forward and speaking to the audience, presenting himself in a relevant way, Hamlet is speaking to the surf "BLABLA" and turns his back on what he—as a critical intellectual—should be addressing.

Die Hamletmaschine can be read as an experiment exploring the possibility of theater after World War II. It explores a different type of theatricality, sometimes called postdramatic, that, following Bertolt Brecht, foregrounds and explores the precarious conditions of appearance and of theatrical presence instead of just utilizing the theatrical possibility of taking on roles and performing them on stage. Not only does it seem appropriate to read *Die Hamletmaschine* as such an experiment on the possibility of theater; it is, more specifically, a particularly challenging experiment on the possibility of *comedic* theater. It is through its peculiar comedic nature that the play exposes and explores the very conditions of theatrical presence. Against the tendency to regard Müller as a tragedian and his *Hamletmaschine* as a tragedy, Müller himself insisted that the play is to be understood as a comedy: "If one doesn't conceive of *Die Hamletmaschine* as a comedy, one will fail with this play."³ As the quote suggests, comedy here is not a special, marginal genre, but somehow foundational of the theatrical play as such.⁴ Comedy in this sense is particularly tied to performance, not to drama: If one doesn't grasp *The Hamletmaschine* as a comedy, one will fail to come up with a convincing *performance* of the play. I understand

comedy here as reflecting upon, playing with, and affirming the very conditions of theater: affirming theatricality.⁵

In the following, I want to offer a reading of Müller's *Hamletmaschine* as a particular type of comedy—an affirmative comedy that still remains in a special relation to tragedy, destruction, and alienation. It is a comedy of negativity, affirming and at the same time turning the negativity of tragedy. The play is thereby a distinct experiment on the possibility of an affirmative theater in postwar Germany, an experiment on the possibilities of theater in the face of the experiences of World War II. The play begins with the ruins of Europe and refers continuously throughout to a dialectic of enlightenment and barbarism.⁶ If it is a comedy, it must therefore be a comedy against this background. I will thus read *Die Hamletmaschine* as exploring a new and different role theater can play at all in the face of its apparently having become obsolete. After an optimism that seemed still strong in Brecht's later writings, envisioning theater as a pedagogical institution and a space of meaningful public communication, such optimism seems shattered in Müller's theater. And yet Müller holds on to the power of theater and affirms it, even in and through questioning its pedagogical function. Müller's *Hamletmaschine* is thus a comedy *after Brecht*, in the double sense of this term, following, but also breaking with the Brechtian model of estrangement (*Verfremdung*). It is affirmative not in contrast to or turning away from various forms of alienation (*Entfremdung*), but affirmative of and by way of alienation: an affirmation of the specific form of alienation that is theater.

I. Benjamin, Brecht, and the Comedy of Estrangement

The figures of *Die Hamletmaschine* are defined by isolated gestures, such as Hamlet turning his back, or Ophelia laughing—"frozen," "isolated," and "quotable" gestures, to speak with Walter Benjamin on Brecht.⁷ They dance on the edge or verge of meaning: they are somehow semantically charged and, at the same time, emptied out or cut short of the signification they are about to performatively evoke. These gestures, cutting short and excessively pointing beyond any actions they are quotations of, can be seen not just as an estrangement of dramatic tragic form, but as potentially comic and affirmative in their playfulness.

In keeping with this, Robert Wilson's famous 1986 production of *Die Hamletmaschine* focuses entirely on isolating and displaying such gestures as frozen and quotable, instead of performing actions and advancing a plot. It starts with Ophelia, already on the stage, turning her back to the audience, very slowly turning towards us, and coming to a hold in a frozen gesture of silent screaming. Hamlet's entrance, following a few minutes later,⁸ marks him as also already having been there on the stage, but as an invisible figure. Stepping slowly into the light, Hamlet arrives in his posture

only to copy one of Ophelia's quoted gestures. The act of entering, with all its ambiguities and in its complex mediality (light, space, music, bodies, etc.) is in this sense foregrounded rather than taken for granted. The relation of text and performance itself figures in a similar—estranged, potentially comic—tension between Müller's text and Wilson's enactment, not unlike the intertextual relation already implied between Müller's *Hamletmaschine* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Lines from Müller's text are isolated, cut, fragmented, endlessly repeated, stage directions are read out loud, while actions are motionlessly declared but not actually performed on Wilson's stage. Both Müller's text and Wilson's performance have a characteristic *paratactic* character, to use Theodor W. Adorno's term.⁹

The theater is historically a space of figuration and personification that allows us to investigate and explore what it means to "appear," in Hannah Arendt's political sense.¹⁰ What distinguishes theater from other media is the fact that what it presents on the stage to the spectator's eye are living bodies—living "means," as Benjamin called them.¹¹ For Brecht and Benjamin, the "gesture" is the theatrical event of a temporal arrest, interrupting the flow and the finalizing of meaning ascribed to a gesturing body.¹² Action becoming gesture is at the same time connecting to its positioning in the theatrical space. In the complex arrangement of the theater, the visibility that the actor and his operation gains as gesture is always at risk to rely on, require, or itself turn into invisibility. Every visibility is given under the condition of a particular perspective that makes an "overview" as much desired as impossible. Something can be on stage and yet removed from sight, only visible to certain audience members, depending on where they sit; someone can even be off stage and yet talk.¹³ What the theatrical display exhibits is thus not overview, but perspective on the limited and conditioned character of what we see and know. If such a theater of estrangement offers a form of collectivity, it is in the absence not just of the gods,¹⁴ but also of the ideal of a coherent, fully transparent, unified community. As a shared and yet divided space, it is a space we can join precisely because of its dividedness, as Jean-Luc Nancy¹⁵ and Stanley Cavell have pointed out.¹⁶

A theater of estrangement (*Verfremdung*) is concerned with the task of exhibiting this complex arrangement itself. Müller's *Hamletmaschine* is a "comedy" in this very tradition of Brechtian estrangement. There are obviously various possible conceptions of what alienation (*Entfremdung*) and estrangement in the Brechtian sense should amount to, and Müller gives it a particular twist, deepening the internal connection between alienation as a social phenomenon and estrangement as an aesthetic strategy. A specific type of alienation which is not just the formal feature but concerns the content of Brechtian theater is the alienation of alienated labor. Already in Brecht's theater we are confronted with the sense that even this alienation can be understood to bear comic potential. This comes to the fore in the first

scene of *Mr. Puntila and His Man Matti*, which focuses on the performative function of having to identify oneself and recognizing—or rather not recognizing—oneself through the other:

Puntila: . . . Matti, you my friend?

Matti: No.

Puntila: Thank you. I knew you were.¹⁷

The service worker Matti is alienated from his work in a way that profits Puntila (the driver Matti is literally bringing him to where he needs to be) and whose product is, in some sense, Puntila, who in turn attempts to use Matti for his own self-reflection and self-appropriation. Yet, dialectically and performatively, it is the servant Matti (not the master Puntila), who is able to play different parts and play his alienated role with an ironic self-difference, while Puntila is stuck in his part and dependent on Matti to reflect his status back to him. In this sense, Matti appears as a comic actor playing with his roles, whereas Puntila is stuck with his part as is typical for tragic protagonists.¹⁸ Eventually, there is a prospect of a possible liberation for Matti, leaving Puntila at the end, a liberation that the master Puntila cannot achieve and that is only available to the alienated agent. While there are many traits of the Brechtian comedy we can find in Müller's *Hamletmaschine* taken to a new level—the absurdity and self-referentiality of this so-called dialogue, for example, that actually seems to evoke the beginning of *Hamlet* (the famous “who’s there?”¹⁹)—the dialectics of alienation and affirmation in Brecht's *Puntila* seems to be essentially different from the way in which Müller makes use of it. We should expect nothing less, if we follow Müller's own dictum: “To use Brecht without criticizing him is treason.”²⁰ Nikolaus Müller-Schöll brings out the contrast by showing that, although *Die Hamletmaschine* may be regarded as a variation on a Brechtian “Lehrstück,”²¹ its mode of operation is crucially different: “In the absence of a transcendent instance of appeal, the expressed positions remain juxtaposed without mediation. What is lacking is the possibility of the moral justification or condemnation of what was displayed.”²²

While this description seems to the point, the open question I would like to pursue remains how we can understand the difference on the level of the specific type of affirmation and of comedy that is at play in Müller's *Hamletmaschine*. Müller's play is a distinct type of theater machine, distinct in its mode of operation and its envisioned liberation and affirmation. Müller's strategy does not seem to rely on the contrast with and the attempted return to an older, supposedly unalienated condition, but rather aims to overload the machine such that it jams. He is thus aiming to interrupt and supersede the prevalent process by accelerating it. The machine that is depicted in production and that refers us to Andy Warhol's factory as well as to Brecht's emphasis on an ensemble,²³ is a machinery of

reorganizing pieces of meaning, a site of theatrical performance. In the place of the absent single author as genius-creator, we find a machine with many isolated, fragmented, alienated elements not created but taken from another context, producing not just an alienated subject by its meticulous workings²⁴ but new modes of relating alienation and affirmation which I want to outline in the following.

Much has been written about the function of the theater for Brecht and his reconstruction of the capitalistically conditioned theater institution into a public forum. Brecht's conception is understood as rehearsing new forms of perception and thinking and aiming at revolutionizing traditional rules of spectatorship. In this sense, estrangement (*Verfremdung*) would stand in the service of a transformation of our common practices, most directly our theatrical and spectatorial practices. On the other hand, estrangement can be seen to fulfil a more revelatory role, unveiling the alienated conditions behind what is accepted as natural.²⁵ The task of estrangement is to prize open the ideological constructs that result from social alienation (*Entfremdung*); to show that seemingly natural conditions are in fact mediated by alienating capitalist conditions of production.²⁶ In both its revelatory and its transformative function, there is a sense in which estrangement could be opposed to alienation: estrangement as revealing and transforming alienated practices. But at the same time, it is also evident that the techniques of estrangement sometimes draw on practices of alienation in a way that creates zones of indistinction between estrangement and alienation, *Verfremdung* and *Entfremdung*.

The double ambiguity between a revelatory and transformative understanding of estrangement and between a model opposing and one intimately connecting alienation and estrangement is present in the complex trajectory of the notion of estrangement in Brecht. In his early theoretical writings, Brecht uses the notion of *Verfremdung* for a theatricality of absolute alterity. The later writings, however, politicize the concept. This can lead into contradictions and tensions, as Phoebe von Held points out. More importantly, there is the danger that the politicization eradicates the theatrical moment it itself draws on: "A theory of alienation that moves directly from 'destruction' to 'construction' sacrifices its aspirations concerning the transformation of spectatorship."

On von Held's account,

only through an initial shattering of illusion, an abdication of the addiction to excessive states of intoxication, can a critical gaze towards the real be reinstalled. Theatre as the cultural institution par excellence that masters the craft of illusion, therefore, can play a crucial role in transforming the spectator's false consciousness into a more critical, alert, and constructive mindset. And yet, Brecht's conclusion—a categorical ban on "anything" pertaining to illusion—is problematic. . . . [T]he

antagonistic definition of *Verfremdung* as anti-illusion also sacrifices crucial forces intrinsic to the theatre. Moreover, it forfeits notions of alienation that may indeed play a constructive role in the endeavor to increase the spectator's perceptual and critical abilities. (33)

If that is correct, then politicizing the notion of *Verfremdung* contains the danger of turning estrangement into a merely instrumental means to reach an unalienated state, free of any illusion. Seen in this light, it may seem that Brecht's concept of *Verfremdung* is part of the anti-theatrical modernist canon: it attacks the illusionary character of theater and commits the spectator to a new form of "presentness." As Martin Puchner has pointed out, however, Brecht also seems engaged in a "dismantling of the live presence of the human actor" and it is this deconstruction that Benjamin recognizes in Brecht's theater.

Müller, at any rate, seems concerned with deepening this deconstructive potential implicit in Brecht's approach. As Müller-Schöll has pointed out with regard to Müller, plays like his *Hamletmaschine* and his notes on their performance indicate that they question the Brechtian model of *Lehrstück* as much as that of the theater as a moral institution.²⁷ If Brecht's plays seemed to Müller as if some kernel of drama exploded in them,²⁸ then we can view Müller's variations of the *Lehrstück* with Müller-Schöll as its explosion.²⁹

It is my contention that Müller's comedy, and his use of Brechtian estrangement as a technique of comedy, is exactly located at this threshold: it is not merely critical, a negative rejection, or a dismantling of the theatrical illusion; it is also at the same time affirmative of the possibilities of theater and theatricality without losing the critical ability. Müller-Schöll speaks of an affirmative dissolution of the boundaries of genre in this context.³⁰ Müller's comedy re-affirms and re-appropriates estrangement and alienation as a condition of liberation. It thus ties a revelatory and a transformative aspect, alienation and affirmation inextricably together. By doing that, Müller's *Hamletmaschine* also brings out a potentiality implicit in Brecht.

This threshold character of the comic technique comes to the fore in Benjamin's analysis of the core element of epic theater: the gesture which constitutes the event of a temporal arrest. Epic theater makes use of the method of freezing the gesticulating body into gestures. This method is made possible through the detached self-alienation of the actor, but by means of this self-alienation opens up a potential for comedic re-affirmation. Epic theater is characterized by a language of pure external typology rather than the transport of emotion from the interior to the exterior. It is the lack of the self-involved character of a theater intent on expressing the inner lives of its protagonists that opens up the experiences on display: This allows the spectator to remain detached as well and to find access to the exposed splits from this detached point of view.

Despite the later Brecht's own attempts to control and limit the process of estrangement³¹ and let the *gestus* take the place of those instances that guaranteed meaning and understanding in the tradition of hermeneutics (the place of intention), Brecht's notion of gesture continues to have an excessive aspect, highlighted by the gap the actor displays in the performed gesture.³² One example of such excess is the joke or pure fun—"reiner Spaß," to use Benjamin's term.³³ With his dialectic at a standstill, Benjamin insists on the uncalculable, uncanny, and excessive nature of the gesture in Brecht's theater that Müller seems to drive out more than Brecht himself: "The [state] which epic theatre reveals is the dialectic at a standstill. For just as, in Hegel, the sequence of time is not the mother of the dialectic but only the medium in which the dialectic manifests itself, so in epic theatre the dialectic is not born of the contradiction between successive statements or ways of behaving, but of the gesture itself."³⁴

It is on the level of the gesture that, on Benjamin's account, Franz Kafka and Brecht seem to be in conversation: "Kafka's entire work constitutes a code of gestures which surely had no definite symbolic meaning for the author from the outset, rather the author tried to address such a meaning in ever-changing contexts and experimental arrangements [*Versuchsanordnungen*]."³⁵ When Benjamin claims that Kafka addresses meaning in ever-changing contexts and experimental arrangements, he declares that the theater is actually the matrix of such experimental set-ups: "The theatre is the given place of such arrangements [*Das Theater ist der gegebene Ort solcher Versuchsanordnungen*]."³⁶ If the theater is indeed the place of such experimental arrangements of gestures lacking definitive symbolic meaning, then we can understand epic theater as a theater exploring its own space, a theater of theater. This should not be understood in terms of a self-reflective closure (theater only being involved with itself), but rather in terms of theater exploring the experience of the mechanisms and procedures that constitute us as persons within a public space. Giorgio Agamben puts this by saying that gesture is a form of pure expression without self-expression. In "Beyond Action," Agamben writes: "[T]he arts that we call performative constitute the example of a human action that seems to escape the category of purposiveness."³⁷

In *Die Hamletmaschine*, the gesture of entering and appearing never completes itself in terms of an action in the perfective sense. We are confronted with an estranged rearticulation of the play *Hamlet*, an alienated form of dramatic theater, an abstraction from established modes of significance. What would usually be moments of interruptions of an otherwise more or less dramatic play, here become the very play itself. And yet, what *Die Hamletmaschine* aims at with such interruptions is, on my account, not primarily destruction—despite Müller's self-declared reason for writing plays: "joy of destruction" ("Lust an der Zerstörung")—but rather *an affirmation of alienation*.

To be more precise, the play is marked by three models of internally connecting alienation and affirmation. The first model can be called “Hamlet” and consists of a hopeless commitment to the alienation of a lost tragedy (“I was Hamlet”). The second model, which we can call “Ophelia,” entails an affirmation of destruction (“Long live . . . death”). Finally, there is a third model, which I will call “Clown No. 2” or “pure joke,” a model developed in the intermediary section designated as “Scherzo” that plays with and exceeds the first two models. With these three models, Müller’s *Hamletmaschine* can be read as a tentative response to the question of how to affirm alienation itself—of how to refrain from merely functionalizing it for some other purpose and rather affirm alienation itself so as to turn it. Only the third model contains the hope of escaping the sense of alienation as a doom and destiny. Whereas Hamlet (or “Hamletdarsteller”/“actor playing Hamlet”) can only affirm alienation in the sense that he resigns himself to it, Ophelia affirms and enhances alienation to the point of self-extinction. Hamlet and Ophelia thereby display two modes of affirming alienation that remain aporetic. The intermediary part, the Scherzo, relates to these two models of resigned and destructive affirmation in such a manner that it becomes possible to move about in alienation. It does not leave alienation behind but exceeds it internally. Müller’s *Hamletmaschine* celebrates an affirmation of alienation which can let alienation go through its very affirmation. I will now briefly investigate these three models in turn.

II. Affirmation of Alienation

Hamlet

ACTOR PLAYING HAMLET: I am not Hamlet. I play
no role anymore.

—Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, 549/56

The actor playing Hamlet seems to mourn the loss of the tragedy—or rather: the mourning play (*Trauerspiel*)—of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Not being able to be a tragic hero and not having a drama of his own, this seems to be his tragedy: the absence, the loss of tragedy. At the same time, he—whoever he is—seems to be unable to truly become something else—a woman, a machine, the actor behind and independent of Hamlet—and so, in some way, he is stuck with this fate of “not-being-Hamlet.” As a “tragedy of reflection,” in Christoph Menke’s description,³⁸ Hamlet already suffered the fate of being able to distance himself from his fate through reflection and play. But in doing so, he evoked a new tragic potential by virtue of his skepticism. Müller’s “Hamlet,” or the “actor playing Hamlet” (*Hamletdarsteller*), can only play not to play Hamlet any more. That is his tragedy, a tragedy always on the brink of turning into a comedy.

Müller's play thus performs a special twist on G. W. F. Hegel's idea of tragedy as consisting in having a one-sided fate.³⁹ Here, the tragic fate seems to be the loss of such a character, without being able to become something else, for instance: the comic actor with his ever-changing masks that Hegel sees at play in a form of comedy which sublates tragedy. In some way, the figure we call "Hamlet" here is still clinging on to an idea of tragedy, but as something that is unattainable.⁴⁰ However, in this quasi-tragic mode, what Benjamin called the "inner lining" of mourning is already showing—a comic element. To be tragically and fatally attracted to, but at the same time blocked from tragedy in this postheroic manner cannot just literally be tragic. It is obviously comic at the same time. In Hamlet's (non-) entrance, the "BLABLA" sticks out as both intensifying but also interrupting the dismay and mourning of the loss of tragedy. A quasi-comic intervention, it operates as a placeholder for Hamlet's usual melancholy speeches as well as his comic wordplays reflecting on the mediality—here: textuality—of the play: "POLONIUS: . . . What do you read, my lord? HAMLET: Words, words, words."⁴¹ Müller's Hamlet is, like Shakespeare's, not just a tragic hero, but a clown: "SECOND CLOWN IN THE SPRING OF COMMUNISM."⁴² For Müller, it is the comic element of representation that provokes the reflection of its own condition. Only the clown questions the circus, as he writes with regard to his *Philoktet* (*Philoctetes*).⁴³ At the same time, it is undecidable whether the "BLABLA" stands in for what Hamlet said or for the account of the actor playing Hamlet. "BLABLA" takes the place of particular, meaningful words—which were already comically undermined in Hamlet's own excessive wordplays—both intensifying and substituting the absence of a tragedy of meaningful collision.

The seed of the meaninglessness exploited and acted out here is thus already to be found in *Hamlet*, the Shakespearean metatragedy or: *Trauerspiel*, the theatrical form tying mourning and play together. By means of all these features, the play seems to take the place that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* may have inhabited, perhaps somewhere between mourning its absence and dancing on its grave, exhibiting the fragmented and isolated quotations that undermine the referenced form they evoke as past, almost irretrievable.⁴⁴

The capitalized text in Müller's *Hamletmaschine* brings something performative to the page, to the reading of a written text. But it is exactly an empty, bluntly repetitive phrase that is highlighted ("BLABLA"), again marking and occluding the absence of a call for revolution. The "SECOND CLOWN" both denies agency for Hamlet and the "SECOND CLOWN IN THE SPRING OF COMMUNISM," and at the same time evokes a tradition of comic figures coming in pairs, very present in *Hamlet*. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern could both be called a SECOND CLOWN, as they come in interchangeable pairs; in the *commedia dell'arte* tradition that *Hamlet* is influenced by, the clown figures which are some kind of servant of the old men usually come in pairs, instead of the one single individual that Hamlet

here both is and is not. In the Scherzo of *Die Hamletmaschine*, Hamlet is said to dress up in women's clothes and to be dancing with Horatio. These comic moments of potentially turning into another—clown, woman, dancer—indeed appear only as an inner lining, showing here and there in Hamlet's passive tragedy of having lost tragedy, yet marking a potentiality of its other in this mode, of a comedy and a form of affirmation that is already indicated in Shakespeare's play. Yet Müller's "actor playing Hamlet" (*Hamletdarsteller*) has the excessively self-negating fate of both playing and not playing the role of another (namely Shakespeare's Hamlet), who already had that fate.

Ophelia/Elektra

One simply has to radicalize.

—Heiner Müller, at a rehearsal of *Die Hamletmaschine*,
Deutsches Theater, February 14, 1990⁴⁵

OPHELIA (CHOR/HAMLET): I am Ophelia.

—Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, 547/54

OPHELIA: *While two men in lab coats wrap her and the wheelchair from bottom to top in gauze bandages.* Here speaks Electra. In the heart of darkness. Under the sun of torture. To the cities of the world. In the name of the victims. . . .

—Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, 553/58

While Hamlet speaks in the past tense, of his loss of being Hamlet, Ophelia claims and affirms her role in the present tense, the mode of the here and now of theater. Yet, in the paratactical arrangement of sentences, it is also true that, as Ophelia, she claims: "this is Elektra speaking."⁴⁶ She is therefore not just introducing one degree of estrangement by presenting a character speaking in the voice of another, but also clearly rewriting the dynamics of both Orestes and Electra, Hamlet and Ophelia. Taking the place of the male Western intellectual, Ophelia/Elektra questions the dominant distribution of active/passive, subject/object.⁴⁷ Ophelia/Elektra does not merely invert these familiar oppositions but contaminates the contrast. Accordingly, the title of the final scene has the play end with the frozen gesture of Friedrich Hölderlin's "WILDHARREND"⁴⁸ as excessive in its very passivity. "Down with the joy of submission. Long live hate, contempt, rebellion, death. When she walks through your bedrooms carrying butcher knives you'll know the truth."⁴⁹ Müller's Ophelia is mostly read as being a proponent of revolution,⁵⁰ although she is obviously acting from the consciousness that violence will evoke more violence. While Hamlet

seems to mourn the loss of his tragic ability to act, Ophelia speaks in active verbs. And yet all her activity is an affirmation of negation: "I reject all of the semen that I received. I turn the milk of my breasts into deadly poison. I take back the world that I bore. I suffocate the world that I bore between my thighs."⁵¹

Rather than conceiving of violence instrumentally as a means used for and justified by the better, non-violent future it helps attain, she affirms the violence and the negation for their own sake ("Long live hate, contempt, rebellion, death"). Her gesture of taking back the world, a prominent trait in Müller's female characters,⁵² seems visible even in the paratactical way of speaking itself. There is no building, no development, no narrative structure leading up to something new that could develop out of these performatives. Wilson's production underlined this by having these sentences spoken in a mechanical way, and without any action or even motion. Instead of being instrumentalized by Hamlet (as one could characterize the way Ophelia's suicide works in Shakespeare's play), Ophelia insists on a pure affirmation of negation, blocking any instrumental appropriation.

Compared with Hamlet, Ophelia seems to affirm her role and capability in a pure and direct way, speaking authentically. And yet there is also something comic in this insistence, a comic (or comedic) form of authenticity. Ophelia's pure affirmation of herself is, at the same time, the negation of herself and her creation. In a reading of Immanuel Kant, Thomas Schestag identified such a comic, self-annihilating authenticity and traced it back to a hidden layer of meaning of the Greek *authentēs* as "killing with one's own hand, either oneself or another"⁵³ (which seem to be the options available to Ophelia/Electra). In Schestag's reading, Kant turns this operation of the *authentēs* into a murder of words, God saying to Hiob: I myself kill you. Ophelia speaks from such an impossible—Schestag calls it comic—position of authenticity: proving her own god-like position by negating the world she created (which she is part of, thus negating herself), rendering the speech act an impossible—comic—one.

While Hamlet is retreating into his own undivided (empty) self, Ophelia appears as affirmative, yet so excessively that her self seems to explode. Not only does she dissolve and disperse in the plurality of roles she takes on as Ophelia/Electra, but also with regard to her addressees: Addressing "the capitals of the world,"⁵⁴ speaking not in her own name but in the name of the victims, Ophelia's "Under the Sun of Torture"⁵⁵ quotes from Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.⁵⁶ "In the name of the victims," she calls on the "capitals of the world,"⁵⁷ invoking a Marxist and anti-colonial type of critique of global imperialism and the colonization of "others" that are excluded from the capitalist centers, in a gesture of transgressing various boundaries.

Such others are absent, and yet in this excessiveness Ophelia opens herself up to potential others, recalling Jacques Derrida's characterization

of Molly Bloom's affirmative voice (in James Joyce's *Ulysses*),⁵⁸ expanded by the telephone and the gramophone—evoking the “live voice” that is the primary organ of the theater, yet with an inbuilt distance and uncertainty of response—affirming the act of speaking itself (as in “yes, yes, hello—I am here”). In this sense, Ophelia seems to evoke the new forms of communication that Marx envisioned, foregrounding the mediality and technicality of the theater in the living voice of the actress that is always already beyond itself.⁵⁹ A new form of collective is potentially opened up here, in the plurality of the paratactical, excessive, and paradoxical calls Ophelia makes, which seems to correspond with the idea of the theater as a shared and yet divided space.

Clown no. 2 (or: Scherzo)

The monologues are the drama, in between the jokes.

—Heiner Müller on *Hamlet*⁶⁰

If we read the structure of the play as divided between Hamlet and Ophelia—playing some kind of joke on the traditional five-act structure of tragedy and the idea of “dialogue” at the heart of drama—we can see that the Scherzo comes to occupy the intermediary space. If we now understand the structure of the play itself as paratactical (a split without development or higher union), the Scherzo seems to reveal the inner lining of the play itself and presents us with Hamlet's and Ophelia's flipsides. In the middle of the play, it takes on the role of the Shakespearean play-within-the-play, reflecting its own conditions. It seems no coincidence that this was also the place in Müller's production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* where he inserted his *Die Hamletmaschine*. The Scherzo performs and displays an affirmation of the alienation that was exhibited in Hamlet's and Ophelia's aporetic positions and their oblique opposition. Turning them both, the Scherzo re-affirms the very possibilities of theater itself as comedy.

The word “scherzo,” meaning “joke” or “jest” in Italian, is related to the root verb *scherzare* (“to joke,” “to jest,” “to play”). It evokes the comic interludes we find in tragedies as well as the *lazzi* in *commedia dell'arte*, but it can also indicate a certain mode: Sometimes the word “scherzando” (“jokingly”) is used in musical notation to indicate that a passage should be executed in a playful manner⁶¹ (evoking, for instance, the lightheartedness of Friedrich Nietzsche's *gay science* that indicates a certain mode, not content⁶²). Scherzo thus evokes both an insertion and at the same time a particular mode that—just like the inner lining of the coat—is always present as a potential. Both characteristics of the Scherzo correspond to its central place in a paratactical structure of monologues that stand unmediated next to each other, divided and connected by the very gesture of turning itself, which receives its own act in this five-act play. In this vein, the Scherzo

in Müller's *Hamletmaschine* as the middle part, dividing and connecting "Hamlet" and "Ophelia," celebrates theater as comedy.

It is in this Scherzo that Hamlet dresses as a woman, and that Ophelia laughs. This laughter seems to echo a long series of female laughter, from the maid of Thales that Hans Blumenberg writes about⁶³ to Molly Bloom's *oui-dire* and *oui-rire*—a saying yes and laughing-yes that is both the condition of possibility of saying anything at all—affirmation of affirmation—and laughing at it, interrupting, corrupting it. The maid's laughter in Blumenberg's *Das Lachen der Thrakerin* (*The Laughter of the Thracian Woman*), understood as being a key for the "Archi-History of Theory," marks an interruption of the philosopher's observational authority, a failure and fault in knowing, a turn in the direction of the gaze. Laughter seems to be the comedic event *par excellence* that is disruptive and yet affirmative and cannot be planned, even if there is a special place for it, like here, in the script. It is also, as Sigmund Freud emphasizes, the most social form of exposing the unconscious and the repressed, compared, for example, to the dream, with which it shares many traits and mechanisms.

On the level of its sociality, the joke corresponds to the gesture which articulates the unconscious of the action in relation to others: An action becomes a *gestus*,⁶⁴ as Brecht argues, only when it is articulated in view of others ("im Hinblick auf andere"⁶⁵). The gesture thus becomes dialectical by drawing on a community which is inscribed in a linguistic medium whose laws are yet to come, as Müller-Schöll has shown. The unity this theater brings about can, as he emphasizes with and against Brecht, only exist in the play of differences, for example, in the kind of joke or fun (*Spaß*) of playing, acting, performing certain gestures in an alienated and yet affirmative way.

Wilson's production of Müller's *Hamletmaschine* does not end with Ophelia but rather with a figure I will call the "second clown." This speechless and nameless figure, easy to overlook and yet distinctly marked by its sparse, golden clothes, accompanies the play as a marginal figure. At the very end, however, it takes center place and literally divides the room. After all other figures have finally frozen in a posture, this clown—SECOND CLOWN IN THE SPRING OF COMMUNISM?—starts to hop on one foot. In accord with the closing music, but also out of phase, this clown jumps across the stage while all other figures remain stock-still in their posture. Finally, this jester jumps on a table that divides the stage diagonally. On this table the clown makes one last hop, only to then, suddenly, tilt from a vertical orientation with his torso and his leg to a horizontal one, stretching his arms. The clown quite literally performs a *Kippfigur* (a reversible figure or trick figure), some kind of *anamorphosis*, tilting the perspective from the vertical into the horizontal. This jester figure—the embodiment of a Scherzo, if you will—has the last "word" (as the Dionysian satyr in tragedy). Agamben describes how Pulcinella, the ridiculous *commedia dell'arte* character, is the one who

survives, in a certain posture that someone adopts after having surpassed his own time.⁶⁶ Clown No. 2 is and is not part of the others, not playing a part himself, but rather dividing the scene of the other roles (like the Scherzo does with the play). Instead of adding another—final—ending, it rather seems to perform—again, in paratactical movements—the Fermata upon the abrupt non-ending of the play. Not speaking but making sounds, Clown no. 2 marks the borders of language on stage, like laughter. The shaking or tremolo—of the actor? or of the role?—that we see the clown performing after he has tilted reverberates. Clown no. 2, rather than performing a genuine part—even the part of not having a part—is displaying an element of theater and comedy itself, an instance of “pure joke” and “pure means.” It enacts a form of laughter that can be understood—according to George Bataille’s reading of Hegel⁶⁷ (and Michel Foucault’s and Derrida’s readings of Bataille)—as an excess of alienation that is not dialectically sublated into a system where it can serve a function. The jester figure seems to be both the affirmation of the condition of possibility of theater, and the affirmation of its impossibility. In the place of a theater of successful, meaningful communication, it marks a sheer excess of an “and-yet,” the “even so” of survival: the comic event of an affirmation of alienation.

Notes

¹ Heiner Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, in *Werke*, vol. 4: *Stücke 2*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 2001), 544–54. In what follows, I will give the page numbers both of this German edition and the published English translation: *Hamletmachine*, in *Hamletmachine and Other Texts for the Stage*, ed. and trans. Carl Weber (New York: Performing Arts Journal, 1984), 49–58. I will occasionally modify the translation in view of the German text.

² It recalls the foundational scene constituting Greek theater from the religious ritual (Dionysian rites), in which one actor steps out of the chorus that is itself constituted as separate from him by that very move. See Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Theater und Mythos. Die Konstitution des Subjekts im Diskurs der antiken Tragödie* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991), 40.

³ Heiner Müller, *Gesammelte Irrtümer: Interviews und Gespräche 1* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1986), 115, my translation.

⁴ Berlin’s Maxim Gorki Theater performed a new production of *Die Hamletmaschine* in 2018. In this production, all figures are variations of clown figures, extending the notion of SECOND CLOWN IN THE SPRING OF COMMUNISM to the SECOND CLOWN IN THE ARAB SPRING.

⁵ This is not opposed to, but in line with the idea, that in doing so comedy may at the same time aim at “defeating” a certain type of theater (cf. Christoph Menke, “Defeat Theater!” in *Happy Days: Lebenswissen nach Cavell*, ed. Kathrin Thiele and Katrin Trüstedt [Munich: Fink, 2009], 135–39).

⁶ In his 2018 book on Pulcinella and the *commedia dell’arte*, Giorgio Agamben reflects on the relation not only between comedy and philosophy but also between

comedy and history—on Aristophanes' comedies and the disruption of Athens. He interprets the stance of comedy not as a flight from reality but rather as establishing itself in particular proximity to it (cf. Giorgio Agamben, *Pulcinella or Entertainment for Children* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018]). On this account, there is something metahistorical in such comedies that show the crisis, the disruption in itself.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, "What is Epic Theater? [Second Version]," in *Understanding Brecht*, introd. Stanley Mitchell, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Verso, 2003), 15–22, here 19.

⁸ At min. 4:48 of the performance video, recorded at Kunsthalle, Thalia Theater Hamburg.

⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, "Parataxis: On Hölderlin's Late Poetry," in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 109–52.

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, introd. Margaret Canovan, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹¹ Walter Benjamin, "Theater und Rundfunk," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II.2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 774; cf. Samuel Weber, *Theatricality as Medium* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 181.

¹² Cf. Benjamin, "What is Epic Theater? [Second Version]," 19.

¹³ As Roland Barthes has once pointed out: "Certainly the theater is that practice which calculates the observed place of things: if I put a spectacle here, the spectator will see this; if I put it elsewhere, he won't see it" (Roland Barthes, "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein," in *Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art and Representation* [New York: Hill and Wang, 1985], 89–97, here 89). In this sense, the spectator is situated in a theatrical laboratory of negotiating various forms and dynamics of (in-)visibility.

¹⁴ Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, "Theaterereignis," in *Ereignis. Eine fundamentale Kategorie der Zeiterfahrung. Anspruch und Aporien*, ed. Nikolaus Müller-Schöll (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2003), 323–30, here 324.

¹⁵ Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, "Theaterereignis," 323–30.

¹⁶ "[O]ur separateness . . . is the unity of our condition" (Stanley Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love. A Reading of King Lear," in *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976], 339). In Wilson's performance of *Die Hamletmaschine*, the ever new rearrangement of the space that is both shared and divided is displayed not as an external condition preceding the performance—being prepared temporally before the performance, and spatially hidden from view by light and curtains, sustained and organized by stage workers coming from the off stage and disappearing into it again (where they belong as the hidden conditions of every *on stage*). Instead, in this performance the turning and re-arranging is both part of the performance—in open view and on full display—and still interrupting it, creating a new relation also between audience and stage, on and off stage, actors and roles.

¹⁷ Bertolt Brecht, *Mr. Puntilla and His Man Matti*, trans. John Willett (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2007), Scene 1, p. 7.

¹⁸ See Hegel's, Benjamin's, and Agamben's ways of contrasting the fated protagonist and the comic subject; cf. Katrin Trüstedt, *Die Komödie der Tragödie* (Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2011), 47–71.

¹⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark*, in *The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare: Vol. 7* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

²⁰ Heiner Müller, "Fitzer + Keuner," in *Werke*, vol. 8: *Schriften*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 223–31, here 231.

²¹ See Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, *Theater des konstruktiven Defaitismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2002), 534: "Varianten des Brechtschen Lehrstücks."

²² Müller-Schöll, *Theater des konstruktiven Defaitismus*, 548, my translation: "In Abwesenheit einer transzendierenden Einspruchsinstanz bleiben die geäußerten Positionen unvermittelt nebeneinander stehen. Was wegfällt, ist die Möglichkeit der moralischen Rechtfertigung oder Verdammung des Gezeigten."

²³ Despite the fact that the credit for this ensemble's work largely went to Brecht.

²⁴ We can see in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* the comic potential of such alienation.

²⁵ Jürg Boner (*Dialektik und Theater* [Zurich: Zentrale der Studentenschaft, 1995]), for instance, describes the function of Brechtian estrangement as a critique of "alienated work" under capitalism in the Marxist sense. For Reinhold Grimm ("Von Novum Organum zum Kleinen Organon: Gedanken zur Verfremdung," in *Das Argemis Brecht*, ed. Willy Jäggi et al. [Basel: Basilius, 1961], 62–63), the revelatory and the transformative uses of "alienation" do not exclude one another. *Verfremdung* then not only estranges the seemingly "natural" but thereby "brings to light" the underlying processes of social alienation. In this understanding, social alienation can be fought and overcome through a clearer understanding, provided with the help of aesthetic estrangement. Cf. Phoebe von Held, *Alienation and Theatricality* (New York: Legenda, 2011), 27–33.

²⁶ "In the context of historical materialism, Marx reinterprets Hegel's idealist concept of the work of absolute spirit as the process of 'social work' (*gesellschaftliche Arbeit*), herein including the state, social, and cultural institutions. But the term 'alienation,' for Marx, assumes a critical meaning, as he no longer sees it as an inevitable process relevant for humankind but an inhuman and thus inappropriate form of reification, manifested by 'alienated work.' It is precisely here that Boner situates the function of Brechtian alienation. This interpretation implies a synthesized reception of Marx and Hegel on the part of Brecht. . . . Boner proposes yet another binary mode of reading Brechtian alienation. He intimates that Brechtian *Verfremdung* intends to instigate a process of critical thinking rather than literally retracing the entire movement from negation to the negation of the negation" (Phoebe von Held, *Alienation and Theatricality*, 29–30). Von Held points out that Jan Knopf gives a different reading, opposed to Boner's interpretation, in which *Verfremdung* "defines the negation of social alienation, a sort of de-alienation which would constitute a second implicit dialectical movement" (*ibid.*, 30).

²⁷ Cf. Müller-Schöll, *Theater des konstruktiven Defaitismus*, 535: "Gemeinsam ist diesen Versuchen wie den Anmerkungen zur Aufführungspraxis, die sie ergänzen, dass sie das Modell des 'Lehrstücks' ebenso zerlegen wie die Versuchsanordnung von 'Quartett' dasjenige der 'moralischen Anstalt.'"

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 536: "[als sei] hier irgendein Kern der Dramatik explodiert."

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*: "Müllers erklärtes 'Hauptinteresse beim Stückeschreiben, . . . Dinge zu zerstören,' äußert sich in 'Quartett,' 'Auftrag,' 'Verkommenes Ufer' und 'Die Hamletmaschine' in der sukzessiven Auflösung der Folien, derer sich die Dramatik bedienen kann."

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*: "[D]as spezifische von Müllers Arbeit an einem Theater der A-Identität: Seine 'affirmative' Auflösung der Grenzen, denen sich die übernommenen Gattungsmuster verdanken."

³¹ Cf. "Kurze Beschreibung einer neuen Technik der Schauspielkunst, die einen Verfremdungseffekt hervorbringt," *BFA* 22, 635: "Das Selbstverständliche wird in gewisser Weise unverständlich gemacht, das geschieht aber nur, um es dann um so verständlicher zu machen." ("Short Description of a New Technique of Acting That Produces a *Verfremdung* Effect," in *Brecht on Theatre*, 3rd ed., ed. Marc Silberman, Steve Giles, and Tom Kuhn [London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015], 192: "The obvious is in a certain sense made incomprehensible, but this is only in order that it may then be made all the easier to comprehend.")

³² Cf. Müller-Schöll, *Theater des konstruktiven Defaitismus*, 304.

³³ Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. I.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 203–409, here 304. (Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* [London and New York: Verso, 2003], 125–26: "Comedy—or more precisely: the pure joke [*reine Spaß*—]is the essential inner side of mourning which from time to time, like the lining of a dress at the hem or lapel, makes its presence felt. Its representative is linked to the representative of mourning.")

³⁴ Walter Benjamin, "What is epic theater [First Version]," in *Understanding Brecht*, 1–14, here 12. Müller-Schöll, *Theater des konstruktiven Defaitismus*, 304–5: "Wo Brecht dazu tendiert, eine stehende Invariante einzuführen, da insistiert Benjamin auf dem dialektischen Bild oder der Dialektik im Stillstand als der einzig denkbaren (und letztlich auch genau nicht mehr denkbaren) Invariante. Wo Brecht sich an dasjenige hält, was berechenbar ist, insistiert Benjamin auf dem unberechenbaren, ungeheuerlichen oder unheimlichen 'über.'"

³⁵ Walter Benjamin, "Franz Kafka: Zur zehnten Wiederkehr seines Todestages," in *Benjamin über Kafka: Texte, Briefzeugnisse, Aufzeichnungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 18, my translation. The German original reads: ". . . dass Kafkas ganzes Werk einen Kodex von Gesten darstellt, die keineswegs von Hause aus für den Verfasser eine sichere symbolische Bedeutung haben, vielmehr in immer wieder anderen Zusammenhängen und Versuchsanordnungen um eine solche angegangen werden."

³⁶ Benjamin, *Benjamin über Kafka*, 18, my translation. Rainer Nägele describes the theater machine as a "machine of phenomenalization." Against this background, theater is revealed as the "model of representation itself [*Darstellung überhaupt*]." See Rainer Nägele, "Mèchanè. Einmaliges in der mechanischen Reproduzierbarkeit,"

in *Hölderlins Kritik der poetischen Vernunft* (Basel: Engler, 2005), 133–49, here 137–38.

³⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Karman. A Brief Treatise on Action, Guilt, and Gesture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 80.

³⁸ Christoph Menke, *Tragic Play: Irony and Theater from Sophocles to Beckett*, trans. James Phillips (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

³⁹ Antigone and Creon are Hegel's paradigmatic cases: Each of them represents a one-sided normative standpoint unable to enter into a negotiation with the other; a one-sidedness that in modernity takes on the shape of fate as character, the paradigmatic case being: Macbeth.

⁴⁰ We could continue to call what defines this standpoint a "tragic desire," extending a notion developed in Nietzsche and Alenka Zupančič.

⁴¹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: Norton, 1997), 1683–784, here II.2, 191–92.

⁴² Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, 545/53.

⁴³ "Komik in der Darstellung provoziert die Diskussion seiner Voraussetzungen [i.e. der Voraussetzungen des Ablaufs, Anm. K.T.]. Nur der Clown stellt den Zirkus in Frage. Philoktet, Odysseus, Neoptolemos: drei Clowns und Gladiatoren ihrer Weltanschauungen" (Heiner Müller, "Drei Punkte [Material zu Philoktet]," in *Mauser* [Berlin: VERLAG, 1978], 72–73, here 73)). See also Christoph Menke, *Tragic Play: Irony and Theater from Sophocles to Beckett* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 168: "The characters in *Philoktet* are not only gladiators who fight one another to the death for the sake of their goals and values. They are equally 'clowns' who merely playact a fight to the death—dramatic realizations of the actor's consciousness." And further on: "The reflective attitude that they [i.e. Odysseus and Philoktetes, Anm. K.T.] have both attained does not make the conflicts between them disappear. On the contrary: a conflict breaks out between them that differs structurally from the conflict of traditional heroes, while surpassing it in tragic hopelessness. For the conflict between Odysseus and Philoktetes is a conflict through, even from, reflection. The tragic nature of their conflict is therefore a result of the very attitude that, nourished in the force of the self-consciousness of playacting, was supposed to dissolve the tragic nature of conflicts" (ibid., 172).

⁴⁴ Cf. Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*.

⁴⁵ *Regie: Heiner Müller. Material zu Der Lohndrucker 1988, Hamlet/Maschine 1990, Mauser 1991*, ed. Martin Linzer and Peter Ullrich (Berlin: Zentrum für Theaterdokumentation und -information, 1993), 112.

⁴⁶ Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, 554/58.

⁴⁷ Cf. Georgina Paul, *Perspectives on Gender in Post-1945 German Literature* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), 189–200.

⁴⁸ Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, 553/58.

⁴⁹ Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, 554/58.

⁵⁰ One of the allusions in the last sentence points to Ulrike Meinhof destroying the apartment she used to share with her husband, throwing furniture out of

the windows—Müller was apparently very impressed by that image of Meinhof destroying the bourgeois stage of her marriage, the interior structuring bourgeois life and sexuality.

⁵¹ Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, 554/58.

⁵² Cf. *ibid.*

⁵³ Thomas Schestag, “Komische Authentizität,” in *Theorie der Komödie—Poetik der Komödie*, ed. Ralf Simon (Bielefeld 2001), 141–56, here 147.

⁵⁴ Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, 554/58.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Jean Jourdeuil, “Die Hamletmaschine,” in *Heiner Müller Handbuch: Leben, Werk, Wirkung*, ed. Hans-Thies Lehmann et al. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), 221–27, here 226.

⁵⁷ Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, 554/58.

⁵⁸ Jacques Derrida, “Ulysses Gramophone: Hear say yes in Joyce,” trans. Tina Kendall, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), 253–309.

⁵⁹ Cf. Bettine Menke, *Prosopopöia. Stimme und Text bei Brentano, Hoffmann, Kleist und Kafka* (Munich: Fink, 2000).

⁶⁰ *Regie: Heiner Müller*, ed. Martin Linzer and Peter Ullrich (Berlin: Zentrum für Theaterdokumentation und -information, 1993).

⁶¹ To quote from the Encyclopaedia Britannica: “Scherzo, plural scherzos or scherzi, in music, frequently the third movement of a symphony, sonata, or string quartet; also, in the Baroque era (c. 1600–c. 1750), a light vocal or instrumental piece (e.g., the Scherzi musicali of Claudio Monteverdi, 1607). . . . Unlike the rather stately minuet, originally a dance of the aristocracy, the scherzo in rapid 3/4 time was replete with elements of surprise in dynamics and orchestration.” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Scherzo,” last modified January 24, 2011, <https://www.britannica.com/art/scherzo>.

⁶² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁶³ Hans Blumenberg, *Das Lachen der Thrakerin. Eine Urgeschichte der Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987).

⁶⁴ On the distinction between gesture and *gestus* see Müller-Schöll, “Exkurs: Brechts Gesten,” in *Theater des konstruktiven Defaitismus*, 299–300.

⁶⁵ “[Über den Gestus],” *BFA* 22.2, 617: “Ein Mann, seinen Gott anrufend, wird bei dieser Definition erst ein Gestus, wenn dies im Hinblick auf andere geschieht oder in einem Zusammenhang, wo eben Beziehungen von Menschen zu Menschen auftauchen.” (“According to this definition, a man calling on his God will only turn into a *gestus* when this happens with regard to others or in a context involving interpersonal relationships.”)

⁶⁶ Cf. Agamben, *Pulcinella*.

⁶⁷ Georges Bataille, “Méthode de méditation,” in *L'expérience intérieure* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 287.

Frühneuzeitliche Figuren in der späten Neuzeit: Zur Wiederkehr des “Chors der Komödie” im Gegenwartstheater nach Brecht

Ausgehend von einer Äußerung des für sein Chortheater berühmt gewordenen Einar Schleeß, wonach seine zwei Anliegen waren, den Chor und das “Stegreifspiel” auf die Bühne zurückzuführen, entwickelt der Aufsatz die These, dass der Harlekin mit einem Bonmot Jean Pauls als “Chor der Komödie” zu begreifen ist. Nach einer Darstellung der Spezifik des Harlekins und der mit der *Commedia dell’arte* verbundenen Theaterauffassung wird daran erinnert, dass diese komische Figur nicht von ungefähr in dem Moment wiederentdeckt wird, wo das Theater sich gegen die mit der Austreibung des “Hanswurst” verbundene Verarmung des Theaters wendet. Von den Theateravantgarden um 1900 und speziell von Brechts Lustspiel *Mann ist Mann*, dem ersten explizit “epischen” Theaterstück, führt eine Traditionslinie der Wiederentdeckung des Harlekins in die Gegenwart der Performance Art, die eine Parallele zur Wiederentdeckung des Chores aufweist: Hier wie da wird das “bürgerliche” Theater dekonstruiert, das sich zwischen der frühen Neuzeit und dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert herausbildet. Dessen Theoretikern wie Akteuren war an einem Drama der Selbstversicherung des Subjekts gelegen. Dagegen erinnern Arbeiten von Gruppen wie Forced Entertainment an jene Reste, die in keiner wie auch immer gearteten Ordnung aufgehen. Dies wird abschließend am Beispiel von Tim Etchells chorischer Arbeit *As Night Follows Day* ausgeführt.

The director Einar Schleeß, who was famous for his choric theater, once stated that what interested him most next to the reintroduction of the chorus on stage was the return of the *Stegreifspiel* (improvised comedy). Taking up Schleeß’s interest in these two seemingly disparate elements of early modern theater, this essay argues—in accordance with one of Jean Paul’s witticisms—that the Harlequin should be understood as the “chorus of the comedy.” After discussing the specific characteristics of the Harlequin within the context of the *commedia dell’arte*, the essay explains how this comic figure is rediscovered at the very moment when the theater finally acts upon the realization that it has been impoverished by the literal as well as figurative expulsion of the Harlequin. The rediscovery of the Harlequin can be traced from the theater avantgardes around 1900—and especially from Brecht’s *Lustspiel* (comedy) *Mann ist Mann* (*Man Equals Man*), the first explicitly “epic” theater play—to contemporary performance art, and it is comparable to the concurrent return of the chorus: both deconstruct the “bourgeois” theater which emerges between early modernity and the late nineteenth century and whose theoreticians as well as participants espouse a drama of the self-reassurance of the subject. By contrast, the work of groups such as Forced Entertainment reminds us of those remainders which do not fit into any kind of order. This is finally discussed by using Tim Etchell’s choric performance project *As Night Follows Day* as an example.

Early Modern Characters in the Late Modern Age: On the Return of the “Chorus of Comedy” in Contemporary Performance Practices after Brecht

Nikolaus Müller-Schöll

A Puzzling Statement: The Chorus and the German Improvised Comedy (*Stegreifspiel*)

The starting point for my deliberations in this article is a statement made by Einar Schleef which, at first glance, is puzzling and certainly gives us a lot to think about. In an unpublished interview he gave during the rehearsals for a staging of Bertolt Brecht’s *Mr. Puntila and His Man Matti*, the theater practitioner and theater theoretician made the following remark:

Ich habe probiert, den Chor wieder auf die Bühne zurückzuführen, und das zweite Anliegen ist das Stegreifspiel; gegen diese auswendig gelernten Texte, dieses Abgedudel.¹

I have tried to lead the chorus back to the stage, and my second interest is the improvised comedy; in opposition to those texts that are learned off by heart, that rattling off of texts.

Even if you take this statement to be a mere witty remark, it is still remarkable that Schleef equates his great achievement—bringing the chorus back to the stage of the contemporary theater—with, as he says, this “second interest,” the improvised comedy (*Stegreifspiel*), which he sees as the German version of the *commedia dell’arte*. This raises many questions: Do leading the chorus back to the stage and the revival of the improvised comedy have something in common? And, if so, to which extent is the thing that they have in common connected with the major project undertaken by Schleef and other theater practitioners after (or *nach*) Brecht, that is, the dismantling or deconstruction of the theater model that still dominates all German municipal and state theaters today—in spite of a myriad of avant-gardist efforts?

I would like to examine these questions by starting with a hypothesis that I have derived from a statement made by Jean Paul, in which the chorus and the improvised comedy converge once more. In his *Introduction to Aesthetics*, he describes the Harlequin or, rather, his German pendant, Hanswurst, as “Chor der Komödie”² (“the chorus of comedy”). As I would like to show—if we think about it in connection with recent theoretical and practical theatrical works that deal with the chorus and the improvised comedy—this rather intuitive interpretation allows us to reevaluate the

remarkable separation that begins to take place in the mid-eighteenth century with the formation of a bourgeois, that is, the modern theater. The Harlequin, in his appearance originating in the Middle Ages, must be banished from this bourgeois theater of the eighteenth century or be transformed into something unrecognizable, because he is not in any way compatible with this reformed institution that has been enlisted to serve enlightenment, reason, and the bourgeois subject—and for reasons that go further than those repeatedly named by contemporaries and in historical accounts. In comic theater up until the eighteenth century, the Harlequin likely stood for a function that, although with a different tendency, was inherent to the chorus in the old, that is, ancient comedy. As in the ancient comedy, the Harlequin as a *shifter* allows the audience to take part in a ritual initiation, as it were, but of a paradoxical nature: In a kind of rite of singularity, he allows the audience to experience a constitutive a-sociality, a permanent *changeability*. It is this characteristic that underlies the Harlequin's return to the theater of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

1. The Origin and Development of the Harlequin; What We Know of the Harlequin

In terms of its form, that which will later be described by Carlo Goldoni as the *commedia dell'arte*, in which *Arlecchino* or the Harlequin will appear, originated in the comic performances of the Middle Ages, in the carnival, in the *sacre rappresentazioni* and court festivities, and also in the *commedia erudita*. But, first and foremost, what we know of the Harlequin and the *commedia dell'arte* goes back to the success of the Italians in France. In 1630, wandering Italian theater groups began journeying there regularly. Soon afterwards, they fused with the French tradition of the farce, with Gros-Guillaume, Turlupin, Gaultier-Garguille and others—that is to say, with a theater that took place in the open air, on squares, streets, and bridges, competing with other amusements and spectacles, and often related to the selling of all kinds of so-called remedies. In 1653, the Ancienne Troupe de la Comédie Italienne (today considered the most famous troupe) was formed in Paris, where it shared the Palais Royal with the Troupe de Molière from 1660.³ Evaristo Gheradi began playing *Arlecchino* in the Comédie Italienne in 1680 and would later capture their plays in six volumes.⁴ Significantly, the moment that this form of theater, which had long been transitory, was recorded on paper was the beginning of its downfall and disappearance. A century later, between 1779 and 1783, three pieces written by Florian appeared as an obituary to this theater form and were written in line with the Diderotian genre of *drame bourgeois*. Between them lay the establishment of this form of theater in fixed buildings, the introduction of stage sets and stage machinery, of roles and psychology, and of literarization; the abolition of masks and servant characters (in Goldoni's

plays, object of a quarrel with his opponent Carlo Gozzi) and, associated with all this, the dispersal of the features that had been characteristic of the superseded form: Static character types performed wearing masks, which were taken off every now and then, within coarsely outlined *canovacci* or *scenari* and supplemented predefined speeches—which expressed, for example, “pleas, allegations, threats, desperation, scenes of jealousy, or laments of love”—through improvisations, they weaved in *lazzi* (i.e., links, schematic puns, and in-jokes) as well as pantomimes and tricks.

And this was the environment in which the Harlequin emerged: Zan Ganassa, aka Alberto Naseli, is considered to have been the first to play him; the first testaments to the Harlequin in image and word date to around 1570. He is a poor fellow, a servant from Bergamo, who hides his poverty, who is always hungry and thirsty, always trying to copulate, who is alert, funny, jolly, witty, ingenious, quick-witted, and who preempts good and evil, but with characteristics that sometimes seem infernal, reminiscent of the comic devil of the medieval mystery plays, the vice of English moralities, the awkward farmer of the farces and Shrovetide plays, the rude shepherds of Christmas Plays, the stubborn servants of the Easter Plays, and the stupid and prudent servants of Renaissance comedies. Incidentally, the Harlequin is above all elastic and able to adapt, with an inexhaustible “pleasure to transform,” which is why Richard Alewyn described him as the “epitome of the absolute and universal actor” (“Inbegriff des absoluten und universalen Schauspielers”⁵) to which he attributes a “disarticulated archi-comicality and infinity of facial expressions”⁶ (“ungegliederte Urkomik und Allmimik”). He was also considered a chameleon and a man of metamorphoses,⁷ and it was no coincidence that, in the Italian theater, he was frequently played by acrobats. This character type can be described concisely using an old Maoist saying: good at everything but good for nothing.

The reason why the Harlequin was banished from the stage in the eighteenth century, both in a figurative and literal sense,⁸ has been explained time and time again: Many have seen his banishment as part of the bourgeois theater reforms that assigned the theater a moral and educational function and that bid farewell to the farce on behalf of the sentimental *comédie larmoyante* or “true comedy.”⁹ The names of Johann Christoph Gottsched, Johann Jakob Bodmer, Johann Jakob Breitinger, Philippe Nericault Destouche, Pierre-Claude Nivelle de La Chaussee, Christian Fürchtegott Gellert and, of course, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing would have to be mentioned in the German and French context. According to an explanation that is still influential, these comedies are part of a development “from the stock character type to the psychological character,” from the raw wandering actor to the sentimental subject, and this development can be interpreted as a “humanization” or an “upgrade in the direction of human kindness.”¹⁰ In this tradition of interpretation, Pierre de Marivaux is the

one who adds a sentimental dimension to the Harlequin. Social history has traditionally understood the comic character in terms of its function, which was to relieve the pressure that the onward march of civilization exerted on the individual, but which was no longer considered necessary in the Age of Enlightenment.¹¹ This stands in contrast to recent studies, which have shown that the Harlequins initially continued performing in spite of the efforts of theater reformers.

These explanations seem to be convincing within their context but do not allow us to understand—in Alewyn's words of pathos, fed by the consciousness that he is alone with his views—the "heaviest loss the theater ever suffered,"¹² that is, the historic rupture that the Harlequin's banishment actually constitutes, the prohibition against the improvised comedy and the gradual replacement of Harlequinades and farce with other, supposedly higher forms of comedy and the comic. It is only possible to understand this *caesura* if you view the material that has been passed down from a perspective that no longer sees the *telos* of the forms considered to be pre-literary in the literary theater and if you are therefore able to restructure the narrative of the history of genres in a way that is no longer founded on a more or less hidden background in the history of philosophy.¹³

2. "The Chorus of Comedy"

A perspective like this can be developed not least based on Jean Paul's *Introduction to Aesthetics*, in which, as already indicated, we find a remarkable characterization of the Harlequin:

Er ist der Chor der Komödie. Wie in der Tragödie der Chor den Zuschauer antizipierte und vorausspielte und wie er mit lyrischer Erhebung über den Personen schwebte, ohne eine zu sein: So soll der Harlekin, ohne selber einen Charakter zu haben, gleichsam der Repräsentant der komischen Stimmung sein und ohne Leidenschaft und Interesse alles bloß spielen, als der wahre Gott des Lachens, der personifizierte Humor.¹⁴

He is the chorus of the comedy. Just like the chorus anticipated and pre-enacted the spectator in tragedy, and just like it floated above the characters in literary exaltation without itself being a character, the Harlequin, without himself having a character, was supposed to represent the comic atmosphere and simply played everything, without passion or interest, as the true god of laughter, as humor personified.

It might initially seem odd that this statement describes an individual, the Harlequin, as a chorus. How can an actor become a chorus or, *vice versa*, how can a chorus speak with one voice? Jean Paul does not actually solve this puzzle, neither does he provide any information about where his concept

or his knowledge of the chorus in tragedy comes from, but the publication date of his writings, the year 1804, and the period in which they were written, between fall 1803 and spring 1804, suggest that he is referring to the prologue to Friedrich Schiller's *The Bride of Messina*, which appeared in 1803—that is, to the treatise “On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy” (“Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie”¹⁵).

Schiller stresses how the chorus suspends illusion and breaks the power of affects in tragedy, which allows the spectator to retain “his freedom, even during the most fervent of passions” (“auch in der heftigsten Passion seine Freiheit”¹⁶), which prevents him from getting mixed up with the material, instead allowing him to “float above it” (“über demselben schweben”¹⁷). At the same time, he sees in the chorus a “natural theater” (“natürliches Theater”¹⁸) constructed within the theater because the chorus investigates the tragic characters as a judging witness, which leads them to prudence and dignity in their actions and speech. Schiller thereby emphasizes the unity of the ancient chorus, saying that he uses it as the “single ideal character” (“einzige ideale Person”) that it was in times past, which “carries and accompanies the entire plot” (“die ganze Handlung trägt und begleitet”¹⁹).

The affinity between the properties assigned by Jean Paul to the Harlequin as the chorus of the comedy and Schiller's definitions is obvious: Whereas the many members of the chorus appear to Schiller as one single, ideal “character” (“Person”), Jean Paul views the Harlequin in turn as a chorus within a single “character” (“Person”). Like Schiller's chorus, Jean Paul's Harlequin breaks the illusion. At another point, Jean Paul explains that this occurs because the Harlequin renews and fixes “the contrast between his consciousness and his performance in every minute” (“jede Minute den Kontrast zwischen seinem Bewusstsein und seinem Spiele”²⁰). Like Schiller's chorus, he is not a “Person,” not a character, and like Schiller's chorus, he is assigned the passionless and uninterested function of a carrier, a companion, a witness, and a judge of the action, that is, ultimately, of a kind of neutral entity and, therefore, that of a mere performer. He is assigned precisely the function of (in Alewyn's words) an absolute actor²¹—of a bare medium²² that exhibits itself within him as such.

This interpretation corresponds with the myriad of Harlequin pieces, the titles of which can be found in bibliographies: “Arlequin esclave par les turcs, Arlequin déserteur, Arlequin bohémien ou la gaillote angravée, Arlequin garçon marchand et esclave par amour” etc.²³ The Harlequin appears here as a kind of ubiquitous hero in ever-new adventures, which, upon closer inspection, modify and parody earnest material from ancient and contemporary literature. What is special about the concept of the actor inherent to the Harlequin can perhaps be illustrated by making recourse to a familiar pattern of structuralist theater theory. Theater there is defined by the formula: A impersonates B, while C watches, and A is an actor who slips into different characters that are part of the written plays being performed.

In contrast to this model, the Harlequin appears as A, who wears mask H, and it is this mask H in which B is played, while C watches. A, the player, disappears with the mask and becomes identical with it, up to the point that, even in his private life, he is now only known by the name of his mask. Accordingly, in an unpublished manuscript of a play by Alain-René Lesage we read: "to be performed again in the fairground theater if there is a good Harlequin."²⁴ We do not find that which would seem typical today: "if you have an actor who is good at playing the Harlequin." The Harlequin, in other words, is the absolute actor to the extent that, within him, representing, standing for something else, obtains its own momentum. His mask separates him as a performance character or *persona* (that takes on numerous roles, for example that of a slave, a deserter, a bohemian, a merchant, or a lover, not seldom in one and the same play) from the wearer of the masks, who, as such, does not play any role, as it separates him from the assumed character, in which he, by way of his mask, always remains a foreign body, a performer who is visible as such. The Harlequin is never just the role played by an actor, never just the mask merging with his adventures, but always something twofold, a link between the wearer of masks and role play, linking both, but still separating them at the same time. We could thus describe his theater using a formula from Walter Benjamin's "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" ("Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen"²⁵) as pure "communicability,"²⁶ or, as we could say with regard to his state of permanent change, as one of *changeability*.

On the basis of a heightened awareness for passages of choric speech, which refer to the *hic et nunc* of the production—an awareness heightened by discussions of the *performative* in the theater—Anton Bierl presented a reinterpretation of the chorus of old, that is, ancient Greek comedy some years ago, which opens up interesting perspectives in relation to the context of the Harlequin as the chorus of the new comedy. According to Bierl, in a "society based on the orality of communication, which largely defined itself through myth and ritual," the chorus was a central site of socialization, of the reactualization of "initiatory rites," which were "part of the reality of Greek life everywhere" ("initiatorischer Riten, die überall zur griechischen Lebenswirklichkeit [gehörten]"²⁷). For Bierl, the chorus of the old comedy not only disrupted the action in an anti-illusionist way, as a parabasis in the play, but was also a means "to involve the entire city including its gods in an extensive experience of festive complementarity."²⁸ He defines the chorus concisely as a "*shifter* between the fictional events on the stage and the polis," the *choreuts* as "artificial, non-referential, and non-mimetic masked figures without any fixed, continuous identity on the stage," who in part play a character but simultaneously fulfill the "non-mimetic function of divine worship in song and dance. One might say that they created the atmosphere in which the actors then developed their plot."²⁹

It is difficult to judge whether Jean Paul had in-depth knowledge of the chorus of the old comedy, but it is clear that Bierl's insights from his investigations into the old chorus can be applied to the new chorus of the comedy, that is, to the Harlequin. While Bierl says that the choric players "mostly only played themselves,"³⁰ Rudolf Münz describes their mere appearance as the "'message' of the representatives of the Harlequin principle," in which he sees an "expression of insubordination . . . for example, against the myriad of social norms and restraints."³¹ In his own way, the Harlequin therefore also serves the purpose of cultural socialization and, as in the case of the old chorus, an older order pushes into the more recent one within him. Whereas the chorus had to do with ritual, the Harlequin has to do with—as Ulrike Haß develops in her deliberations on the Harlequin—the episteme of resemblance in the late Middle Ages. Whereas the ancient chorus's initiatory function that created the atmosphere stood in opposition to its referential and mimetic function, in the case of the Harlequin, this latter function stands in opposition to a "lattice of rules that the *Commedia dell'arte* covers the actors with like a mask"³² (Ulrike Haß). In this, we might find a different formula for what Jean Paul describes as the comic "mood" ("Stimmung"³³) represented by the Harlequin. Although there is a similar constellation, we can discern an altogether different tendency of the old and the new chorus respectively and, accordingly, an altogether different mode of cultural socialization: Whereas the old chorus can be viewed as an essentially social agency, the Harlequin is an essentially a-social agency. His performance can be understood as a paradoxical ritual for the purpose of experiencing or rather practicing the changeability and therefore the instability of the given order. What he lets the audience experience is less festive complementarity than the indissoluble potential of difference.

3. The Return of the Harlequin in Brecht, Tim Etchells, and Forced Entertainment

If, to a certain extent, the disappearance of the chorus and the Harlequin was the prerequisite for the establishment of a bourgeois theater (and when it comes to the Harlequin, this is illustrated by Jean-François Marmontel in his entry on farce in Denis Diderot and Jean le Ron d'Alembert's encyclopedia with a clarity that leaves nothing to be desired³⁴) then it is perhaps unsurprising that, with the different forms of an anti-bourgeois theater—or a theater that acts as if it is anti-bourgeois—the buried tradition of the Harlequin has been re-exhumed. There have been numerous examples of this. They range from Edward Gordon Craig, Vsevolod Meyerhold and Max Reinhardt, to Jean-Louis Barrault, Dario Fo, Ariane Mnouchkine, Benno Besson, Giorgio Strehler, Roberto Ciulli, and René Pollesch. In the same breath, mention could also be made of the numerous revivals of the *com-media* in the fine arts, for example, in paintings by Paul Cezanne, Pablo

Picasso, Joan Miró, Paul Klee, Fernand Léger, André Derain, Max Beckmann, Karl Hofer, Wassily Kandinsky, and Jackson Pollock. And, of course, we would have to talk about independent and alternative theater forms, of the "clowns and fools" movement, of the use of masks, and forms of the *commedia* in puppet and children's theater.³⁵ It is also worth mentioning *pars pro toto* that Brecht, in the act of founding his "Epic Theater," introduced precisely that materialistic Harlequin who only ever thinks of his physical wellbeing—the Harlequin who had been banished from the stage in the German Mourning Play of the eighteenth century, to which Brecht bids farewell—in the figure of Galy Gay.³⁶

However, with regard to the idea of the choric illuminated here, of the medium that lets us experience its changeability and the different understanding of the relationship between performer and impersonated character, there seems to be one example from the recent past worth mentioning. This example comes from the field of performance art, which by no means can be characterized sufficiently by simply differentiating between the actor in a dramatic play (who, according to conventional theories, plays someone else) and the performer in devised theater (who, in contrast, stands for him- or herself): the theater of Tim Etchells and Forced Entertainment.

I would like to formulate my thoughts based on an exceptional piece of work that allows us to see something in its difference to other works that we would not otherwise become aware of at first glance, that is, Tim Etchell's chorus-theater production of *That Night Follows Day* at the Victoria Theater in Ghent.³⁷ Seventeen children standing before us in a row in the middle of a stage that is reminiscent of a gymnasium look at us, without ceremony, without acting cool, without any show. They do not pretend to perform for us, they simply address us and tell us in different-sized choruses the kinds of things we do with children: "You choose our clothing. You sing to us. You watch us while we sleep. You tell us that the world is round. You tell us stories. You tell us that the shadows are nothing to be afraid of. You tell us that the sound that we sometimes hear is just the wind in the trees."³⁸ The sentences they speak also chart, as it were, how adults tailor the world for children and let them feel at home in it. A whole world theater in miniature, which contains everything that the children's world is made up of: the everyday, the curious, the evil, the sweet, the comical. It ranges from their first questions (the fertilization of the egg cell by the sperm) to the last (the color of death); it encompasses questions of the everyday as well as all of the awkward questions that are usually left out. Always in the same form, starting with "You," the children talk about what adults say to them, what they ask, teach, address, forbid, what they buy, what they do to earn their children's admiration, and the stories they tell them.

The children perform or, rather, play in everyday clothing. When they are not performing, they sit on chairs at the back of the stage or climb onto bars fixed to the wall. There are breaks every now and then, during which

the children play with each other on stage: They try to catch each other, take away each other's shoes and throw them at each other, they scuffle. As you can read in a short essay written about the staging, for Etchells, it was about finding a form that would allow the children to stand on stage as themselves, to exhibit their own existence, to be there, to say who they are in a way that might seem tautological at first, by describing the kind of discourse that has made them become what we see them as.³⁹ However, by seemingly tautologically describing how the image that we see in front of us was constituted, the image of a supposedly homogeneous group of young people, the posited form of the chorus lets us see each of their different manners of speaking, their different gestures, tones and gazes, and their many insignificant mannerisms. In short: the *way* in which they fulfill the task in the order prescribed by the rules of the performance emerges, and, with it, that which breaks with all rules in its own specific way, the specific singularity, out of which an individual by negotiating the rules of a chorus (just like those of a community or a society) may emerge, but which continuously re-questions every form of individuality. Maybe it is the respective Otherness of each one of these seventeen children that draws our attention to this performance, which, as an action, is not characterized by much tension or development. In any case, precisely because of its prescribed uniformity—its choric principle—the performance lets something emerge in the speech of the united children through the potential that exceeds every image and every community: the seventeen personalities that result from different negotiations of the prescribed sentences and rules that determine the performance and, beyond that, perhaps even their everyday lives.

As I have indicated, the evening shines a light on the principle of performance that other evenings by the group Forced Entertainment are based upon. During the performance *And on the Thousandth Night*, which usually lasts six hours, seven actors are on stage, each wearing a cardboard crown that looks like it has been made by a child, and a crimson cloak, a cloth that they drape somewhat casually, somewhat elegantly around their upper bodies, in order to at least partially hide the street clothing they are wearing underneath. At the back of the stage, there is a table with provisions. A red curtain closes off the stage area toward the back; at the front of the apron, the stage is delimited by small spotlights that are reminiscent of candles and illuminate the players from below (perhaps reminiscent of a time before the stage was illuminated by gas and electricity). The performers begin their speech with "Once upon a time . . ." and then start telling stories that they have sourced from a wide range of different fields that they treat as equally valid for their performance: fairy tales, TV series, films, and the wide range of occidental cultural memory, from the biblical world of the Old Testament to Greece and the Shakespearian Renaissance, right up to the present day in all of its medial appearances. However, the prevailing atmosphere of their performance is one of farce, very much in the sense that Karl Marx

assigns to this genre when he describes it as the comic repetition of former tragedies, when he understands it as a cheerful farewell from the past:⁴⁰ As all of the group's performances ultimately signalize, the age of history, tragedy, and a truth that comes to light in dramatic dialog has passed, and what has stayed behind are the remnants that they can use to repeat their once meaningful narratives almost *ad infinitum*, as farce and, by compulsion, as pure entertainment, *Forced Entertainment*.

During an evening at Essen PACT Zollverein,⁴¹ the performance opens with a rather awkward telling of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Each player must begin with "Once upon a time . . ." and then tell a story about characters who have no names, unfolding that story until another player interrupts him or her by saying "stop," in order to begin with his or her own story. Identical iterations are forbidden, as is the word "I."

Within this framework, a twofold performance quickly unfolds: Just like the children speaking in chorus are held back by the rhythmical sentences that they articulate in tandem, the rules, which are the same for everybody, prevent the individual performers from acting in the sense of psychologizing while, in turn, also preventing them from simply being what they consider to be their "selves." Their deliberately simple costumes (which look homemade, so to speak) mark the difference between the private players and the characters. However, whereas a choric principle connects the performers—namely the fact that, as poorly dressed kings, they all become identical participants in a play or rather a game on stage—acting as and at the same time not acting as king, each of the infinitely different players remains as recognizable and as visible as the different clothing that they wear underneath the only half-sitting costume: their own specific trousers, blouses, shirts, their own footwear. What unites this, like so many other of the troupe's performance arrangements, with the principle of the Harlequin and improvisation is, first of all, that they plunder the entirety of theater, literary, and world history. Most recently, the group performed all of Shakespeare's plays within the space of one week, taking about forty-five minutes to perform each of them. They were each played by one performer or narrator using "a collection of everyday objects" as his or her only props, "as stand-ins for the characters on the one metre stage of an ordinary table top."⁴² Secondly, another uniting element is the performers' permanent awareness of the here and now and the use of the performers' own wealth of experience, as well as a continuous awareness of the co-presence of the audience which, both here and there, always takes on the role of a co-performer who gets involved by way of *parabasis*, that is, an uninterrupted exchange of gazes between players and spectators. Moreover, the way they get in and out of character on the open stage and the merging of predetermined patterns with improvised passages is also worth mentioning. But, above all, what unites both theater forms is the fact that, in the choric theater of *Forced Entertainment* as well as in the *commedia dell'arte*,

the players do not play a role or pretend to be characters but, ultimately, try to carry out the rules of the performance in the only way their abilities and limitations allow. Whereas role-play theater presents us with a character and a character actor, this theater ultimately presents us with, above all, different forms of performing. In a way that is unparalleled, we feel like we are actually encountering the real performers. We seem to meet them at a point at which they act neither as dramatic characters nor as private people—which would ultimately mean that they were still acting as characters—but rather as people fulfilling the tasks given to them by this theater and its scores, as people who, by means of their specific interaction with the rules and nothing else, bear witness to that which specifically defines each of them.

Final Remarks

Once the extent to which the Harlequin can be described as the chorus of the comedy in the theater has been established, the connection I have suggested between the disappearance of the Harlequin—or, more precisely, the disappearance of the improvisational comedy (*Stegreifspiel*)—and that of the chorus reveals itself almost automatically. Like the Harlequin, the chorus is defined by its belonging to the very site where it appears and is, therefore, in a sense, a different example of the survival of the episteme of resemblance. To this extent, neither of them—neither the Harlequin, nor the chorus—are characters (*Figuren, Charaktere, Personen*) in the sense intended by the theater that was founded in the eighteenth century. Above all, both question the specific actions and, beyond that, the *dispositif* of the proscenium stage and the fourth wall. Both can be understood as theater forms that would continuously remind the bourgeois theater of what it must forget in order to maintain the phantasms of natural shape,⁴³ pure illusion, the powerful subject or hero, and successful communication in dramatic dialog.⁴⁴

My hypothesis, which I have developed from a near contemporary's observations on the exclusion of the Harlequin and confirmed in readings (which I have not elaborated upon here) of comedies in which the more subtle banishment of the comic figure openly prohibited by Gottsched and Friederike Caroline Neuber took place, has ultimately led me to read the traces of this other theater only present *modo negativo* in texts that have been passed down. I was aided by an examination of the contemporary theater practice presented here: What comes to light when looking into theater forms like that of Forced Entertainment is what is specific to the *experience* that disappears from the theater in the mid-eighteenth century together with the Harlequin: It is not possible to form a state with a non-subject like him, nor any stable subject or even a standing theater. He is an element that limps their fiction over and over again, who plays with it, who embodies (as

one could assert by referencing current terminology) a continuous de-positioning, the af-formative of the speakers and the players.⁴⁵ The Harlequin—who uses everything without shame, who does not have anything that is proper to him because, like his patchwork costume, his words, speech, and deeds are borrowed from others and used for his own purposes—carries the knowledge within himself that language, the performance, and ultimately the theater do not belong to him, at least not to him alone. However, choric speech also conveys this experience, although in a different way. *Commedia* and chorus both let us experience the *choric of language*: that we cannot have any pure command of it, because we are let into language like the *choreut* into the surrounding chorus or the Harlequin into the rules of his presentation. To a certain extent, the performance of the Harlequin and of choric speech are actually two forms of an unfathomable experience of what it means to have been in a medium all along: the end of every closed representation and the opening up of unforeseeable possibilities.⁴⁶

(Translated by Lydia White.)

Notes

¹ "Gespräch von Schleef mit Ute Scharfenberg vom 5. Mai 1996," Folder 2128, Schleef-Archive.

² Cf. Jean Paul, *Vorschule der Ästhetik. Kleine Nachschule zur ästhetischen Vorschule* (Munich: Hanser, 1974), 160.

³ Cf. on the *commedia dell'arte* and the Harlequin amongst others: Otto Driesen, *Der Ursprung des Harlekin, ein kulturgeschichtliches Problem* (Berlin: A. Duncker, 1904); Cyril W. Beaumont, *The History of Harlequin* (London, 1926); Gustave Attinger, *L'Esprit de la Commedia dell'arte dans le théâtre français* (Neuchâtel: Editions de la Baconnière, 1950); Vito Pandolfi, *La Commedia dell'Arte* (Florence: Casa Edizione Le Lettere, 1955/1988); Pierre-Louis Duchartres, *La Commedia dell'arte* (Paris: Editions D'art et Industrie, 1955); Fausto Nicolini, *Vita di Arlecchino* (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1958); Wolfgang Krömer, *Die italienische Commedia dell'arte* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976); Norbert Jonard, *La Commedia dell'arte* (Lyon: L'Hermès, 1982); Jürgen Stackelberg, *Metamorphosen des Harlekin. Zur Geschichte einer Bühnenfigur* (Munich: Fink, 1996); Henning Mehnert, *Commedia dell'arte* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2003). A useful selected bibliography on the topic is to be found in Mehnert, 158–69.

⁴ Cf. Evaristo Gherardi, *Le Théâtre Italien de Gherardi ou le Recueil Général de toutes les Comédies et Scènes françoises jouées par les Comédiens Italiens du Roi, pendant tout le temps qu'ils ont été au service, enrichi d'estampes en taille douce à la tête de chaque Comédie, et des airs gravés-notés à la fin de chaque volume* (Paris: Guillaume de Luyne et chez le Sieur Gherardi, 1694).

⁵ Richard Alewyn, *Das große Welttheater. Die Epoche der höfischen Feste* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1989), 99.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁷ Cf. Stackelberg, *Metamorphosen*, 31.

⁸ Cf. on the expulsion of the Harlequin: Wolfgang Promies, *Der Bürger und der Narr oder das Risiko der Phantasie. Sechs Kapitel über das Irrationale in der Literatur des Rationalismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1987).

⁹ Cf. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "Abhandlungen von dem weinerlichen und rührenden Lustspiele," in *Werke*, vol. 4 (Munich: Hanser, 1973), 12–14, 53–57.

¹⁰ Cf. Stackelberg, *Metamorphosen*, 143. Cf. also Dorothea Klenke, *Herr und Diener in der französischen Komödie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1992).

¹¹ Cf. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters* (Tübingen: Francke, 1993), 81–164.

¹² Alewyn, *Welttheater*, 104.

¹³ Cf. on similar approaches to reevaluate the eighteenth century, its literature, its theatre, and its institutions in a more general sense: Ruedi Graf, *Das Theater im Literaturstaat. Literarisches Theater auf dem Weg zur Bildungsmacht* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992); Reinhart Meyer, "Limitierte Aufklärung," in *Über den Prozess der Aufklärung in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert. Personen, Institutionen und Medien*, ed. Hans-Erich Bödeker and Ulrich Herrmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 139–200; Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); Foucault, *Histoire de la folie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969); Foucault, *Surveiller et punir. La naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

¹⁴ Cf. Paul, *Vorschule*, 160.

¹⁵ Friedrich Schiller, "Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie," in *Vom Pathetischen und Erhabenen. Ausgewählte Schriften zur Dramentheorie*, ed. Klaus L. Berghahn (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1987), 104–14.

¹⁶ Ibid, 112.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, 113.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Paul, *Vorschule*, 157.

²¹ Cf. Alewyn, *Welttheater*, 99.

²² Cf. on the notion of the medium: Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, *Das Theater des "konstruktiven Defaitismus." Lektüren zu einer Theorie der A-Identität bei Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht und Heiner Müller* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2002), 73–106.

²³ Cf. for instance: Clarence D. Brenner, *A Bibliographical List of Plays in the French Language 1700–1789. With a New Foreword and an Index by Michael A. Keller and Neal Zaslaw. Reprint of the 1947 Ed.* (New York: AMS Press, 1979), 3–4. Here are mentioned more than one hundred titles of anonymous origin entailing the Harlequin.

²⁴ "A remettre autheatre delafoire si lon a un bon arlequin." Cf. *Théâtre inédit de Lesage* (Collection de Soleinne), Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms. F. Fr. 9314.

²⁵ Cf. Walter Benjamin, "Über Sprache überhaupt und die Sprache des Menschen," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 140–57, here 154.

²⁶ Cf. on the notion of "communicability": Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," in *Difference in Translation*, ed. J. F. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 180; Rodolphe Gasché, "Saturnine Vision and the Question of Difference: Reflections on Walter Benjamin's Theory of Language," in *Benjamin's Ground. New Readings of Walter Benjamin* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 83–104, here 88; Müller-Schöll, "Nachahmbarkeit," in *Das Theater*, 139–74; Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's Abilities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

²⁷ Cf. Anton Bierl, "Doppeltanz oder doppelte Freude? Gedanken zum umstrittenen dipten (Ar. Thesm. 982) aus einer performativen Perspektive," in *Der Chor im antiken und modernen Drama*, ed. Peter Riemer and Bernhard Zimmermann (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999), 27–47, here 42.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid. Cf. also Bierl, *Der Chor in der Alten Komödie. Ritual und Performativität unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazusen und der Phalloslieder* (Munich: Saur, 2001).

³⁰ Bierl, *Doppeltanz*, 42.

³¹ Rudolf Münz, "Das Harlekin-Prinzip," in *Theatralität und Theater. Zur Historiographie von Theatralitätsgefügen* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 1998), 60–65, here 62.

³² Cf. Ulrike Haß, *Das Drama des Sehens. Auge, Blick und Bühnenform* (Munich: Fink 2005), 160–71, here 170.

³³ Cf. Paul, *Vorschule*, 160.

³⁴ Jean-François Marmontel, "Farce," in *Die Welt der Encyclopédie*, ed. Anette Selg and Rainer Wieland, trans. Holger Fock, Theodor Lücke, Eva Moldenhauer, and Sabine Müller (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 2001), 102–3. Cf. on the disappearance of the chorus Einar Schleef, *Droge. Faust. Parsifal* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997). Cf. also Ulrike Haß, "Chor," in *Metzler-Lexikon Theatertheorie*, ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte, Doris Kolesch, and Matthias Warstat (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005), 49–52.

³⁵ Cf. amongst others: Mehnert: *Commedia*, 58–93.

³⁶ Cf. Bertolt Brecht, *Mann ist Mann*, *BFA* 2, 93–168. Müller-Schöll, *Das Theater*, 201–30.

³⁷ Tim Etchells and Victoria, *That Night Follows Day*. My depiction refers to the performance of May 4, 2007 during the *Kunstenfestivaldesarts* in Brussels.

³⁸ Cf. Tim Etchells, *That Night Follows Day*, playbill of the *Kunstenfestivaldesarts*, 14–17, here 15. Cf. as well Etchells, *That Night Follows Day* (Ghent 2007).

³⁹ Cf. Etchells, *That Night Follows Day*.

⁴⁰ Cf. Karl Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie," in Marx/Friedrich Engels, *Studienausgabe in vier Bänden*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2016), 17–30, here 20–21; Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*

(Berlin: Dietz, 1988), 19; Cf. as well Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagenwerk* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 583–84.

⁴¹ The remarks about *And on the Thousandth Night* are related to a performance at PACT Zollverein, Essen, on March 31, 2007.

⁴² Cf. the description of the show on the group's homepage: <https://www.forcedentertainment.com/projects/complete-works-table-top-shakespeare/>.

⁴³ Cf. Günther Heeg, *Das Phantasma der natürlichen Gestalt. Körper, Sprache und Bild im Theater des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2000).

⁴⁴ Cf. on this context in more detail: Peter Szondi, *Theorie des modernen Dramas 1880–1950* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963).

⁴⁵ Cf. on the notion of the “Afformative”: Werner Hamacher, “Afformative, Strike,” trans. Dana Hollander, *Cardozo Law Review*, vol. 13 (1990): 1133–57.

⁴⁶ A German version of this text was published under the title “Der ‘Chor der Komödie’” in *Performing Politics. Politische Kunst machen nach dem 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, André Schallenberg, and Mayte Zimmermann (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2012).

Pure Fun? Comedy as a Reality-Satire

In his essays on Bertolt Brecht's epic theater, Walter Benjamin stresses the relationship between the *Verfremdungseffekt* (estrangement effect) and the comedic effects epic theater produces. Like alienation, laughing has a mind-opening effect. Indeed, Brecht himself considered the estrangement effect to be a method that is rooted in the "old artistic devices" of comedy. In this essay, I will explore further parallels between epic theater and comedy: on the one hand forms of *Cool Fun* (*sensu* Hans-Thies Lehmann), on the other hand strategies of self-distancing that enable the actor to make social gestures "quotable." Tracing back to the debate between speech act theory and deconstruction about the "performative forces" that are at stake when theatrical practices are recited on stage, I introduce Jacques Derrida's notion of "grafting" in order to demonstrate how contemporary comedy and satire are producing *Cool Fun* with performative gestures of quotation.

In seinem Essay über Bertolt Brechts episches Theater betont Walter Benjamin die Verbindungen zwischen dem Verfremdungseffekt und den komischen Effekten, die das epische Theater hervorruft. Ebenso wie die Verfremdung bewirkt Lachen einen "Start des Denkens." Tatsächlich ging auch Brecht selbst davon aus, dass der Verfremdungseffekt eine Methode sei, die sich vom "alten Kunstmittel" der Komödie herschreibe. In meinem Beitrag nehme ich weitere Analogien zwischen dem epischen Theater und der Komödie in den Blick: auf der einen Seite Formen des *Cool Fun* (*sensu* Hans-Thies Lehmann), auf der anderen Seite Strategien der Selbstdistanzierung, die den Schauspieler in die Lage versetzen, soziale Gesten zitierbar zu machen. Im Rückgriff auf die Debatte zwischen Sprechakt-Theorie und Dekonstruktion über die "performativen Kräfte," die im Spiel sind, wenn Äußerungen im Rahmen theatraler Praktiken—etwa auf der Bühne—geäußert werden, führe ich Jacques Derridas Begriff der "Pfropfung" ein, um zu zeigen, wie gegenwärtige Formen der Komödie mit Hilfe performativer Gesten des Zitierens *Cool Fun* erzeugen.

Reiner Spaß? Komödie als Real-Satire

Uwe Wirth

“Aus kleinsten Elementen der Verhaltensweisen zu konstruieren, was in der aristotelischen Dramaturgie ‘handeln’ genannt wird, das ist der Sinn des epischen Theaters,” schreibt Walter Benjamin 1934 in seinem Essay “Der Autor als Produzent,” wobei er betont, dass die Mittel und Ziele des epischen Theaters “bescheidener” seien als die des überlieferten Theaters: Es zielt weniger darauf ab, “das Publikum mit Gefühlen, und seien es auch die des Aufruhrs, zu erfüllen, als es auf nachhaltige Art, durch Denken, den Zuständen zu entfremden, in denen es lebt. Nur nebenbei sei angemerkt,” schließt Benjamin seinen Gedankengang ab, “dass es fürs Denken gar keinen besseren Start gibt als das Lachen. Und insbesondere bietet die Erschütterung des Zwerchfells dem Gedanken gewöhnlich bessere Chancen dar als die der Seele. Das epische Theater ist üppig nur in Anlässen des Gelächters.”¹ Diese Feststellung bringt Brechts Idee des Verfremdungseffekts als Mittel des epischen Theaters auf den Punkt: Statt Gefühl und Identifikation soll beim Publikum eine distanzierte Haltung hervorgerufen werden, um Raum fürs Nachdenken zu schaffen. Brecht betrachtet den Verfremdungseffekt ja explizit als “ein altes Kunstmittel, bekannt aus der Komödie.”² Sprich: Der Verfremdungseffekt ist zunächst einmal ein komischer Effekt, der dazu dienen soll, zum Lachen anzuregen.

Vor dem Hintergrund von Benjamins Zusammenfassung der Grundtendenzen epischen Theaters—zunächst in “Der Autor als Produzent,” dann aber auch in seinen beiden Artikeln zum epischen Theater³—liest sich die folgende Passage aus dem ersten Teil des *Trauerspiel*-Buchs wie eine Art Vorspiel zum Nachdenken über das Komische: “Mit dem Intriganten zieht die Komik ins Trauerspiel ein. Sie ist darin jedoch nicht Episode. Die Komik—richtiger: der reine Spaß—ist die obligate Innenseite der Trauer, die ab und zu wie das Futter eines Kleides im Saum oder Revers zur Geltung kommt.”⁴ Offenbar ist der Einzug des Intriganten ins Trauerspiel—im ersten Rahmen der “Haupt- und Staatsaktion”—für Benjamin gleichbedeutend mit dem Einzug einer Figuration des Komischen, die das Trauerspiel in spezifischer Weise re-konfiguriert: Interessanterweise wird Komik hier jedoch nicht als karnevaleskes *upside-down*-, sondern als eine Art *inside-out*-Phänomen verstanden, das die ernste Oberfläche des Trauerspiels gleichsam unterfüttert. Bemerkenswert erscheint mir aber auch Benjamins Präzisierung: “richtiger: der reine Spaß,” denn sie wirft die Frage

auf, wie das Verhältnis von “Komik” und “reinem Spaß” zu bestimmen sei. Eben dieser Frage möchte ich im Folgenden weiter nachgehen. Die Bedeutung des italienischen *spasso*, das dann ins Deutsche eingebürgert wurde, ist eine doppelte: *Spasso* bezeichnet hier zum einen den “Witz- und Spaßmacher,” zum anderen das Vergnügen, das er erzeugt: Spaß, Unterhaltung, Lust. Auch im heutigen Sprachgebrauch kann man zwischen einer produktionsästhetischen und einer rezeptionsästhetischen Perspektive hin und her wechseln: Man kann “Spaß machen” oder “Spaß haben,” wobei “Spaß” hier dann entweder eine Form des Entertainment ist oder auf das hinausläuft, was man im Englischen—und mittlerweile auch im Deutschen—als *fun* bezeichnet.

Welche Konsequenzen hätte es, wenn wir Benjamins Formulierung “reiner Spaß” nicht nur als komödienhafte Innenseite der Tragödie auffassen, sondern auch als reinen Spaß im Rahmen unseres medialen Amüsierbetriebs? Damit ist auch das Verhältnis zwischen Komödie und Comedy angesprochen. “Comedy” ist ein Ausdruck, der im Englischen wie im Deutschen nicht nur ein Theater-Genre bezeichnet, sondern auch ein Medienformat. So ist die *stand-up comedy* ein performatives Bühnenergebnis, das anderen Gesetzen gehorcht wie die attische Komödie oder eine Komödie im Sinne Brechts oder Elfriede Jelineks. Sprich, das Format einer Fernseh-Comedy, wie wir sie von *Saturday Night Live* oder der *Late Show* (oder von den deutschen Pendants—der *Heute-Show* und dem *Neo-Magazin Royal*) her kennen, folgt, ebenso wie jede *stand-up comedy* als Performance vor Life-Publikum, anderen Strategien der Inszenierung als das politische Kabarett.

Auch wenn das Benjamin-Zitat aus dem *Trauerspiel*-Buch nicht unmittelbar auf das Konzept der Comedy im heutigen Sinne übertragbar ist, so war Benjamin doch durchaus mit Phänomenen der Kleinkunst vertraut. In diesem Zusammenhang erwähnt er in seinem Essay zu Brechts epischem Theater den “Amüsierbetrieb” von “Varieté” und “Kabarett.”⁵ Umgekehrt wurde—vor allem in Deutschland—der Trend zur Comedy, der seit den 1990er Jahren in Funk und Fernsehen zu beobachten war, häufig als Ausdruck einer amüsierwütigen “Spaßgesellschaft” gedeutet: ein Trend, der durchaus auch Einfluss auf Theater-Produktionen hatte. Man denke an Mark Ravenhills *Shopping and Fucking* (1995) oder an René Polleschs *Splatterboulevard* (2003). Und so könnte man im Anschluss an Nikolaus Müller-Schöll zu dem Schluss kommen, dass “ein großer Teil des Theaters der Gegenwart seit 1989 seinen Ausgang” von der Erfahrung nimmt, “dass wir in einer Spaßgesellschaft leben.”⁶

So besehen ist der reine Spaß das Symptom eines “komischen Dispositivs,” das sich sowohl in der Entwicklung der ersten deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft zu einer etwas weniger ersten Nach-Wiedervereinigungs-Spaß-Gesellschaft ablesen lässt, als auch an den Tendenzen hin zu einem postdramatischen Gegenwartstheater, das auf Performativität

setzt, auf die Unterbrechung der dramatischen Handlung, auf das Durchbrechen der vierten Wand, auf Improvisationen und direkte Publikumsansprache, aber auch auf metatheatrale Formen der Selbstreflexion. Nun gibt es zwei theatergeschichtliche Kristallisationspunkte dieser "komischen Tendenzen": Da ist zum einen das Konzept der *Parabase* respektive der *Parekbase*, wie es Friedrich Schlegel nennt und als romantisches Konzept einer permanenten ironischen Illusionsdurchbrechung in Anschlag bringt.⁷ Diese Unterbrechung der Täuschung in Form einer direkten Anrede des Publikums durch den Komödienchor markiert, wie Christoph Menke schreibt, "als Ausdruck der Freiheit . . . das Wesen der Komödie."⁸ Zum anderen ist hier die eingangs bereits erwähnte Brechtsche "Methode" des Verfremdungseffekts als "altes Kunstmittel"⁹ der Komödie zu nennen. Hierbei handelt es sich gewissermaßen um eine Ausweitung des *Parabase*-respektive *Parekbase*-Konzepts. Um einen Verfremdungseffekt zu setzen, muss der Schauspieler "die restlose Verwandlung in die Bühnenfigur aufgeben. Er zeigt die Figur, er zitiert den Text."¹⁰ Dabei impliziert die Geste des Zitierens zugleich, dass der Schauspieler *Gesten zitierbar macht*. Eben das ist, wie Benjamin in "Was ist episches Theater?" feststellt, "eine der wesentlichen Leistungen des epischen Theaters," nämlich dass "der Schauspieler seinen Gestus selbst zitiert."¹¹ Heißt: Die Schauspieler durchbrechen nicht nur die Illusion des Bühnenrahmens, sondern unterbrechen die Identifikation mit ihrer Bühnen-Rolle. Insofern impliziert der zitierbare Gestus auch eine Geste der Unterbrechung (mit Benjamin zu sprechen: "Einen Text zitieren, schließt ein: seinen Zusammenhang unterbrechen"¹²). Insofern folgen die Schauspieler einer, wie man im Anschluss an Niklas Luhmann sagen könnte, Strategie der "Doppel-Rahmung,"¹³ indem sie eine Haltung der Selbst-Distanz einnehmen, so dass ihr Sprechen auf der Bühne zugleich ein permanenter Selbst-Kommentar ihrer Rolle ist. Auf diese Weise, so Brecht, erneuert das epische Theater nicht nur seine "alte Funktionen der Unterhaltung und Belehrung,"¹⁴ sondern impliziert eine dialektische Haltung: Das epische respektive dialektische Theater kennt keine "scharfe Trennung der Genres" mehr—bei den Vorgängen auf der Bühne wird vielmehr "ihre komische oder tragische Seite herausgearbeitet."¹⁵ Mit anderen Worten: Die Vorgänge auf der Bühne werden so bearbeitet, dass sie, mit Erving Goffman zu sprechen, die Anwendung von zwei "schema[s] of interpretation"¹⁶ erlauben: Sie können sowohl als Elemente einer Komödie und als Elemente einer Tragödie gedeutet werden. Dabei ist das Ziel dieser Form von Theater der "Spaß, den es seinem Publikum bereitet, menschliches Verhalten und seine Folgen kritisch, das heißt produktiv zu betrachten."¹⁷

Zu diesen beiden Kristallisationspunkten des Späßes gibt es sicherlich zahlreiche Anschlussmöglichkeiten, von denen ich hier nur zwei erwähnen möchte. Die erste findet sich in Hans-Thies Lehmanns Buch zum postdramatischen Theater, nämlich in dem Kapitel, das den Titel "Cool Fun" trägt.

Dort heißt es: "Cool ist der Name für Emotionalität, der der 'eigene' Ausdruck so sehr abhanden kam, dass alle Regungen des Gefühls nurmehr in Gänsefüßchen darzubieten sind, und keine Regung, die einst das Drama zeigen konnte, ohne den Ironiefilter der Film- und Medienästhetik passieren kann."¹⁸ Korrespondierend zum *Fun* attestiert Lehmann dem postdramatischen Theater eine Tendenz zur Parodie. Hier rekurriert er auf Gérard Genettes Konzept der Intertextualität, das auf unterschiedliche—ernste, nicht-ernste und spielerische—Formen der Parodie hin perspektiviert ist.¹⁹ Dabei ist *Cool Fun* vor allem an die nicht-ernsthafte Formen der Parodie rückgebunden: "Indem die Kenntnis von anderen Texten (Bildern, Klängen) aufgerufen und die parodistische Aneignung im Lachen bestätigt wird, wird das *Publikum theatraalisiert*—Kabarett und Komödie leben ebenso wie *Cool Fun* von dieser Interaktionsform."²⁰ Die ästhetische Haltung, die der *Cool Fun* impliziert und triggert, ist eine Haltung, die sich als "ironisch distanziert, sarkastisch, 'zynisch,' illusionslos und 'cool' im Ton"²¹ beschreiben lässt.

Die zweite Anschlussmöglichkeit, die ich hier erwähnen möchte, betrifft ein prominentes Beispiel für eine parodistische Performance, die darauf abzielt, *Cool Fun* zu evozieren: Gemeint sind die Aktionen und Interventionen der sogenannten "Spaß-Partei" DIE PARTEI, die 2004 in Deutschland gegründet wurde. Seitdem trat DIE PARTEI bei mehreren Bundes- und Landtagswahlen an, hat etliche Vertreter in Kommunalparlamenten und besitzt seit 2014 sogar ein Mandat im EU-Parlament, das von ihrem Vorsitzenden, dem ehemaligen Chefredakteur des Satire-Magazins *Titanic*, Martin Sonneborn, wahrgenommen wird.

Bis heute ist sich die deutsche Öffentlichkeit—vor allem auch die Medien-Öffentlichkeit—nicht im Klaren darüber, wie man die Existenz einer "Spaß-Partei"²² zu deuten hat: Geht es den Mitgliedern dieser Partei (alle Gründungsmitglieder sind ehemalige Mitarbeiter der Satire-Zeitschrift *Titanic*) um reinen Spaß, also eine bloße Nonsense-Parodie der Politik? Oder handelt es sich bei der Parteigründung um einen *practical joke* mit einer subversiven, einer satirischen Tendenz, die darauf abzielt, durch komische Aktionen und Interventionen einen ironisch-distanzierten Standpunkt zu etablieren, von dem aus sich—ganz im Sinne Brechts—das politische System kritisch betrachten lässt? Oder haben wir es bei der PARTEI mit einer Form von politischem Meta-Theater zu tun: einer parodistischen Performance, die die reale Lebenswelt als Bühne nutzt? In der Berichterstattung über DIE PARTEI tauchen häufig die negativ konnotierten Begriffe "Spaß-Partei" oder "Fake-Partei" auf. Mitunter hört man jedoch auch eine Formulierung, die ich im Titel meines Beitrags aufgegriffen habe, nämlich dass es sich bei der Partei DIE PARTEI um eine "Satire-Partei" handle,²³ deren Ziel es sei, die herrschenden politischen Zustände durch eine Form der Real-Satire sichtbar zu machen.

Ich möchte daher im Weiteren der Frage nachgehen, was es mit diesen Zuschreibungen auf sich hat. In meinen Augen ist die "Spaß-Party" DIE PARTEI ein Indiz dafür, dass es eine Kopplung von reinem Spaß und komischem Dispositiv gibt, bei der die Differenzierung zwischen ernsthaften und nicht-ernsthaften Aktionen (und ihren Konsequenzen) ausfranst. Meine Hypothese ist dabei, dass es Parallelen gibt zwischen einer postdramatischen Verhältnisbestimmung von tragischen und komischen Elementen sowie der quasi-dialektischen Spannung zwischen Spaß und Komik, respektive zwischen satirischem Witz und Realität. Dabei werfen die Aktionen und Performances von DIE PARTEI die Frage auf: Wo hört der reine Spaß auf und wo fängt der *practical joke* einer metapolitischen Real-Satire an?

Um einen ersten Eindruck zu vermitteln, sei hier die Transkription eines Wahlwerbespots angeführt, den DIE PARTEI anlässlich der Bundestagswahlen 2005 produziert—und gesendet—hat.

Wahlwerbung DIE PARTEI Bundestagswahl 2005

Sprecher:

Dazu sehen Sie jetzt Wahlwerbung der Partei für Arbeit, Rechtsstaat, Tierschutz, Elitenförderung und Basisdemokratische Initiative, DIE PARTEI. Für den Inhalt der Spots sind ausschließlich die Parteien verantwortlich.

Oliver Maria Schmidt (ehemaliger Chefredakteur der TITANIC):

Wir sind eine Partei, weil wir eine Partei sind. Weil wir es selbst so wollten.

(Eingespielte Musik: kommunistisches Partei-Lied, "Die Partei, die Partei, die hat immer recht—und Genossen, wir bleiben dabei.")

Martin Sonneborn (ehemaliger Chefredakteur der TITANIC):

Bauen Sie die Mauer wieder auf! Achtung, fertig, los! Ich gebe Ihnen, gebe der gesamten deutschen Öffentlichkeit mein Ehrenwort, ich wiederhole, mein Ehrenwort, dass mit uns an der neuen Mauer, die wir errichten werden, kein Schießbefehl zu machen ist. Danke.

Oliver Maria Schmidt:

Wir müssen nur zupacken. Wir müssen nur die Entschlusskraft aufbringen, alles in den Dienst der Partei zu stellen. Wir müssen das Vermächtnis des *Titanic*-Mitbegründers Chlodwig Poth erfüllen: Die endgültige Teilung Deutschlands. Das ist unser Auftrag!

Ein Passant:

Nee, witzig find ich das gar nicht!²⁴

Angesichts dieser Wahlwerbung stellt sich die Ausgangsfrage von Goffmans *frame-analysis*: Was geht hier eigentlich vor?²⁵ Offensichtlich haben wir es mit einer Partei zu tun, deren Ziele rückwärtsgewandt sind: Dabei erweist sich die Forderung nach einem Wiedererrichten der Mauer und dem Wiederherstellen des *status quo ante* auch 2005 noch als eine unerhörte

Provokation: “Nee, witzig find ich das gar nicht!” sagt der Passant am Ende des Wahlwerbespots. Zugleich wirkt diese Forderung wie ein populistisches Echo auf all jene frustrierten Ost- und Westdeutschen, die sich die Zeit vor der Wiedervereinigung zurückwünschen. So besehen ist der Wahlspot eine Parodie populistischer Meinungs-Mache.

Auffällig bei diesem Wahlwerbespot ist jedoch noch etwas anderes, nämlich das krude Patchwork von Phrasen und Zitaten, das zusammen gemischt wird. Es handelt sich um eine Mischung aus Zitaten überkommener politischer Gesten und Haltungen: etwa Zitate der Kommunistischen Partei respektive der SED; ein Zitat des ehemaligen Ministerpräsidenten Schleswig-Holsteins, Uwe Barschel, der unter mysteriösen Umständen ums Leben kam; aber auch Anspielungen auf eine Rede von Joseph Goebbels, die er 1943 im Sportpalast hielt—all dies abgerundet durch einen satirischen Kommentar des *Titanic*-Mitbegründers Chlodwig Poth. Sowohl die absurde Forderung nach einem Wiederaufbau der Mauer als auch die Mischung von Zitaten höchst unterschiedlichster—und höchst zweifelhafter—Herkunft signalisieren im Grunde nur Eines, nämlich dass man diese Partei nicht ernst nehmen kann, ja, dass diese Partei offensichtlich nicht ernst genommen werden will. Dieser ostentative Un-Ernst, der hier in Szene gesetzt wird, gepaart mit einem “gefährlichen” Stil des Zitierens aus zweifelhaften Quellen, offenbart eben das, was Lehmann “Spiel mit der Kälte”²⁶ nennt und als einen signifikanten Zug des postdramatischen Theaters bezeichnet. Dabei deutet die wilde Appropriation von Phrasen und Zitaten—ebenso wie die *mise en scène* der “Führungsriege” der Partei DIE PARTEI—darauf hin, dass es sich hier um eine performative Parodie der vorhin erwähnten Formel Brechts für Verfremdungseffekt und episches Theater handelt: Anstatt ein eigenes Parteiprogramm vorzustellen, werden Figuren gezeigt und Texte zitiert—und vor allem politische Gesten zitiert.²⁷ Alle Protagonisten der PARTEI wirken wie Schauspieler, die nicht nur die Texte anderer Politiker zitieren, sondern ihre Gesten zitierbar machen. Eben dadurch stellt sich der Eindruck einer ironisch-sarkastischen Distanz ein.

Schließlich gibt es noch eine weitere Hinsicht, in der der Auftritt der PARTEI in ihrem Wahlwerbespot wie eine Illustration der Prinzipien des postdramatischen Theaters wirkt, nämlich mit Blick auf das Verhältnis von Performance, Parodie und medialer Rahmung. So schreibt Lehmann (unmittelbar bevor der Begriff des *Cool Fun* eingeführt wird): “Angesichts der Prägekraft und der kaum zu umgehenden massenhaften Verbreitung mediatisierter Realität sehen die allermeisten Künstler keinen anderen Ausweg, als die eigene Arbeit den existierenden Modellen aufzupropfen (‘greffe’).”²⁸ Was mich bei dieser Beschreibung der zitathaften Bezugnahme von Künstlern auf “existierende Modelle” im Rahmen einer “mediatisierten Realität” besonders interessiert, ist die Metapher des Pfropfens. Dieser Begriff verweist zurück auf die theoretischen Fundamente einer postdramatischen Zitathaftigkeit, die die Form einer parodistischen

performativen Praxis annehmen kann, die entweder als reiner Spaß oder als satirischer Witz, als *Cool Fun* oder als Real-Satire gedeutet werden kann. Um die Relevanz des Begriffs der Pfropfung (respektive der "greffe") plausibel zu machen, möchte ich hier ein theoretisches Intermezzo einschalten.

Theoretisches Intermezzo

Ich möchte mein theoretisches Intermezzo mit einer bekannten Passage beginnen. Es ist eine Passage, die sowohl für die dekonstruktive Literaturtheorie als auch für den *performative turn* der Theaterwissenschaften zum Ausgangspunkt einer kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit der *ordinary language philosophy*, insbesondere mit der Sprechakththeorie, wurde. Die Passage findet sich in der zweiten Vorlesung J. L. Austins in *How to Do Things with Words*, wo es heißt:

... a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance—a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways—intelligibly—used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use—ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language.²⁹

Die Argumentation von Austin impliziert, dass performative Äußerungen in fiktionalen Kontexten (etwa im Rahmen des Theaters), aber auch in all jenen Fällen, in denen eine performative Äußerung nur zitiert wird, ihre so genannte *performative force* verliert. So besitzt ein Heiratsversprechen, das auf der Bühne gemacht wird, also unter den "special circumstances" einer Theateraufführung vorkommt, keine performative respektive illokutionäre Kraft.

Seinen Ausgangspunkt nimmt Austins Kraftkonzept von einer Überlegung Gottlob Freges. In seinem Aufsatz "Der Gedanke" schreibt Frege der "Form des Behauptungssatzes" eine "behauptende Kraft" zu, die für ihn zu einem wichtigeren Referenzpunkt wird als jedes Wahrheitsprädikat. Dort, wo die Form des Behauptungssatzes "ihre behauptende Kraft verliert, kann auch das Wort 'wahr' sie nicht wieder herstellen."³⁰ Dieser Kraftverlust vollzieht sich laut Frege, "wenn wir nicht im Ernste sprechen. Wie der Theaterdonner nur Scheindonner, das Theatergefecht nur Scheingefecht ist, so ist auch die Theaterbehauptung nur Scheinbehauptung. Es ist nur Spiel, nur Dichtung."³¹ In gleicher Weise sei ein Zitat zu werten: Es ist für Frege keine Behauptung, sondern das Echo einer Behauptung—die Sprachphilosophie spricht hier von der *use-mention distinction*: Ein Zitat ist demnach ein sprachlicher Ausdruck, der einen Satz nicht "gebraucht," um eine Aussage zu treffen, sondern der den Satz lediglich "erwähnt." Wichtig für die

Sprachphilosophie ist dabei, dass sich durch den Modus des Erwähnens die Wahrheitsbedingungen ändern.

Immer wieder wurde auf die Signifikanz der Metaphern hingewiesen, mit denen Austin den Verlust an performativer respektive illokutionärer Kraft beschreibt: Da ist von einem “non-serious, *parasitic* use upon its normal use”³² die Rede. Dies impliziert, dass die Alltagssprache als Normalfall gesetzt wird, während die Sprache auf der Bühne oder im Rahmen von Literatur als parasitäres Grenzphänomen dargestellt wird, das unter die “doctrine of the *etiolations* of language”³³ fällt. *Etiolation* ist ein botanischer Ausdruck für Prozesse, die bei einer Pflanze ausgelöst werden, die unter Lichtmangel leidet. Das heißt, *etiolation* steht für eine Schwächung der Pflanze und wird somit zu einer zweiten Metapher für den illokutionären Kraftverlust, den performative Sprechakte erleiden, sobald sie in “non-serious circumstances” in einem “non-normal, parasitic mode”³⁴ verwendet werden.

Besondere Aufmerksamkeit verdient aber auch—darauf hat nicht zuletzt Katrin Trüstedt hingewiesen³⁵—der Ausdruck “sea-change.” Nach Austin erfährt eine performative Äußerung, sobald sie von einem Schauspieler auf der Bühne geäußert wird, einen “sea-change in special circumstances.” Der Ausdruck stammt aus Shakespeares *The Tempest*, wo in Ariels Lied die Transformation eines menschlichen Körpers in Korallen und Perlen beschrieben wird als “a sea-change into something rich and strange.”³⁶ Offensichtlich findet diese Passage ihr Echo in Austins Vorlesung. Genau genommen handelt es sich sogar um ein ironisches Echo von Shakespeares Metapher, denn der *sea-change*, den Äußerungen erfahren, sobald sie in nicht-ernsthafter Weise Verwendung finden, ist aus einer sprachphilosophischen Sicht kein *sea-change into something rich and strange*, sondern eher ein *sea-change into something poor and parasitic*. Eben dies wird durch die zweite Metapher, nämlich den Ausdruck *etiolation* impliziert: Die Transformation oder (wie man im Anschluss an Goffman sagen könnte, der sich in seiner *frame-analysis* ebenfalls auf diese Passage bezieht³⁷) der Rahmenwechsel zwischen normaler Sprachverwendung und literarischer Sprachverwendung macht die Sprache schwächer, nicht stärker. Warum? Weil die verwendete Sprache ihre performative Funktion verliert—und damit zugleich ihre performative Kraft.

Gerade vor dem Hintergrund dieses semantisch-pragmatischen *sea-change*, der sich gleichsam “hinter der Bühne” von Austins Argumentation abspielt, finde ich die kritische Lektüre dieser Passage durch Jacques Derrida höchst bemerkenswert, die er in seinem Aufsatz “Signatur Ereignis Kontext” vorgenommen hat. Ein Hauptkritikpunkt ist für ihn dabei die sprachphilosophische *use-mention distinction*, die er ebenso grundsätzlich wie gründlich in Frage stellt: Anstatt die Alltagssprache *prima facie* als Normalfall zu setzen und die verschiedenen Formen des Zitierens und Rezitierens als parasitäre Spezialfälle zu behandeln, geht Derrida von einer “wesensmäßigen

Iterabilität" aller Zeichen aus, die bereits *vor* der Unterscheidung zwischen normaler Alltagssprache und zitierter Sprache wirksam ist. Aufgrund dieser wesensmäßigen Iterabilität kann man, so Derrida, "ein schriftliches Syntagma immer aus der Verkettung, in der es gefasst oder gegeben ist, herausnehmen, ohne dass es dabei alle Möglichkeiten des Funktionierens und genau genommen alle Möglichkeiten der 'Kommunikation' verliert. Man kann ihm eventuell andere zuerkennen, indem man es in andere Ketten einschreibt oder es ihnen *aufpfropft*. Kein Kontext kann es abschließen. Noch irgendein Code."³⁸ Unter "Kommunikation" versteht Derrida hierbei primär ein "mouvement non-sémantique."³⁹ Es kann nicht nur Bedeutung, sondern auch Bewegung kommuniziert werden: sei es im Sinne einer "déplacement de force,"⁴⁰ wie es etwas kryptisch heißt; sei es als "force de rupture,"⁴¹ die sowohl mit externen (historischen, räumlichen, sozialen), aber auch internen, sprachlich-syntagmatischen Kontexten bricht und die herausgebrochenen Elemente in einen neuen Kontext bewegen kann. In diesem Sinne wird das "zitathafte Aufpfropfen,"⁴² die *greffe citationelle* wie es im Original heißt, auch zur Metapher der Möglichkeit, alles zitierend in Dienst zu nehmen, alles "in Anführungszeichen"⁴³ zu setzen und in neue Kontexte einzuschreiben. Dabei impliziert die "force de rupture" einen Zusammenhang von Zitathaftigkeit und Unterbrechung, die die *greffe citationelle* an Brechts Konzept der Verfremdung durch Zitathaftigkeit und Unterbrechung anschließbar macht (hier sei noch einmal an Benjamins Formulierung erinnert: "Einen Text zitieren, schließt ein: seinen Zusammenhang unterbrechen"⁴⁴).

Die eigentliche Pointe der Pfpfungsmetapher ist jedoch eine begriffspolitische: Die Metapher der *greffe citationelle* unterläuft nämlich Austins Metapher des Parasitären. Während Austin davon ausgeht, dass der parasitäre Gebrauch der Sprache—sei es in Form des Zitats, sei es in Form von literarisch-fiktiver Sprachverwendung—einen illokutionären Kraftverlust impliziert (Stichwort: *etiolation*), zeigt Derridas Einführung der Pfpfungsmetapher, dass die kommunikativen Qualitäten zitierter (respektive iterierter) Sprache durch den Akt des Zitierens neue Funktionsmöglichkeiten erhalten können. Das Gepfpfte erscheint als *freundlicher Parasit*, der durch den Akt des Zitierens in einem positiven Sinne in *something rich and strange* verwandelt wurde. *Rich*: weil es sich bei der Pfpfung um eine Operation handelt, die zu einer quantitativen und qualitativen Steigerung und "Veredelung" führt. In eben dieser Hinsicht ist die Pfpfung eine seit der Antike bekannte Agri-Kulturtechnik, die im Obst- und Weinbau angewandt wird.⁴⁵ *Strange*: weil die Verbindung, die die Pfpfung vornimmt, den Status der neuen Kombination auf merkwürdige Weise offen lässt. Was durch die Pfpfung entsteht, ist—anders als ein Hybrid—kein homogener Organismus, sondern ein funktionales Zusammenspiel von heterogenen Teilen innerhalb eines gemeinsamen Rahmens.⁴⁶

Sobald man den biologisch-gärtnerischen Metaphern-Hof der Pfpfung verlässt und in die semiotische Sphäre wechselt, zeigt sich noch

ein weiterer seltsamer Effekt der *greffe citationelle*: Der Kontextwechsel bewirkt zumeist auch einen interpretativen Rahmenwechsel. Goffman zufolge vollzieht sich mit einem Rahmenwechsel die Transformation einer Handlung oder einer Äußerung “into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else.”⁴⁷ Diese Form des *sea-change* zeigt sich etwa an den Collage- und Montage-Techniken der klassischen Avantgarde, bei denen Alltags-Gegenstände in Kunst-Gegenstände transformiert werden. Dies ist z.B. bei Marcel Duchamps *ready makes* der Fall—etwa bei dem berühmten Urinal, das unter dem Titel “Fountain” Aufnahme in eine Ausstellung für moderne Kunst erlangte. Eine andere Form der *ready makes* besteht in der verfremdenden Manipulation eines Gegenstandes oder eines bereits vorhandenen Kunstwerks—etwa der Übermalung der Mona Lisa mit einem Schnurrbart: eine Strategie, die unter den Dadaisten als “*Greffage*” bekannt war.⁴⁸ *Greffer* steht dabei im Französischen sowohl für das Pfropfen im botanischen Sinne als auch für die Organtransplantation—es markiert also eine parasitäre Relation, die unter Umständen auch eine parodistische Form annehmen kann. Tatsächlich verwendet Genette in seinen *Palimpsestes* den Begriff der Pfropfung (“*sur lequel il se greffe*”),⁴⁹ um die parodistische Bezugnahme eines Textes auf eine andere Textvorlage zu beschreiben. Die Parodie erscheint so besehen auch als eine Variante der *greffe citationelle*.

Ende des theoretischen Intermezzos

Mit dieser These endet mein theoretisches Intermezzo und ich kehre zurück zur Frage, wie die parodistischen Performances der Partei DIE PARTEI zu deuten seien. Dabei geht es mir zum einen darum, noch einmal einen Blick auf die Unterscheidung ernsthaft/nicht-ernsthaft zu werfen, zum anderen gilt es zu klären, welcher Zusammenhang besteht zwischen dem perlokutionären Effekt des *Cool Fun* und der Geste des Zeigens und Zitierens. Zeigen und Zitieren sind Gesten, die Verfremdungseffekte erzeugen—und, so möchte ich vor dem Hintergrund des bisher Gesagten hinzufügen, Zeigen und Zitieren sind Gesten, die als *greffe citationelle* grundlegend für die Produktion von Parodien sind. Ich möchte sogar noch einen Schritt weiter gehen und behaupten, dass die Pfropfung eine Grundoperation zur Erzeugung *komischer Effekte* ist⁵⁰—auch wenn damit nicht impliziert werden soll, dass *jede* Pfropfung eine unernste, komische Wirkung hat.⁵¹ Vielmehr bedarf es hierfür des Zusammenspiels zwischen *greffe citationelle* und *sea-change* unter besonderen Umständen. Das Resultat ist die Transformation einer Äußerung oder einer Handlung in etwas, “das dieser Tätigkeit nachgebildet ist, von den Beteiligten aber als etwas ganz anderes gesehen wird.”⁵²

Um zu illustrieren, was damit gemeint sein könnte, möchte ich die Transkription aus einem "Auftritt" von Martin Sonneborn im Zuge der Wahlen zum Berliner Landtag 2011 anführen, der auf dem Nachrichten-Kanal SPIEGEL-ONLINE gesendet wurde.

Interview Landtagswahl Berlin 2011 (Teil 1)

Reporterin (Off-Stimme):

Weiter geht es mit dem Plakatieren. Mangels eigener Werbefläche ergänzt Sonneborn die Slogans der anderen Parteien um das entscheidende Etwas.

Sonneborn (*während er ein großes CDU-Plakat mit einem sehr kleinen Plakat überklebt, auf dem "Inhalte überwinden!" steht*):

Das ist eine ganz moderne Form des Plakatierens. Wir haben nicht soviel Geld. Deswegen haben wir nicht soviel eigene Plakate, sondern wir nutzen einfach die Plakate des politischen Gegners, um sie durch kleine Aufkleber in eigene Plakate zu verwandeln. Wir sind die modernste aller Parteien.⁵³

Sonneborns Hinweis auf die "moderne Art des Plakatierens" ist nicht nur ein Hinweis auf eine parasitäre Praktik im wörtlichen Sinne, sie ist auch ein Hinweis auf eine Geste der Pfropfung, die durch das Aufkleben der eigenen Plakate auf die Plakate der anderen Parteien vollzogen wird. Mit Derrida könnte man sagen: Hier kommt es zu einer "Einschreibung" in Form einer "Einfügung," die parasitär und appropriativ zugleich ist. Die Plakate der anderen werden mit Hilfe einer *Greffage* zu einem eigenen Plakat umfunktioniert. Dadurch erleben sie einen dramatischen *sea-change*. Gleichgültig, was die anderen Parteien auf ihren Plakaten als Botschaft verkünden: Durch die Einfügung des Plakats mit dem Slogan "Inhalte überwinden!" werden deren Botschaften durch eine "pfropfende Intervention" entkräftet: Die Einfügung (respektive Überklebung) "Inhalte überwinden!" transformiert jede ernsthafte Aussage in eine Äußerung, die jeden Anspruch (und jede Möglichkeit), ernst genommen zu werden, verloren hat. Mehr noch, sie tut dies durch einen "gepfropften performativen Sprechakt"—man beachte das Ausrufungszeichen!

Aber wie ist diese pfropfende Intervention zu bewerten? Meines Erachtens hat man es auch hier mit einer Konfiguration zu tun, die einen *sea-change* in verschiedene Richtungen möglich macht. Man kann die Performances der Partei DIE PARTEI als Parodien auf den ernstesten Politik-Betrieb deuten, die auf nichts anderes aus sind als auf reinen Spaß. Man kann die Performances aber auch als Strategien deuten, um einen satirischen, politischen Witz zu machen. Damit kommt ein Aspekt ins Spiel, der bislang noch gar nicht thematisiert wurde, nämlich der merkwürdige Jargon der Reinheit, der bei Benjamins Formulierung "reiner Spaß" mitschwingt. In diesem Zusammenhang finden sich wichtige Hinweise bei Sigmund

Inhalte über- winden!

Wählt die **PARTEI** - sie ist sehr gut!

Die **PARTEI**

Abbildung 1. Wahlplakat DIE PARTEI.

Freud: Wenn Freud von “reinem Witz,”⁵⁴ “reiner Komik”⁵⁵ oder “reiner Lust”⁵⁶ spricht, dann bezieht er sich auf Phänomene, die keine “Tendenz” haben.⁵⁷ “Eine Tendenz haben” meint für Freud: eine aggressive Affektladung besitzen.⁵⁸ Das gilt insbesondere für Sarkasmus und Satire. Insofern sind Sarkasmus und Satire “nicht-reine” Formen von Witzen: Sie wollen verletzen oder kritisieren—eben hierin besteht die Tendenz ihrer Affektladung. Analog hierzu müsste man natürlich auch fragen: Wie steht es mit dem *Cool Fun*? Handelt es sich hierbei um einen reinen Spaß, weil er nicht-emotional ist? Oder handelt es sich hier um eine Art erkaltete Affektladung, die ihre Tendenz verloren hat—sozusagen das Innenfutter einer aggressiven Affektladung? Diese Affektladung wäre dann insofern “rein,” als sie indifferent, distanziert, unengagiert—kraftlos—geworden ist.

Ich glaube, dass es im Rekurs auf Derridas Konzept der Pfropfung eine Möglichkeit gibt, das Verhältnis von Parodie und Satire respektive von *Cool Fun* und Real-Satire neu zu bestimmen. So könnte man die pfpfende Intervention, die mit einem aufgeklebten, inserierten Slogan den Sinn der Plakate der anderen Parteien verändert, auch als eine satirische Intervention deuten. Ihre satirische Tendenz bekommt diese Intervention dabei allerdings erst durch jene Form von Rekontextualisierung, die Derrida als “*déplacement de force*”⁵⁹ bezeichnet: eine Rekontextualisierung, die durch die Kopplung von Parodie und Pfropfung eine satirische Aufladung erhält. Was damit gemeint sein könnte, lässt sich anhand der Fortsetzung des “Auftritts” von Martin Sonneborn auf dem Ernst-Reuter-Platz erklären, dessen Transkript hier folgt.

Interview Landtagswahl Berlin 2011 (Teil 2)

Reporter (*voice over*):

Für die NPD hat es sich DIE PARTEI nicht nehmen lassen, ein extra Wahlplakat anzufertigen—und das darf keineswegs am Ernst-Reuter-Platz fehlen: Der Unfallwagen des verunglückten rechten Politikers Jörg Heider. Darunter geschrieben: “Gas geben.” Eine Replik auf das Original NPD-Plakat.

Sonneborn:

Die NPD hat in Berlin Plakate geklebt auf denen steht “Gas geben” mit einem Bild von Udo Vogt und die haben es auch vor dem Jüdischen Museum plakatiert. Wir sind der Meinung, dass DIE PARTEI, der politische Arm des Faktenmagazins *Titanic*, die einzige Partei ist, die geschmacklose Plakate kleben darf. Deshalb haben wir eine eigene, 2.0 Version des NPD-Plakates entwickelt, mit demselben Slogan “Gas geben.” Wir haben das vor dem Jüdischen Museum plakatiert und wir haben das auch den Nazis vor die Partei-Zentrale geklebt. Nachts um zwei, als der letzte Trupp da raus war, haben wir das denen vor die Tür genagelt und an die Straßenlaternen gehängt. Wir glauben, dass die Nazis einen guten Witz verstehen.

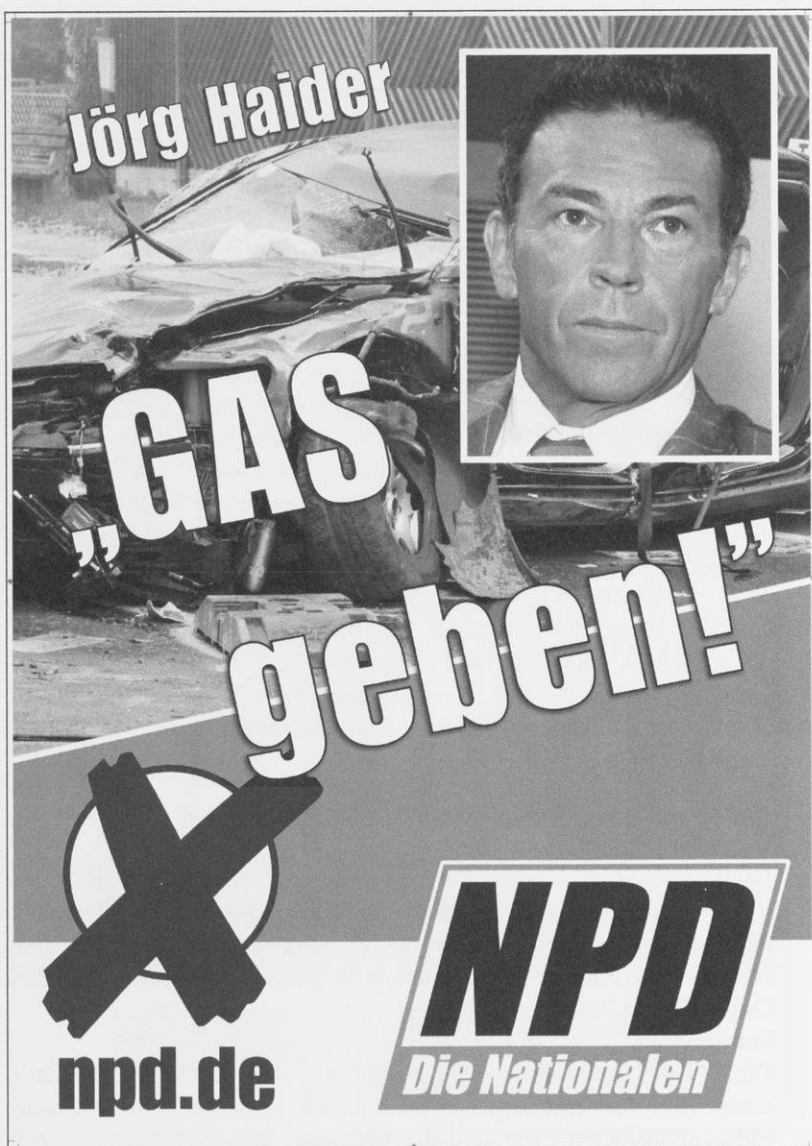


Abbildung 2. "Gas geben!" 2.0.

Sonneborn (*durch Lautsprecher*):

Gibt es hier irgendwelche Fragen—inhaltlich?⁶⁰

Offensichtlich ist die von der Titanic entwickelte “2.0 Version” eine parodistische Bezugnahme auf das Original des NPD-Plakats. Man könnte sagen: es handelt sich auch hier um eine Art *Greffage*. Ihre satirische, um nicht zu sagen, real-satirische Tendenz erhält das Plakat aber erst durch eine Geste der Pffropfung, die zugleich Teil einer Performance wird: Als Antwort auf die “geschmacklose” Wahl eines sensiblen Kontextes (das Jüdische Museum) durch die NPD, wurde von der PARTEI eine geschmacklose Transformation des Original-Plakats vorgenommen, der der NPD ihre eigene Geschmacklosigkeit im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes “vor Augen führt.”

Vielleicht könnte man sogar so weit gehen und sagen: Zeigen und Zitieren—und damit jede parodistische Bezugnahme auf eine Vorlage—werden überhaupt erst durch Gesten der Pffropfung politisch aufgeladen. Der politische Moment besteht dabei sowohl in der Unterbrechung (Stichwort: *force de rupture*) mit dem originalen Kontext als auch in der Wahl eines neuen, anderen Kontextes, in den die zitierten, parodierten Elemente transportiert und inskribiert werden. Erst diese Geste der Pffropfung macht aus dem reinen Spaß einer Plakat-Collage einen politischen Witz mit satirischer Tendenz. So besehen lässt sich argumentieren, dass die Ziele der Performances von Sonneborn & Co. zumindest teilweise ähnliche sind wie die des dialektischen Theaters Brechts (es geht um den “Spaß, den es seinem Publikum bereitet, menschliches Verhalten und seine Folgen kritisch zu betrachten”⁶¹)—allerdings erweitert um die Dimension des *Cool Fun*, der auch ein Spaß am Kontextwechsel ist.

Zwei Fragen stellen sich abschließend: Die erste betrifft die Figur von Sonneborn und seine Rolle als “Parteivorsitzender”: Ist seine Rolle lediglich die des *agent provocateur*—oder ist es nicht vielmehr eine Neufassung der Rolle des Intriganten im Sinne Benjamins—freilich eines verfremdeten Intriganten, der “seinen Gestus selbst zitiert”?⁶² Die zweite Frage betrifft den Status von Sonneborns Performances. Sie werden in der deutschen Medienöffentlichkeit als komische Unterbrechung des ernstesten Polit-Theaters wahrgenommen—und entfalten insofern einen eigentümlichen Verfremdungseffekt. Insofern könnte man argumentieren, dass diese Auftritte eine parabatistische Funktion haben.⁶³ Friedrich Schlegel nennt in seinem Essay “Vom ästhetischen Werte der griechischen Komödie” die Parabase ein “politisches Intermezzo.”⁶⁴ Ich habe den Eindruck, dass diese Formulierung auch auf die parodistischen und satirischen Performances von DIE PARTEI zutrifft. Und möglicherweise ist die Pffropfung als Figur der Unterbrechung dabei eben jene Operation, die den Raum für die parabatistische Unterbrechung schafft, also für das, was Schlegel als politisches Intermezzo bezeichnet.

Anmerkungen

- ¹ Walter Benjamin, "Der Autor als Produzent," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. II.2, hrsg. von Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1991), 683–701, hier 699.
- ² "Zweiter Nachtrag zur Theorie des 'Messingkaufs,'" *BFA* 22.2, 699.
- ³ Vgl. Walter Benjamin, "Was ist episches Theater? (1) Eine Studie zu Brecht," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. II.2, 519–31; sowie Walter Benjamin, "Was ist episches Theater? (2)," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. II.2, 532–39.
- ⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. I.1, hrsg. von Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1991), 203–430, hier 304.
- ⁵ Benjamin, "Was ist episches Theater? (1)," 524.
- ⁶ Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, "'Ur-Verbrechen' (und) 'Spaßgesellschaft.' Zum Komischen als Paradigma des Gegenwartstheaters," in *Politik der Vorstellung. Theater und Theorie*, hrsg. von Joachim Gerstmeier und Nikolaus Müller-Schöll (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2006): 194–212, hier 195.
- ⁷ Friedrich Schlegel, "Vom ästhetischen Werte der griechischen Komödie. Studien des klassischen Altertums," in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe. Abt. 1, Kritische Ausgabe*, hrsg. von Ernst Behler (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 30.
- ⁸ Christoph Menke, *Die Gegenwart der Tragödie. Versuch über Urteil und Spiel* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 136.
- ⁹ "Zweiter Nachtrag zur Theorie des 'Messingkaufs,'" 699.
- ¹⁰ "[Vierter] Nachtrag zur Theorie des 'Messingkaufs,'" *BFA* 22.2, 701–2, hier 701.
- ¹¹ Benjamin, "Was ist episches Theater (2)," 536.
- ¹² Ebd.
- ¹³ Niklas Luhmann, *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), 177–78.
- ¹⁴ "[Vierter] Nachtrag zur Theorie des 'Messingkaufs,'" 702.
- ¹⁵ "Dialektik auf dem Theater," *BFA* 23, 300–301, hier 300.
- ¹⁶ Erving Goffman, *Frame-Analysis. An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1974), 45.
- ¹⁷ "Dialektik auf dem Theater," 300.
- ¹⁸ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1999), 213–14.
- ¹⁹ Gérard Genette, *Palimpseste. Die Literatur auf zweiter Stufe* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), 14.
- ²⁰ Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater*, 215.
- ²¹ Ebd.
- ²² Vgl. Martin Kaul, "PARTEI wählen ist das letzte. Elitär, bourgeois und amoralisch," in der *taz* vom 14. September 2017, <http://www.taz.de/!5447201/>. Zuletzt gesehen am 15. Oktober 2018.

²³ Ebd.

²⁴ Die PARTEI Spandau. "Die PARTEI Wahlspot zur Bundestagswahl 2005." Youtube Video 1:45. Gepostet am 2. Februar 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=WohaDC5Ryz4>. Zuletzt gesehen am 15. Oktober 2018.

²⁵ Goffman, *Frame-Analysis*, 8.

²⁶ Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater*, 213.

²⁷ Benjamin, "Was ist episches Theater (2)," 536.

²⁸ Ebd.

²⁹ John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 21.

³⁰ Gottlob Frege, "Der Gedanke. Eine logische Untersuchung," in *Beiträge zur Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus 2* (1918–19), 58–77, hier 63.

³¹ Ebd.

³² Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 21.

³³ Ebd.

³⁴ Ebd.

³⁵ Vgl. Katrin Trüstedt, *Die Komödie der Tragödie. Shakespeares "Sturm" am Umschlagplatz von Mythos und Moderne, Rache und Recht, Tragik und Spiel* (Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2011).

³⁶ William Shakespeare, "The Tempest," in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2. Aufl., hrsg. von Gwynne Blakemore Evans u.a. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 166–86.

³⁷ Vgl. Goffman, *Frame-Analysis*, 44.

³⁸ Jacques Derrida, "Signatur Ereignis Kontext," in *Limited Inc.*, übers. von Werner Rappl (Wien: Passagen, 2001), 15–45, hier 27–28.

³⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Signature Événement Contexte," in *Marges de la Philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 365–93, hier 367.

⁴⁰ Ebd.

⁴¹ Ebd., 377.

⁴² Derrida, "Signatur Ereignis Kontext," 32.

⁴³ Ebd.

⁴⁴ Benjamin, "Was ist episches Theater (2)," 536.

⁴⁵ Vgl. hierzu Ken Mudge, Jules Janick, Steven Scofield, und Eliezer E. Goldschmidt, "A History of Grafting," in *Horticultural Reviews* 35 (2009): 437–93.

⁴⁶ Vgl. Uwe Wirth, "Poetisches Paperwork. Pfropfung und Collage im Spannungsfeld von *Cut and Paste*," in *Paperworks: Literarische und kulturelle Praktiken mit Schere, Leim, Papier*, hrsg. von Magnus Wieland und Irmgard Wirtz (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017), 41–63.

⁴⁷ Erving Goffman, *Frame-Analysis*, 44.

- ⁴⁸ Raoul Hausmann, "Die Dadaistischen Montagen der großen Internationalen Dada-Messe und der Almanach-Dada," in *Am Anfang war Dada*, hrsg. von Karl Riha und Günter Kämpf (Gießen: Anabas, 1992), 137–41, hier 137.
- ⁴⁹ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes. La Littérature au second degré* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982), 11.
- ⁵⁰ Uwe Wirth, "Kunst und Komik als Performanz und Pfropfung," in *Kunst und Komik, Ergebnisse des Kasseler Komik-Kolloquiums*, hrsg. von Friedrich W. Block (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2016), 35–59.
- ⁵¹ Vgl. Uwe Wirth, *Diskursive Dummheit. Abduktion und Komik als Grenzphänomene des Verstehens* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1999), 321–22.
- ⁵² Erving Goffman, *Rahmen-Analyse. Ein Versuch über die Organisation von Alltagserfahrungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), 55–56.
- ⁵³ SPIEGEL TV. "Berlinwahl: 'Die Partei,' Obama und ein Großer Vorsitzender—SPIEGEL TV." Youtube Video, 2:84. Gepostet am 15. September 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILg0cZ_ZLzU. Zuletzt gesehen am 15. Oktober 2018.
- ⁵⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten" (1905), in *Gesammelte Werke, Band VI* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999), 1–269, hier 102.
- ⁵⁵ Ebd., 207, 234, 244.
- ⁵⁶ Ebd., 255.
- ⁵⁷ Ebd., 132.
- ⁵⁸ Ebd., 261.
- ⁵⁹ Derrida, "Signature Événement Contexte," 367.
- ⁶⁰ SPIEGEL TV. "Berlinwahl: 'Die Partei,' Obama und ein Großer Vorsitzender—SPIEGEL TV."
- ⁶¹ "Dialektik auf dem Theater," 300.
- ⁶² Benjamin, "Was ist episches Theater (2)," 536.
- ⁶³ Vgl. Christian Kirchmeier, "The President's Address. Zur politischen Parabase in *House of Cards*," *LiLi Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 46 (2016): 369–83.
- ⁶⁴ Schlegel, "Vom ästhetischen Werte der griechischen Komödie," 30.

The Debts of Mister Julius Caesar: Brecht's History of the Credit Economy

Literature and art in Bertolt Brecht's understanding not just work with economic motifs but rather critically scrutinize the "epistemic constitution" of the economic matters and issues whose sway they themselves, as products and commodities, are subjected to. Brecht's texts and stage productions, in this context, not only pursue the historicization of economic "facts" but also the economic analysis of historical tradition. While classical historiography shows little interest in the economic aspects of Julius Caesar's rise, Brecht's novel focuses on Caesar's business career instead of his political biography. Instead of a hero's career, Brecht's work portrays a debtor's career that testifies less to Caesar's historical "individuality" than to the functional logic of a debt service already expanding in Rome at the time. Not only does Brecht draw conclusions from this for his anti-Aristotelian conception of theatre and narrative and for the status of his own authorship. What is more, Brecht's unfinished novel on Caesar opens up the horizon of a general history of debt and guilt that has coincided with the genesis of capitalism—a history that was already outlined by Walter Benjamin and has become the core element of today's theories of capitalism.

Literatur und Kunst im Sinne Bertolt Brechts arbeiten nicht nur mit wirtschaftlichen Motiven. Vielmehr beobachten sie kritisch die "epistemische Konstitution" jener ökonomischen Objekte und Themen, deren Wirkmacht sie, als Produktion und Ware, selbst unterliegen. Brechts Texte und Inszenierungen verfolgen in diesem Zuge neben der Historisierung ökonomischer "Tatbestände" auch die ökonomische Analyse historischer Tradierung. Während die klassische Geschichtsschreibung an den wirtschaftlichen Aspekten von Julius Caesars Aufstieg kaum Interesse zeigt, setzt Brechts Caesar-Roman an die Stelle seiner politischen eine Geschäftsbiografie und stößt, statt auf einen heroischen Werdegang, auf eine Schuldnerkarriere, die weniger von Caesars historischer "Individualität" zeugt als von der Funktionslogik eines bereits in Rom expandierenden Schuldendienstes. Nicht nur, dass Brecht daraus Schlussfolgerungen zieht für seine antiaristotelische Konzeption des Theaters und Erzählens und für den Status seiner eigenen Autorschaft; Brechts Romanfragment zu Caesar eröffnet den Horizont einer allgemeinen, mit der Genese des Kapitalismus koinzidierenden Schuld(en)geschichte, wie sie bereits Walter Benjamin umrissen hat und zum Kernstück heutiger Kapitalismustheorien geworden ist.

Die Schulden des Herrn Julius Caesar: Brechts Historie der Kreditökonomie

Burkhardt Wolf

Ökonomische Poetik

Alles andere als eine bloße Gabe ist für Bertolt Brecht die Literatur: Unweigerlich ist sie von Ökonomischem durchdrungen. Dabei ist die "Ökonomie," wie er 1930 notierte, "weder das Hauptstoffgebiet der Kunst, noch ist ihre Umformung oder Verteidigung eines ihrer Ziele: sie ist, sowohl mehr als auch weniger: ihre Voraussetzung."¹ Dadurch, dass ihr wirtschaftliche Sachverhalte zugrunde liegen, verfügt die Literatur allerdings noch lange über keinen festen Grund. Wenn nämlich unterschiedliche ökonomische Theorien ihre jeweiligen epistemischen Objekte (den Markt oder *homo oeconomicus*, das Geld oder Kapital) auf ihnen eigentümliche Weise entwerfen, wenn also bereits auf der Ebene wissenschaftlicher Gegenstandskonstitution diverse Poetiken des Ökonomischen am Werk sind, muss eine ökonomische Poetik vermeintlich unumstößliche "Sachverhalte" der Wirtschaft gerade in ihrer Gemachtheit und Historizität reflektieren.

Diese Einsicht war das Ergebnis von Brechts erstem Versuch, sich der Ökonomie thematisch anzunähern: Unter dem Titel *Jae Fleischhacker* wollte er 1923 die Getreidebörse Chicagos auf die Bühne bringen, um im Umweg über die amerikanische Lebensmittelspekulation zu klären, wie es im Nachkriegsdeutschland, ungeachtet seiner Rekordernten, zu einer Versorgungskrise kommen konnte. Für die Dynamiken und Turbulenzen der Börse, diesen Umschlagplatz von Waren-, Geld- und Menschenströmen, fand Brecht trotz intensiver Lektüren ökonomischer Literatur und trotz zahlreicher Gespräche mit Wirtschaftswissenschaftlern keine zureichende Erklärung. Will man Brechts Auskünften über seinen eigenen Werdegang glauben, verschrieb er sich aus eben diesem Grunde fortan dem Studium des Marxismus. Und aus demselben Grunde begriff er es als eine Herausforderung des Theaters, die moderne Makroökonomie mitsamt ihren obskuren Kausalitäten, virtuellen Zukünften und komplexen *agencies* zu modellieren.²

Brechts "episches Theater," dieses experimentelle Forum diskursiver und darstellungslogischer Selbstreflexion, wurzelt in einer ökonomischen Poetik. Seine programmatischen Leitsätze gehen auf Brechts Beschäftigung mit der Börsenspekulation und auf die Verlegenheit der zeitgenössischen

Ökonomik zurück.³ Schließlich wollte Brecht demonstrieren, wie weit die "Realität" wirtschaftlichen Handelns bereits "in die Funktionale gerutscht" (BFA 21, 469) und wie sehr der vermeintlich rational oder tugendhaft Handelnde nur mehr ein Anhängsel seiner ökonomischen *persona* war. Und hierzu hatte, an die Stelle des "aristotelischen Theaters," welches typische, anschauliche und einfühlungsträchtige Fälle vorführt, ein "Theater des wissenschaftlichen Zeitalters" (BFA 22, 695) zu treten: ein Theater, das es mit der Autorität der Wissenschaften aufnehmen kann.

Doch nicht nur die Konstitution ökonomischer Sachverhalte und damit ihre historische Dimension sollte Brecht beschäftigen. Wie im Folgenden zu zeigen ist, wandte er sich ebenso der ökonomischen Dimension historischer Sachverhalte zu: der Frage, inwiefern Überlieferung und Geschichte einem rationalen Kalkül oder auch schlicht der Zwingkraft bestimmter wirtschaftlicher Konstellationen unterworfen sind. Ausgehend von der Figur des Julius Caesar entwarf Brecht ein Konzept der Historiografie, das man ebenso materialistisch nennen kann wie chronikalisch und konstruktiv—and das nicht nur Walter Benjamins Geschichtsauffassung nahesteht, sondern auch der der französischen Annalisten und der heutigen Genealogien des Kapitalismus. Indem sein (unvollendetes) Caesar-Projekt an die Stelle einer "heroischen" die bloße Geschäftsbiografie setzt und diese als eigentümliche Schuldnerkarriere konkretisiert, konterkariert es zum einen das historistische Programm der "Einfühlung," zum anderen jede historiografische Fixierung auf das Individuum und dessen politisches Charisma, um, ausgehend von antiken Kreditökonomien, zuletzt eine umfassende Schuldgeschichte in Aussicht zu stellen.

Caesar im Roman

Bereits im Winter 1928 diskutierte Brecht mit Fritz Sternberg und Erwin Piscator über eine zeitgemäße Fassung der *Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, und noch 1939 monierte er, in Shakespeares Stück würden allerlei "Empfindungen voll auf uns" übertragen, doch sei "die Handlungsweise" der antiken Charaktere "nicht für Ökonomen verständlich gemacht" (BFA 22, 519). Seit 1937 arbeitete er selbst an einem Drama über Julius Caesar, das weniger republikanische Heldentaten als vielmehr kommerzielle Machenschaften zeigen sollte, die zu guter Letzt nur in die Diktatur führen. Seinerseits von der Hitlerdiktatur mit Aufführungsverbot belegt, entschloss sich Brecht 1938 zu einer Romanfassung unter dem Titel *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar*. 1940, nachdem er zu dem Stoff auch ein kurzes Filmexposé geschrieben hatte, brach er die Arbeit am Roman ab, versuchte sich noch an zwei Caesar-Erzählungen und veröffentlichte dann von alledem nur die Kalendergeschichte *Caesar und sein Legionär* (1949). Der Roman, das eigentliche Zentrum dieses Werkkomplexes, konzentriert sich im ersten Buch auf die anfängliche Ämterlaufbahn Caesars, dann auf die

Catilinarische Verschwörung, auf Caesars Statthalterschaft in der Provinz Hispania Ulterior und schließlich, im vierten Buch, auf sein Konsulat; die Rückkehr aus Gallien und der Bürgerkrieg, Caesars Diktatur und Ermordung wurden nicht mehr ausgeführt.

Was diesen Erzähltext mit Brechts ökonomischem Theater verbindet, ist zunächst seine "antiaristotelische" Konzeption. Denn im Gegensatz zum "aristotelischen Roman," der einen allgemeinen Befund (wie: "Die römische Politik war korrupt") anhand eines besonderen Falls (eines korrupten römischen Politikers) veranschaulichen und dann zu einer "Fabel" (vgl. *BFA* 21, 538–39) ausformulieren würde, entwirft dieser Text ein kaum überschaubares Netzwerk von Einflussnahmen und Abhängigkeiten, das so komplexe wie wechselhafte Verhältnisse zwischen Ökonomie und Politik oder persönlicher Ambition und sozialem Feld offenbart. Wie Brechts einzig vollendeter Roman, der *Dreigroschenroman* (1934), der ja schon dem Titel nach das "epische" Moment der *Dreigroschenoper* ins Erzählerische rückübersetzt, minimiert auch der *Caesar* "Anschaulichkeit" und sperrt sich so gegen jede "Einfühlung"—seinem Helden gewährt er nicht einen einzigen persönlichen Auftritt, geschweige denn eine eindringliche Charakterstudie. Programmatisch werden hier nicht "die Handlungen aus den Charakteren, sondern die Charaktere aus den Handlungen" entwickelt und diese wiederum aus "Interessen" abgeleitet (*BFA* 22, 505). Realistisch sind der *Caesar* wie der *Dreigroschenroman* in dem Sinne, dass sie Wirklichkeit nicht als das, was angeblich *ist*, auffassen, sondern vielmehr als einen "Prozess": als das, was aus dem Bereich des Evidenten "in die Funktionale gerutscht" ist und nach den widerstreitenden "Gesetzen" der Realität, zuvorderst denen der ökonomischen Realität, auf widersprüchliche Weise *wird* (vgl. *BFA* 22, 458–59).

Caesar in der Überlieferung

Bereits während seiner Beschäftigung mit Shakespeares *Julius Caesar* las Brecht Plutarchs *Leben*, für die Arbeit am Drama und Roman exzerpierte er dann Sueton, Theodor Mommsens *Römische Geschichte*, Max Webers *Römische Agrargeschichte* und einige weniger prominente Studien.⁴ Was zu Caesars Vermögensverhältnissen überliefert war, suchte Brecht penibel zu erfassen—beispielsweise verglich er Plutarchs und Suetons Angaben zu Caesars Schulden. Letztlich jedoch wurde er hier nicht fündig, am wenigsten bei den Klassikern: "Über die Eigenschaften des großen Caesar finden wir in der römischen Geschichte des berühmten Mommsen, die 21 Kapitel umfasst, ein ganzes Kapitel," notierte er, "aber nicht eine Zeile über sein Einkommen."⁵ Für den ökonomischen Hintergrund von Caesars Werdegang brachte die Historie offenbar kaum Interesse auf.⁶

Symptomatisch hierfür ist jene Episode, die Brecht wohl um 1922 in dem Lustspiel *Caesar unter den Seeräubern*, von dem nur die Titelangabe

überliefert ist (vgl. *BFA* 10, 1304), dramatisieren wollte und im Roman dann aufgegriffen hat: Auf einer Bildungsreise in die Ägäis sei der junge Caesar einmal von Piraten entführt worden. Als Gefangener habe er sich aber keineswegs einschüchtern lassen, sondern über die für seine Selbsteinschätzung zu geringe Lösegeldforderung von zwanzig Talenten mokiert, die Piraten als Barbaren verhöhnt und ihnen, offenbar im Spaß, angedroht, sie für ihr Treiben aufzuknüpfen. Sobald ausgelöst, habe er einige Schiffe und Kämpfer organisiert, dieselben Piraten überwältigt und ihre gesammelten Reichtümer als Prise erklärt. Da der asiatische Statthalter an ihrer Strafverfolgung kein Interesse zeigte, habe sie Caesar kurzerhand ans Kreuz schlagen lassen—und so seine scherzhafte Drohung wahrgemacht.

In der Überlieferung zeugt die Episode seit Plutarch und Sueton für Caesars Charisma so sehr wie für seinen Humor. In Brechts Roman hingegen stellt der Zeitzeuge Spicer klar: “Es war Sklavenhandel” (182). Auf seiner Überfahrt nach Rhodos habe der künftige Gewährsmann der Republik nämlich eine eigene Menschenladung verschifft, sei dabei aber auf kleinasiatische Sklavenhändler gestoßen, die hier im Einvernehmen mit dem römischen Senat ihre Geschäfte “legal” betrieben und Caesar folglich als Schmuggler fassten. Die fällige Geldstrafe habe Caesar durch seine Boten als “Lösegeld” borgen lassen, ohne sie je zurückzuzahlen, und die vermeintlichen Kidnapper seien Sklavenhändler gewesen, die er als Konkurrenten republikanischer Unternehmungen beseitigte. Caesar hatte also “nicht für einen Aß Humor. Er hatte aber Unternehmungsgeist” (184). Und dieser war so vorausschauend, dass er des Pompeius Säuberungsaktionen gegen “die Piraterie” ebenso bedachte wie die Überlieferung “in den Geschichtsbüchern” (185).

Die Episode betrachtet man heute als “das erste Zeugnis der Selbstdarstellungskunst Caesars.”⁷ Von ihr ausgehend schildert Brechts Roman, wie Caesar “Geschichte macht” oder vielmehr: wie er “sich macht”—nicht nur, welche geschäftliche und politische Karriere er antritt, sondern wie er (durch Geld, Einfluss und literarisches *self-fashioning*) in seine historische Geltung investiert (vgl. 167). Mit Caesar wird deutlich, was es mit der vermeintlichen “Omnipotenz der Geschichtsschreiber” auf sich hat (*BFA* 27, 15). Denn nicht nur, dass der historische Akteur, wenn nur reich und mächtig genug, selbst die Historie beliefern oder aber boykottieren kann. “Dass Machiavell [in Caesar] den Kondottiere sieht, Mommsen den aufgeklärten Monarchen, der mit dem Bürgerstand geht usw.” (ebd.), spricht weniger für die schrankenlose Macht der Historie als für ihre historische Prägung. Geschichte wird nicht nach Belieben produziert, vielmehr verweist ihre Machart so sehr wie ihr Material auf komplexe “Produktionsverhältnisse”: auf ökonomische, politische und ideologische Bedingungen, unter denen Zeugnisse angefertigt, überliefert und bewertet werden.

Poetik der Geschichte

Eine Historiografie, die den Prozess der Überlieferung derart "materialistisch" begreift, hat Benjamin 1940 in "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" umrissen. Die Thesen dieser kurzen Schrift treffen nicht zufällig den poetologischen Nerv des *Caesar*-Romans. Denn Brecht selbst vermutete, die ihm nach Benjamins Selbstmord zugespielte Abhandlung "könnte nach der Lektüre meines 'Caesar' geschrieben sein (mit dem Benjamin, als er ihn in Svendborg las, nicht allzuviel anfangen konnte)" (BFA 27, 12). Tatsächlich wird im Roman, trotz seiner verschachtelten Konstruktion, weitgehend chronikalisch, ohne die Unterscheidung zwischen "großen" und "nebensächlichen" Ereignissen erzählt—ganz wie von Benjamins Gegenhistorie nahegelegt. Fordert diese, wider die nivellierende Universalität und homogene Zeit des Historismus "ein konstruktives Prinzip" aufzubieten, ist damit gerade keine freie Fabulation gemeint, sondern ein "Denken," dass sich an "einer von Spannungen gesättigten Konstellation" zu entzünden und aus ihr prägnante Momente "herauszusprengen" vermag.⁸ Eben diese Sprengkraft gewinnt bei Brecht ein Ensemble vermeintlich nebensächlicher ökonomischer Tatbestände, welche Caesar plötzlich als skrupellosen Geschäftemacher erscheinen lassen.

An Brechts Roman wurde von althistorischer Warte harsche Kritik geübt: Er befasse sich "gerade mit dem Teil von Caesars Leben, der historisch weniger bedeutend und relativ schlecht dokumentiert ist"; er habe etliche historische Details und Bezeichnungen falsch oder missverständlich wiedergegeben; und er habe "an die Stelle einer eindeutigen historischen Überlieferung, die keinerlei Anstoß bietet," nur die "unwahrscheinliche Erfindung" gesetzt, "Caesar sei es um nichts als um Geld gegangen."⁹ Alles andere als eindeutig und unanstößig schien Brecht indessen eine Überlieferung, deren "Quellen 'unsaubere' Zusammenhänge zwischen Gesetzeserlassen und finanziellen Transaktionen" (etwa zwischen Gesetzen zur Schuldenerhebung und gleichzeitigen Kreditgeschäften) nahelegen.¹⁰ Eben dass sie an entscheidenden Punkten lückenhaft ist, machte es für Brecht nur umso nötiger, der Quellenlage durch (sachlich gestützte und narrativ plausibilisierte) Hypothesen zu begegnen, selbst wenn diese Hypothesen für einen Althistoriker "unwahrscheinlich" sein sollten. Gerade dass es den kanonisierten Schein der Wahrheit, das historistische "Wie es wirklich war" konterkariert, zeichnet ja das "konstruktive Prinzip" von Brechts Verfahren aus. Oder anders gesagt: Brechts Hypothesen sind weder verifizier- noch falsifizierbar.¹¹ Schließlich betreffen sie gerade jenes (gleichermaßen ideologische wie finanzielle) "Interesse," das Caesar und sein Umfeld an einer selektiven Überlieferung nahm.

Ganz im Sinne Benjamins versuchte Brecht, "die Überlieferung von neuem dem Konformismus abzugewinnen."¹² Und dieser bestand, nicht erst seit der Epoche des Faschismus, in einer Historie, die Caesar eine

republikanische Gesinnung attestierte, seinen Schwenk zur Diktatur aber in "tragischer Notwendigkeit" begründet sah. Wenn die kommunistische Gegenhistorie, im Rekurs auf Karl Marx' Formulierung im *Achtzehnten Brumaire des Louis Buonaparte* (1852),¹³ die faschistische Diktatur als bloß farcenhafte Wiederholung der antiken Konstellation verstand, folgte sie damit wider Willen der bürgerlichen Historie. Brecht ging deshalb einen Schritt weiter: Statt die Gegenwart als komödiantische Wiederaufführung zu bagatellisieren, begriff er Caesar selbst als einen Schmierenkomödianten, der weniger "tragische Schuld" auf sich lädt, als dass er—für seine Auftritte, Masken und Rollen—Schulden über Schulden macht. Im allerersten Dramenentwurf heißt es gleich zu Beginn: "*I. Akt/Schulden*" (BFA 10, 790), und was der Historie "hochtrabend 'Volk'" heißen wird, ist für Caesar nur ein "Publikum," auf das er mit Bühnentricks—und nicht zuletzt mit Schulden—Eindruck macht (BFA 10, 805).

Antike Verfremdung

Brechts *Caesar* kann man eine "Systemsatire"¹⁴ nennen. Denn schon dadurch, dass hier die Folgen und Nebenfolgen allen Handelns (im doppelten Wortsinn) nicht mehr absehbar sind, schrumpfen Caesars vermeintlich welthistorische Strategien auf das Format privater Geschäftemacherei. Wenn es im Roman nicht nur ein "Schwarzer Tag an der Börse" (283), sondern eine gravierende Kreditkrise ist,¹⁵ die dem Diktator seinen Weg bereitet, liegt ein satirischer Bezug auf die 1930er Jahre auf der Hand. Indes vereitelt Brechts systemische Perspektive allzu simple Analogien. Hitler ist nicht gleich Caesar, denn auch Cicero, Catilina oder Pompeius antworten im Roman auf das Bedürfnis nach einer starken Hand.¹⁶ Brechts Text ist also kein "historischer Roman" im Stile Lion Feuchtwangers, der auf verschlüsselte, aber leicht dekodierbare Weise das Regime attackiert. "Kritik" übt er vielmehr im Sinne einer Unterscheidungskunst, die als aktualisierende Historienfiktion eine verblüffende Nähe zwischen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart herstellt, die Geschichte aber im selben Zuge verfremdet und damit den Bezug auf die Überlieferung irritiert.

Der Roman präsentiert sich als antiker Text, teils zu Caesars Lebzeiten, teils nach seinem Tod entstanden. Gerade dort, wo er sich präzise an die Quellen hält, wirkt er auf moderne Leser befremdlich, wie Brecht feststellte, denn "einige leute, denen ich von C.s geschäften erzählte, bezweifelten die 8stöckigen häuser, die steuerpachtgesellschaften mit ihren aktien und direktoren, die sterbekassenvereine der plebs usw usw, alles was 'so modern wirkt' und hielten das für erfindung. sie dachten, ich hüllte zeitergebnisse in 'antikes gewand.'" ¹⁷ Dass uns die antike Ökonomie apokryph geblieben ist, markiert der Roman dann in einem zweiten Schritt, wenn er die Erzählung systematisch mit Begriffen der modernen Finanzökonomie durchsetzt: Neben der "Börse" und dem "Kapital" ist etwa vom "Cornern"

und "Kurzverkaufen," von einer "Baissetendenz" und entsprechenden Spekulation *à la baisse* die Rede. Im Gegensatz zu den Anachronismen, die sich auch in der etablierten Historie finden, beansprucht Brecht jedoch, den "V-Effekt" weniger "unvollkommen" zur Geltung zu bringen: Statt wie Mommsen "für Prätor 'Staatsanwalt'" zu setzen,¹⁸ ohne damit die Spezifik des römischen Amtes zu erhellen, zielt Brechts unzeitgemäße Terminologie darauf, das ökonomische Substrat römischer Politkarrieren offenzulegen.

Unter diesen Vorzeichen rücken Caesars mehr oder minder ehrenwerte Geschäfte in den Mittelpunkt: seien es seine Anfänge im Sklavenhandel, seine Anwaltstätigkeit, seine Bestechungsmaßnahmen und Grundstücksspekulationen, sei es die Organisation pompöser Familienbegräbnisse, die Stiftung einer Reitbahn, die Verwaltung Spaniens oder die Finanzierung seines eigenen Triumphs. All diese Etappen von Caesars Werdegang zeugen dafür, dass er "immer von der Politik ins Geschäft" (378) wollte. Alles andere als ein "Politiker großen Formats" (286), wurde Caesar zum Diktator wider Willen, aber aus ökonomischem Zwang. Deshalb charakterisiert ihn das Erzählen, wie etliche andere Figuren auch,¹⁹ allein durch sein *ökonomisches* Handeln, und mehr noch: die Vielfalt seiner Geschäfte trägt ihm das eigentümliche Lob ein, keinerlei "Charakter" zu haben (287, 384). Der ursprüngliche Plan des Ich-Erzählers, eine heroische Biografie zu verfassen, mündet in eine Geschäftsbiografie, oder genauer: in die Biografie eines Schuldners, denn beeindruckend war Caesars Geschäftskarriere vor allem durch die in ihr aufgehäuften Schulden. Nur weil er, nach Mommsens Formulierung, die "Kunst[,] immer zu borgen und nie zu bezahlen,"²⁰ so virtuos beherrschte, konnte es zur "Eroberung der Welt auf der Flucht vor dem Gerichtsvollzieher" (BFA 10, 791) kommen—and konnte Caesar, nach Hegels Formulierung, zum "Geschäftsführe[r] des Weltgeistes" (BFA 26, 331) aufsteigen.

Ökonomische Dividualität

Als solcher "Geschäftsführer" pendelt Caesar zwischen widerstreitenden Interessen (vgl. BFA 29, 57–58), ohne jemals zu einer gesicherten Position zu gelangen. Denn während er die eine Fraktion zu beherrschen scheint, treibt ihn die andere vor sich her. Nur auf den ersten Blick ist Caesar jener charismatische "Machthaber," als den ihn die Historie feiert. Tatsächlich kann er allenfalls Funktionsstellen innerhalb jenes Gefüges besetzen, das Macht ganz offenbar nach ökonomischen Maßen und Maßstäben verteilt. Weit davon entfernt, diese "Ökonomie der Macht" zu beherrschen oder zu verkörpern, ist Caesar nur ein prominenter Ausdruck derselben und hat er deshalb "ebensoviel Charakter und Eigenart wie eine Gesellschaft zur Ausbeutung der sardinischen Silberminen" (371). Aus Caesar kann, trotz aller Bemühungen des Ich-Erzählers, keine "Gestalt" (ebd.) werden, keine Figur aus Fleisch und Blut. Schließlich ist er "keine Einzelperson, sondern

nur der sichtbarste Teil eines kräftigen, bösartigen, sein Aussehen übrigens immerfort wechselnden Wesens" (372). Entscheidungen liegen nicht bei ihm, sondern bei den "Großbanken" (284), die ihrerseits nichts anderes als gestaltlos und unpersönlich sind.

Vor diesem Hintergrund ist das Geschehen nicht vom Individuum aus zu fassen, sondern von dem, was Brecht einmal als "Dividuum" (*BFA* 21, 359) beschrieben hat: Statt ein Kompositum unteilbarer Einzelemente (sovereäner Individuen oder eigennütziger *homines oeconomici*) ist das Dividuum ein sich immerzu veränderndes, weil dauernd neu aufteilendes "Wesen." Am Einzelnen ist somit, wie Brecht sagt, "gerade seine Teilbarkeit zu betonen (als Zugehörigkeit zu mehreren Kollektiven)" (ebd.). Seine Teilhabe an mehreren Interessengruppen (oder Funktionssystemen) betrifft wohlgemerkt nicht nur jene, die angeblich "Geschichte machen," sondern auch jene, die Geschichte bezeugen, dokumentieren und schreiben. Nicht nur das erzählte Geschehen, sondern jeden einzelnen Erzählakt durchwaltet im Roman die "Ökonomie der Macht." Deshalb überlässt Spicer, der ehemalige Bankbeauftragte zur Kontrolle des Schuldners Caesar, dem Ich-Erzähler nicht einfach jene Tagebücher von Caesars Sklaven Rarus, die er in Verwahrung hat. Mit der Geschichte des Geschäftemachers Caesar macht der Bankier Spicer nochmals ein Geschäft, indem er zwölftausend Sesterzien für die Vorlage und Kommentierung des Dokuments verlangt.

Diese Tagebücher sind zwar aus der Perspektive eines Sklaven verfasst, zeigen sich aber nicht seiner Befreiung, sondern seinem "Eigentümer" Caesar verpflichtet. Der Historiker wiederum ist anfänglich noch beseelt von der Größe seines Gegenstands, verliert aber zusehends den Glauben, als er sich mit zwölftausend Sesterzien verschulden muss und sich so in das Geschäft mit Caesar verstrickt. Überhaupt schlägt sich die verwickelte Struktur der Geschäfte in der verwickelten Erzählanlage nieder: Der Roman bietet nicht nur mehrere Zeitebenen auf (das Geschehen um Caesar, die Gespräche bei Spicer, die Niederschrift), sondern auch mehrere Erzählebenen: den unmittelbaren Bericht des Sklaven Rarus; die Kommentare noch lebender Zeitzeugen, deren Zeugnis ihrer jeweiligen Interessenlage (als Bankier, Dichter, Jurist und Veteran) verpflichtet ist; und den zusehends selbstreflexiven Text des Historikers. Der Roman geht also "materialistisch"²¹ vor, indem er die Polyphonie historischer Überlieferung als eine bewegliche Konfiguration nicht "freier" oder "ideeller" Standpunkte, sondern handfester Interessen zeigt.

Ökonomie der Macht

Was sich im Roman hinter seinem verwickelten Geschehen abzeichnet, ist der Übergang vom altrömischen Feudalismus zum imperialen Handelskapitalismus: Die "seit grauer Vorzeit" (175) führenden Familien von Großgrundbesitzern feierten zwar allerhand militärische Erfolge; mit den

eroberten Gebieten wussten sie aber kaum mehr anzufangen, als sie auszulündern. Die Reichtümer, die derart nach Rom eingeschleppt wurden, gingen letztlich zu Lasten der heimischen Wirtschaft, besonders der Handwerker und Händler. Historisch überfällig war also offenbar eine nachhaltigere Form der Ausplünderung: ein Kolonialismus asymmetrischer, aber geregelter Handelsbeziehungen. In dieser Situation suchten sich, wie es im Roman heißt, die *equites*, der Stand der Kaufleute, gegen die Privilegien der alten Familien durchzusetzen. Sich das Monopol auf Sklaven zu sichern, von deren Verfügbarkeit ja die Großgrundbesitzer abhingen, war hierzu ein erster Schritt. Und genau hier liegt der Schlüssel zur Episode "Caesar bei den Seeräubern": Mit ihr hatte er sich der Kaufmannschaft als Agent empfohlen, weshalb er fortan ein Teil ihrer Agenda, ein fester Posten in ihrer Rechnung war. Folglich führen im Roman die Zeitzeugen, sobald die Anekdote erst einmal aufgeschlüsselt worden ist, nie mehr den Namen "Caesar," nur mehr die Chiffre "C." an. Und wenn die Kaufleute hier nicht einfach *equites* genannt werden, sondern (im Vorgriff auf Londons frühneuzeitlichen Geldmarkt) "City" heißen, hat das ebenso sachliche Gründe: Die City ist ein "dividuelles" Wesen, das die Begehrlichkeiten und Handlungen zahlloser Individuen vereint und gegen die dynastische Herrschaft des Senats eine neue Ökonomie der Macht etablieren wird.

So wie man zunächst auf Pompeius setzt, um zum Zweck der "Pirateriebekämpfung" die Kriegsflotte und alsdann den Oberbefehl im Osten zu übernehmen; so wie man später Catilina benutzen wird, um den Unmut der Plebejer gegen den Senat zu mobilisieren; so versichert man sich auch C.s, sobald man nach einer "vernünftigen Führung" (175) sucht. Alle drei werden mit Krediten ausgestattet, auf dass sie die *res publica* als Sache der City voranbringen. Catilina lässt man jedoch, ob der gescheiterten Verschwörung, rechtzeitig fallen; und Pompeius wird, nachdem zum Senat übergelaufen, erfolgreich bekämpft; nur C. bleibt der City von Anfang bis Ende verpflichtet. Denn nicht nur, dass er in die Catilinarische Verschwörung verwickelt war; vor allem die Kredite, die man ihm immer wieder gewährt, binden ihn immer fester an die Banken. C.s Aufstieg vollzieht sich im Auftrag der Banken. In diesem Zuge wird aber nicht nur ein Großteil der Senatoren zur, wie es bereits Mommsen nennt, "Kapitalistenoligarchie."²² Das "Volk" wird wiederholt verraten, und das "Bürgertum" mit "seinem" Diktator erscheint als der "tragikomische Held" (BFA 10, 805).

Wenn Brecht das "Übergehen von politischer zu ökonomischer Herrschaft" (378) untersucht, dann übt er sich nicht einfach in "Korruptionskritik."²³ In seinem heutigen Verständnis—als Schädigung des Gemeinwohls zugunsten partikularer Interessen durch den Missbrauch einer Vertrauensstellung oder die Verwischung von Code-Wert-Trennung (v.a. zwischen den Codes des Rechts und der Wirtschaft)²⁴—trägt dieser Begriff wenig zur Erhellung altrömischer Verhältnisse bei. Denn nicht nur, dass es

hier noch keine Ausdifferenzierung sozialer Funktionssysteme gab; auch war, was das “Gemeinwohl” oder eine “Vertrauensstellung” überhaupt sein soll, in der Republik umstritten. Beim “Wählerkauf” erwartete niemand eine direkte Rendite; vielmehr beglaubigte er ein ohnehin bestehendes Vertrauensverhältnis zwischen Gewähltem und Wählern, die wussten, dass Wahlergebnisse eher durch Absprachen unter den Oberen und durch gezielte Manipulationen beeinflusst wurden.²⁵ Eine “Ware” (250) waren Wählerstimmen eher im Sinne einer längerfristigen Investition.

Nicht anders verhielt es sich mit dem “Euergetismus,” der demonstrativen Wohltätigkeit durch die Stiftung von Bauten, die Veranstaltung von Spielen oder Verteilung von Geschenken: In erster Linie befestigte er bestehende Solidaritäten innerhalb der *plebs*. Ein Triumphzug hingegen, der politischen Aufstieg in Aussicht stellte, musste all diejenigen mobilisieren, die Teilhaber sein wollten an der künftigen Macht. Ein Triumphzug war, so gesehen, wirkliche “Kreditbeschaffung” (324): Er verschaffte wirkliche Gläubiger und, mit den hierbei übernommenen Schulden, allererst eine wirkliche “Vertrauensstellung.” Ansehen folgte nämlich aus Kreditwürdigkeit, nicht umgekehrt. Und deshalb vollzog sich die “Monetarisierung” der römischen Politik auch nicht durch die Einführung von Münzgeld (das primär der militärischen Besoldung und dem kolonialen Handel diente),²⁶ sondern in Form von Kreditgeld: von *bonds* oder sogenannten *nomina*.²⁷ Roms Ökonomie der Macht war eine Ökonomie der Schuldtitel—ein Befund, den nicht nur Brechts Intuition und Konstruktion, sondern auch die neuere Geschichtsschreibung nahelegt.

Schuldendienst

Hauptsächlich dreierlei Geschäften widmete sich Roms Adel: Man trieb Tribute aus den Provinzen ein; man kaufte Grundbesitz; und man verlieh Geld.²⁸ Durch den (in der Praxis unkontrollierten) Wucherzins versprach gerade das dritte dieser Geschäfte beträchtlichen Gewinn. Kam es jedoch bei diesen Kreditgeschäften zur Zahlungsunfähigkeit, profitierte, schon weil es keinen gesetzlichen Schuldner- und Gläubigerschutz gab,²⁹ zumeist “der kühle Bankier, der es verstand Kredit zu geben und zu verweigern.”³⁰ In die persönlichen “Kreditnetzwerke” der Oberen, die durch die (hier sehr reell begründeten) Prinzipien der *fides* und *gratia* reguliert wurden,³¹ schalteten sich so mehr und mehr Wechsler und Bankiers ein. Die Vermittlungs- und Verwaltungs-, Beschaffungs- und Bürgschaftsdienste dieser *argentarii* waren schließlich notwendig geworden, seitdem zahlreiche *nomina per delegatio* oder *transcriptio* auf Dritte übertragen und alle möglichen Geschäfte durch—oft mehrfach weitergegebene—Schuldtitel getätigt wurden.³² Somit hatte sich nicht nur “eine regelrechte Schuldenkultur,”³³ samt etlicher Schuldenkrisen, etabliert, sondern ebenso ein expandierendes

Bankensystem, das auch außerhalb Roms tätig war, etwa bei der Kreditvergabe an eroberte Provinzen mit Reparationsverpflichtungen (vgl. 204, 336).

Da für eine politische Ämterkarriere in Rom immense Summen aufzubringen waren, sah sich hier ein Kandidat, sofern nicht von Haus aus hochvermögend, unweigerlich zur Kreditaufnahme genötigt. Je größer seine Ambitionen, desto tiefer sah er sich bald verstrickt in einem Netz unabsehbarer Verpflichtungen und Schuldtitel. Irgendwann wusste, wie es im Roman heißt, der politisch "Führende" nicht mehr so recht, wer für ihn entscheidet, wohl aber, "dass er eigentlich *niemals er selber ist*, indem ja andere da sind, denen wieder er ausgeliefert ist" (228). Wer "Caesar" wirklich war, wussten daher allenfalls seine Gläubiger. Und diese umfassen im Roman das ganze soziale Spektrum, vom Sklaven Rarus bis hin zu den Banken. Gerade die, denen er verpflichtet war, entwerfen C.s Persönlichkeitsprofil, und dies im Stil einer Kreditauskunft: "Er besaß ohne Zweifel persönlichen Mut," sagt Spicer. "Außer den Banken fürchtete er wenig. Den Tod hielt er gelegentlich gegenüber dem Bankrott für das kleinere Übel" (389).

Dazu "gezwungen, aus all seinen politischen Unternehmungen Münze zu schlagen" (249), bewährt sich C. als Feldherr und vor allem bei der kolonialistischen Bewirtschaftung seiner Provinzen. Schulden sind allemal die Triebkraft seines Handelns, und jeder seiner Siege ist ein Sieg der Banken. Mit ihm wird Politik zur Fortsetzung der Wirtschaft mit anderen Mitteln. Hatte C. "Instinkt" und "Inspiration," dann zeigte sich das zuvorderst in seiner Begabung, jede "Sache nur als eine Gelegenheit für Geschäfte" zu betrachten und eben jenen "Augenblick, wo er ohne alle Mittel war," als Gelegenheit zur Schuldenaufnahme zu erkennen (255, 286). Was aus ihm einen "großen Mann" gemacht hat, waren letztlich seine Schulden, denn: "Kleine Schulden sind keine Empfehlung, große Schulden, das ändert den Aspekt. Ein Mann, der wirklich viel schuldet, genießt Ansehen. Für seinen Kredit zittert nicht mehr nur er selber, sondern auch der Gläubiger. Es müssen ihm große Geschäfte zugeschoben werden, damit er zurückzahlen kann. . . . Je größer die Folgen, meineten die unglücklichen, desto größer der Mann" (307–8).

Nachdem C. vor einer "Flut von Anklagen und finanziellen Forderungen" (350) nach Gallien geflohen, dann—von der City angetrieben—zurückgekehrt und in den Bürgerkrieg gezogen ist, wird zum letzten und größten Geschäft, das man ihm "zuschreibt," die Diktatur. Mit ihr führt, wie es in Brechts Gesamtplan heißt, nicht nur die "Aufrechterhaltung der Sklaverei als Grundlage der Wirtschaft . . . zu einer Versklavung allgemeinsten Art, das heißt aller Schichten der Gesellschaft" (352). Auch wird die Aufrechterhaltung des Schuldendienstes als Grundlage der Macht zu einer Verschuldung allgemeinsten Art und aller Schichten der Gesellschaft führen. Seitdem C. als Diktator eine—von den Banken sanktionierte—Neuordnung des Schuldendienstes durchsetzt,³⁴ für die er—von Plutarch bis Mommsen—als der Begründer humaner Konkursordnungen gefeiert

werden wird,³⁵ ist die Verschuldung nicht mehr nur die Sache einer kleinen, sich selbst verpflichteten Elite. Sie ist zur Angelegenheit aller geworden. Und so wie C. "den Höhepunkt der Sklaverei" markiert, in dessen Nachhut sich "eine Sklavenreligion" der "Herren" bemächtigen wird (389), siegt mit dem Christentum auch eine Macht, die den Schuldendienst verewigt und ihn als Schuld aller demokratisiert.

Schuldgeschichte

Geschichte schreibt Brechts Roman ganz im Sinne Benjamins, ebenso aber im Stil der *histoire sérielle*. Denn nicht nur, dass "historische Totalität," bei Brecht wie den *Annales*, allein "in der und durch die Ökonomie sichtbar" wird;³⁶ *fassbar* wird sie für beide erst im Übergang zwischen dreierlei Ebenen:³⁷ im Schritt von den *Ereignissen* und *Personen* (auf die sich die Historie von Plutarch bis Mommsen fixiert) zu den *Kontexten* und *Konjunkturen* (die der ausgeführte Roman in ihrer unübersichtlichen Komplexität erschließt) bis hin zur *longue durée* und zu den *längerfristigen Strukturen* (die Brechts letzte Notizen zumindest andeuten). Seinem Gesamtplan nach verweist der Roman auf eine "totale" Schuldgeschichte, und dies in mehrfacher Hinsicht: Benjamin zufolge ist "Schuld" die "höchste Kategorie der Weltgeschichte," weil sie, im Gegensatz zur Kategorie der "Ursache," eine "Totalität" und "Struktur" zu erfassen vermag.³⁸ Dass die eigentümlich metafiktionale Anlage von Brechts *Caesar* die Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten der Historiografie direkt mit dem antiken Schuldendienst verquickt, ist also nicht zuletzt methodisch begründet. Doch mehr noch: Als "höchste Kategorie der Weltgeschichte" kann "die Schuld" nur durch die "heillose Dreifaltigkeit"³⁹ ihrer Bedeutung gelten. Der Begriff hat nämlich eine *genealogische* wie auch eine *ökonomische* und eine *moralische* Dimension—drei Aspekte, die Brecht im Szenario des römischen Schuldendienstes (und seines Nachspiels) allesamt zusammenführt.

Schulden sind hier zuvorderst eine Sache der Nobilität, ehe sich eine Kreditwirtschaft entwickelt, die sich an alle richtet, deshalb aber ihre ökonomischen Bewertungen mit moralischen ergänzen muss. "Edel" und dadurch glaub- und kreditwürdig ist zunächst nur, wer möglichst fest in jenes System eingebunden ist, das die Mächtigen einander (durch Wertschätzung oder Kreditgeld) verpflichtet. Mit dem Bankgeschäft kommt jedoch ein so unpersönlicher wie unbegrenzter Umlauf von Schulden in Gang, und genau in diesem Umschwung kann man den "Ursprung des Kapitalismus" sehen—und die Etablierung eines "ursprünglichen," historisch nicht ableitbaren "Kapitalverhältnisses."⁴⁰ Denn auch wenn, worauf bereits Marx, Weber und Werner Sombart hingewiesen haben, in der Antike der Mehrwert noch nicht systemisch appropriiert wurde, selbst wenn hier noch keine formell freie Arbeit im "Geist des Kapitalismus" rationalisiert wurde und der Handel, das Banken- und Kreditwesen noch nicht wirklich

marktförmig waren,⁴¹ kam es hier, lange vor Entstehung von Fabriken und vor Einführung der Lohnarbeit, zur umfänglichen Mobilisierung von Kapital—und dies durch die Weitergabe und Refinanzierung von Schulden.⁴²

Deshalb spricht selbst Mommsen in seiner *Römischen Geschichte* wiederholt von "Kapital," so als ob, nach Schumpeters Beschreibung, hinter den modernen Charaktermasken des Unternehmers und Kapitalisten die antiken Figuren des (großen) Schuldners und des (mächtigen) Gläubigers stünden.⁴³ Der Kapitalismus ist eine Schuldgeschichte. Diese rekonstruiert Brechts Roman in seinem ausgeführten Teil freilich rein genealogisch und ökonomisch: Sich bei Seinesgleichen zu verschulden, zeitigt für C. noch ebenso wenig moralische Bedenken wie der Sklavenhandel, die Kriegsführung oder die Ausbeutung der Provinzen. Brecht selbst war erstaunt, wie "unmenschlich" sein "kaltes Werk" eine "kalte Welt" präsentiert (BFA 26, 314–15)—ein V-Effekt, der unseren Abstand zu Caesars Zeit markiert. Wo und wie in Brechts "kalter Welt" die Moral hätte intervenieren sollen, darüber lässt sich nur spekulieren. Anzunehmen ist jedoch, dass seine Schuldgeschichte den Leitlinien Benjamins (auch hier) weitgehend entsprochen hätte.

Die Etablierung einer Ethik der Selbstsorge (als Kehrseite expandierender Kreditökonomien) und die Installierung des Monotheismus (im Zentrum des Imperiums) waren sicherlich notwendige Bedingungen dafür, Moral und Ökonomie konvertierbar zu machen und jenes System unendlicher Verschuldung zu errichten, das Benjamin zuletzt im Kapitalismus gegeben sah.⁴⁴ Im Christentum ist "Schuld" als Verschuldung gegenüber Gott, dem größten Gläubiger, "Glauben" hingegen als ein Kredit angelegt, dem man jenem Gott gewähren muss, der schuldig geworden ist "an der Schuld derer, die ihm etwas schulden."⁴⁵ Als Parasit des Christentums, dieses Parasiten der Schuld und ihrer "dämonische[n] Zweideutigkeit," ist für Benjamin der Kapitalismus selbst ein religiöses Gebilde—ein Kult nicht der Entsühnung, sondern der unablässigen Verschuldung gegenüber dem einen Gott und Gläubiger: dem Kapital.⁴⁶

Nicht nur, dass im Kapitalismus, der sein Kapital allein durch einen dauernden Umlauf der Schulden mobilisiert, ein jeder ökonomisch verschuldet ist; auch weiß jeder Schuldner um seine moralische Schuld, dem Kult des Kapitals anzuhängen. Doch folgt aus diesem Wissen keine Sorge mehr um das eigene Seelenheil und die eigene Erlösungswürdigkeit, sondern um die eigene Kreditwürdigkeit. Dass man vom Christentum die Logik der Verschuldung als Betriebsgeheimnis übernommen, die Mittel der Entschuldung aber als wirkungslose Rituale beseitigt hat, erweist den Amoralismus des modernen Kapitalismus als bloße Hypokrisie. Verschuldete sich nämlich das "Dividuum" Caesar nicht nur jenseits von *gut* und *böse*, sondern auch ungeachtet von *credit* und *debit*, ist der moderne Schuldner auf das Soll und Haben seiner Lebensbilanz verwiesen. Wie Marx sagt, ist er Schuldner nicht nur ökonomisch, sondern auch moralisch—im

dauernden Blick auf seine Arbeit an sich selbst.⁴⁷ Zutiefst in seinen Schuldendienst verstrickt, hängt er an seiner "Kreditidentität"—und kann damit allererst glauben, ein souveränes Individuum zu sein.

Schuldverschreibung

Der *Caesar*-Roman rekurriert auf die Anfänge jener Schuldgeschichte, deren moderne Auswüchse auch in etlichen anderen Texten Brechts Konturen gewinnen, selbst wenn diese nicht auf das Schuldenthema zentriert sind. Mahagonny etwa, die "Netzestadt" (*BFA* 2, 336) in der gleichnamigen Oper (1930), ist letztlich eine Schuldenfalle: Nicht als Handelsplatz wurde sie gegründet, sondern als ein dystopisches Genießerparadies, dessen unablässig angepriesene Freuden zum dauernden Konsum nötigen und unweigerlich zur Verschuldung führen. Die "Erbssünde," die vormals noch als unvordenkliche Schuld die erlösungsträchtige "Möglichkeit, anders gehandelt haben zu können,"⁴⁸ zumindest vorstellbar gemacht hatte, ist vergessen. Verpflichtet ist man nun allein dem Kapital, dessen verengter Zukunftshorizont in einer "Statistik der Verbrechen und Geldumläufe" (*BFA* 2, 346) sichtbar wird. Geld ist hier ganz offenbar kein Mittel, das dem Austausch von Arbeit, Waren und Gebrauchswerten dient; vielmehr symbolisiert es ein Machtverhältnis—den gnadenlosen *bond* anderer, wie eine Anspielung auf Shakespeares Shylock unterstreicht.⁴⁹ Gehen die eigenen Mittel zur Neige, ist man ganz und gar ausgeliefert. Denn zum Geld, jenem Mittel, das in der Antike an die Stelle persönlicher Kreditstrukturen den anonymen Schuldendienst gesetzt hat, gibt es keine Alternative mehr: Keiner will für den Mittellosen "in die Bresche treten" (*BFA* 2, 373).

Gerade Paul Ackermann, der zuvor die Abschaffung aller Verbote zugunsten hemmungslosen Konsums bewirkt hat, kommt für das einzig noch vorstellbare und dadurch "größte Verbrechen" vor Gericht: für den "Mangel an Geld" (*BFA* 2, 381). Hier fehlen ihm die Mittel, um der Schuldlogik wenigstens durch Bestechung zu entkommen. Wenn Ackermann dann, der Verschuldung für schuldig befunden, tatsächlich hingerichtet wird, ehe Mahagonny "in zunehmender Verwirrung, Teuerung und Feindschaft aller gegen alle" (*BFA* 2, 386) versinkt, wird hier die Konstellation der Tragödie ebenso zunichte wie das Konzept der Erlösung.⁵⁰ Beide Großtraditionen der Schuldbewältigung versagen offenbar vor einer Schuldökonomie, die, wie in Brechts *Heiliger Johanna*, das Schuldbewusstsein aller kapitalisiert und, wie in *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* (1941),⁵¹ Amoralität mit erhöhter Kreditwürdigkeit prämiiert.

Vielleicht kann man Brechts Schreiben als "doppelte Buchführung" in mehrerlei Hinsicht begreifen: Dass Schulden und Kapital als die zwei Seiten ein und derselben paradoxen Einheit verbucht werden müssen,⁵² registriert es ebenso wie die Konvertibilität rechnerischer Schulden mit moralischer Schuld. Dass auch die Literatur an dieser Schuldökonomie partizipiert,

verdeutlicht die Manuskriptfiktion des *Caesar*, nach der die Beschaffung historischer Dokumente ja zur Verschuldung des Erzählers führt. Was das Schreiben aber letztlich antreibt, ist die Lösung aus dieser Schuldenwirtschaft: Der Angriff auf die "Legende" (167) *Caesar* ist ein Angriff auf die Schuldgeschichte; er klärt auf über die Bedeutung von Schulden und Banken nicht nur für Caesars Werdegang, sondern für das Konzept historischer Zwangsläufigkeit und den tradierten Glauben an dieselbe (vgl. *BFA* 23, 259; 26, 312); und er dient der Diskreditierung des Kapitals, insofern dieses "nicht einfach dem Kredit entspringt, sondern dem Kredit, der dem Kredit gegeben wird, der Spekulation des Kredits mit sich selbst."⁵³

Für Brecht steht die Literatur nicht nur unter ökonomischen Vorzeichen, sondern im System einer allgemeinen—ökonomischen, genealogischen und moralischen—Schuldlogik. Sogar als "unverkäufliche Ware" vermag sie dem Verwertungsprozess des Kapitals nicht zu entkommen, und hinsichtlich bestimmter Vorläufer und Vorbilder, Autoren und Autoritäten ist jedes Werk in eine "genealogische" Verpflichtungsstruktur eingebunden, ebenso wie es sich, sei es als "zweckfreie," sei es als "Tendenzliteratur," der Frage moralischer Verpflichtung niemals ganz entziehen kann. Wie aber erfüllen Brechts eigene Arbeiten diesen ihren Schuldendienst? Was er literaturhistorischen Autoritäten (wie Shakespeare) schuldete, versuchte er mit der Bearbeitung und Weiterverarbeitung seiner "klassischen" Vorlagen (wie *Julius Caesar*) nicht zu kaschieren, sondern aufzuarbeiten. Vom Dilemma, interesselose oder aber interessegeleitete Kunst hervorzubringen, befreite er sich durch die Mobilisierung der Kunst gegen ihre eigene Zweckfreiheit. Was er aber seinen Mitarbeitern für das Zustandekommen seiner Werke—auf pekuniärer Ebene und auf Ebene der Anerkennung—schuldete, versuchte er von der juristischen Logik des "geistigen Eigentums" fernzuhalten; abgegolten werden sollte es über das Konzept einer "dividuellen" Produktionsgemeinschaft, die jedoch, wohlgemerkt, allemal unter dem einen Autornamen *Brecht* zu firmieren hatte.

An der Auseinandersetzung um die Frage des Plagiats und Copyrights (anlässlich der *Dreigroschenoper* und des *Dreigroschenfilms*) zeigte sich, wie skeptisch Brecht die juristische Regelung literarischer Produktion beurteilte. Das allein mag nahelegen, auch Brechts Konzept der "Rezeption," sein Verhältnis zum "Publikum" eher kreditökonomisch zu fassen als kontraktuell: Gerade sein *Caesar* strebt, anders als etwa Philippe Lejeunes "autobiografischer Pakt," ja gerade keine gattungskonstituierende Übereinkunft und, anders als Umberto Ecos "Fiktionsvertrag," keine klare Trennung zwischen realer und imaginärer Referenz an. Will man hier überhaupt von einem Kreditverhältnis sprechen, dann ist dieser Autor allerdings kein Gläubiger, dem der Leser verpflichtet wäre. Im Gegenteil, was er verfasst, sind paradoxe Schuldverschreibungen: Selbstverpflichtungen dazu, die Logik der Schuldigkeit mit den Mitteln der Literatur zu diskreditieren. *Credibility* kann Brechts *Caesar* zuletzt nur dadurch erlangen, dass seiner fiktionalen Kreditökonomie

Glauben geschenkt wird—und dies von einem Publikum jenseits von Treu und Glauben.

Anmerkungen

¹ BFA 21, 376. Alle folgenden Brecht-Zitate mit bloßer Seitenangabe stammen aus BFA 17.

² Vgl. Monika Dommann, "Bühnen des Kapitalismus: Der Getreidehandel als Wissensobjekt zwischen den Weltkriegen," *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 37 (2014), 112–31, hier 113–21, zudem, mit Blick auf die "kritische" Zeitlichkeit des Börsengeschehens und ihre poetologischen Folgen für Drama und Erzählung, Matthias Rothe, "The Temporality of Critique. Bertolt Brecht's Fragment *Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago*," *Brecht Yearbook* 40 (2016), 29–53, hier 37–38, 42.

³ Vgl. hierzu Elisabeth Hauptmanns Arbeitstagebuch, zit. in Patrick Primavesi, "Jae Fleischhacker in Chicago," in *Brecht Handbuch, Bd. 1: Stücke*, hrsg. von Jan Knopf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), 147–52, hier 148.

⁴ Vgl. hierzu Wolfgang Jeske, *Brechts Poetik des Romans* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 231, 258, 261. Zum Folgenden vgl. ebd., 242, 251.

⁵ Zit. nach Herbert Claas, *Die politische Ästhetik Bertolt Brechts vom Baal zum Caesar* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 221.

⁶ Vgl. hierzu (mit expliziter Berufung auf Brecht) Wolfgang Will, *Caesar. Eine Bilanz* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1992), zudem "Introduction," in *Money and Power in the Roman Republic*, hrsg. von Hans Beck et al. (Brüssel: Éditions Latomus, 2016), 9–17, hier 11.

⁷ Wolfgang Will, *Veni, vidi, vici. Caesar und die Kunst der Selbstdarstellung* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2008), 23.

⁸ Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," in *Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. I.2*, hrsg. von Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 693–704, hier 702–3.

⁹ Wolfgang Dieter Lebek, "Brechts Caesar-Roman: Kritisches zu einem Idol," in *Bertolt Brecht—Aspekte seines Werkes, Spuren seiner Wirkung*, hrsg. von Helmut Koopmann und Theo Stammen (München: Ernst Vögel, 1983), 167–99, hier 170, 193, 197.

¹⁰ Jeske, *Brechts Poetik des Romans*, 283. Ein solch "unsauberer Zusammenhang" wird bei Plutarch zu Solon erwähnt: Dessen Gesetzesinitiative zu einer allgemeinen Schuldentilgung habe etliche seiner Freunde zu Grundstückskäufen auf Kredit veranlasst. Brechts Ich-Erzähler hat selbst ein Geschichtswerk zu Solon vorgelegt (168), was eine entsprechende Deutung von Caesars Bodenspekulationen und seiner Lex Julia nahelegt. Vgl. ebd., 248–49.

¹¹ Vgl. Carsten Jakobi, "Die epische Form als Kritik der Geschichtsschreibung. Bertolt Brechts Roman *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar*," in *Literatur für Leser* 28.4 (2005), 295–311, hier 306.

¹² Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften, Bd. I.2*, 695.

¹³ “Hegel bemerkt irgendwo, dass alle großen weltgeschichtlichen Tatsachen und Personen sich sozusagen zweimal ereignen. Er hat vergessen hinzuzufügen: das eine Mal als Tragödie, das andere Mal als Farce.” Karl Marx, “Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte,” in *MEW, Bd. 8* (Berlin: Dietz, 1960), 115–207, hier 115.

¹⁴ Bernd Auerochs, *Erzählte Gesellschaft. Theorie und Praxis des Gesellschaftsromans bei Balzac, Brecht und Uwe Johnson* (München: Fink, 1994), 142, 170.

¹⁵ Der Crash von 1929 ging zum Großteil auf das Konto einer kreditfinanzierten Massenspekulation, während die spätrömische Republik ihre grassierende Schuldenkrise nicht in den Griff bekam. Vgl. Johannes Berger, *Kapitalismusanalyse und Kapitalismuskritik* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2014), 25, und Susanne Schake, “Augustus’ Krisenmanagement in den Provinzen: Schuldenbekämpfung durch Verwaltungsmaßnahmen?” in *Krisen und Schulden. Historische Analysen und gegenwärtige Herausforderungen*, hrsg. von Curt Wolfgang Hergenröder (Wiesbaden: VS, 2011), 191–214, hier 191.

¹⁶ Vgl. Wolfgang Jeske, “Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar,” in *Brecht-Handbuch, Bd. 3: Prosa, Filme, Drehbücher*, hrsg. von Jan Knopf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002), 282–313, hier 295; und Anthony Phelan, “‘Im Augenblick der Gefahr’: Brecht, Benjamin, and *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar*,” *The Modern Language Review* 108, 3 (2013), 881–97, hier 894.

¹⁷ Zit. nach Jeske, *Brechts Poetik des Romans*, 285.

¹⁸ Zit. nach ebd., 270.

¹⁹ Crassus etwa, der Vermieter verschimmelter Wohnbaracken, trägt das Epitheton “der Schwamm,” Pomponius Celer wird niemals ohne die Branchenbezeichnung “Häute und Leder” genannt (*BFA* 17, 225 und 235).

²⁰ Theodor Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte, Bd. III*, 10. Aufl. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1909), 461.

²¹ Brecht betrachtete als “wirkliche materie” nicht die Werke der Historiker, sondern ihren Widerstreit und den “staub, den sie bei ihren kämpfen aufwirbeln.” Zit. nach Jeske, *Brechts Poetik des Romans*, 287.

²² Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte, Bd. III*, 395.

²³ Anders Jakobi, “Die epische Form als Kritik der Geschichtsschreibung,” 299, 311, wo die “Korruptionskritik” des Romans für “recht matt” befunden wird.

²⁴ Vgl. Niklas Luhmann, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft, Bd. 1* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 404.

²⁵ Vgl. Paul Veyne, *Bread and Circuses. Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism* (London: Penguin, 1992), 223–25.

²⁶ Vgl. David Graeber, *Schulden. Die ersten 5000 Jahre* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2012), 243–44, und Reinhard Wolters, *Nummi Signati. Untersuchungen zur römischen Münzprägung und Geldwirtschaft* (München: Beck, 1999), 42, 45.

²⁷ Vgl. Peter Termin, *The Roman Market Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 171, und Sitta von Reden, “Money and Finance,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy*, hrsg. von Walter Scheidel (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 266–86, hier 279.

- ²⁸ Vgl. Rosa-Maria Gelpi, *The History of Consumer Credit. Doctrines and Practices* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), 11.
- ²⁹ Vgl. Michael Lovano, *All Things Julius Caesar. An Encyclopedia of Caesar's World and Legacy* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2015), 276.
- ³⁰ Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, Bd. III, 527.
- ³¹ Vgl. Uwe Walter, *Politische Ordnung in der römischen Republik* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 134.
- ³² Vgl. Reden, "Money and Finance," 276, 278, und Jean Andreau, *Banking and Business in the Roman World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 44.
- ³³ Schake, "Augustus' Krisenmanagement," 191.
- ³⁴ Vgl. hierzu Lovano, *All Things Julius Caesar*, 280.
- ³⁵ Vgl. hierzu Plutarchs *Leben*, Kap. Caesar XII, und Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, Bd. III, 536–37.
- ³⁶ Philippe Ariès, "Die Geschichte der Mentalitäten," in *Die Rückeroberung des historischen Denkens. Grundlagen der Neuen Geschichtswissenschaft*, hrsg. von Jacques Le Goff et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 1994), 137–64, hier 140.
- ³⁷ Vgl. hierzu Fernand Braudel, "Für eine historische Ökonomie," in *Schriften zur Geschichte. Bd. 1: Gesellschaften und Zeitstrukturen* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), 122–31, hier 127.
- ³⁸ Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. VI, 92.
- ³⁹ Thomas Macho, "Bonds: Fesseln der Zeit," in *Bonds. Schuld, Schulden und andere Verbindlichkeiten*, hrsg. von dems. (München: Fink, 2014), 11–26, hier 19.
- ⁴⁰ Graeber, *Schulden*, 350. Zu Brechts Darstellungsstrategie im *Dreigroschenroman* angesichts der unhistorischen Logik der "ursprünglichen Akkumulation" vgl. Devin Fore, "The Time of Capital. Brecht's *Threepenny Novel*," *Nonsite.org* 10 (2013). <https://nonsite.org/article/the-time-of-capital-brecht-s-threepenny-novel>. Zuletzt aufgerufen am 1. November 2018.
- ⁴¹ Vgl. Andreau, *Banking and Business in the Roman World*, 11, 26, 133.
- ⁴² Vgl. Graeber, *Schulden*, 363.
- ⁴³ Vgl. Joseph Schumpeter, *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung. Eine Untersuchung über Unternehmergewinn, Kapital, Kredit, Zins und den Konjunkturzyklus*, 7. Aufl. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1987), 104–5, 148.
- ⁴⁴ Vgl. Marcel Hénaff, *Der Preis der Wahrheit. Gabe, Geld und Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 395, 403–4, und Gilles Deleuze und Félix Guattari, *Anti-Ödipus. Kapitalismus und Schizophrenie I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 273–94, passim.
- ⁴⁵ Werner Hamacher, "Schuldgeschichte. Benjamins Skizze 'Kapitalismus als Religion,'" in *Kapitalismus als Religion*, hrsg. von Dirk Baecker (Berlin: Kadmos, 2003), 77–120, hier 96.
- ⁴⁶ Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. VI, 102.
- ⁴⁷ Karl Marx, "Auszüge aus James Mills Buch 'Éléments d'économie politique,'" in *MEW*, Bd. 40 (Berlin: Dietz, 1968), 445–63, hier 448–50. Vgl. auch: Maurizio

Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man. An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition* (Amsterdam: Semiotext(e), 2012), 54–61.

⁴⁸ Norbert Bolz, “Der Kapitalismus—eine Erfindung von Theologen?” in *Kapitalismus als Religion*, hrsg. von Dirk Baecker (Berlin: Kadmos, 2003), 187–208, hier 206.

⁴⁹ “Jeder muss sich sein Stück Fleisch herauschneiden, mit jedem Messer. Da war das Fleisch faul!” (BFA 2, 386)

⁵⁰ Vgl. Daniel Cuonz, *Die Sprache des verschuldeten Menschen. Literarische Umgangsformen mit Schulden, Schuld und Schuldigkeit* (Paderborn: Fink, 2018), 187, 296.

⁵¹ Dieses diktatorenkritische Drama kann als Seitenstück zum Caesar-Komplex gesehen werden: Nicht nur dient hier die Antonius-Rede aus *Julius Caesar* als rhetorisches Lehrstück eines künftigen Großgangsters; auch wird hier vom Großkapital eine mittelmäßige und charakterlose Figur zum Führer aufgebaut (vgl. BFA 26, 349–50).

⁵² Mit präzisiertem Bezug auf die doppelte Buchführung vgl. Dirk Baecker, “Die Schrift des Kapitals,” in *Schrift*, hrsg. von Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht und K. Ludwig Pfeiffer (München: Fink, 1993), 257–72, hier 264, 267.

⁵³ Werner Hamacher, “Faust, Geld,” *Athenäum* 4 (1994), 131–87, hier 174.

Postkommunistische Ironie: Bertolt Brechts *Herr Keuner* in Interviews mit Heiner Müller

Für das Spätwerk Heiner Müllers sind Interviews von zentraler Bedeutung. Die strukturelle Ambiguität des Interviews in Bezug auf die Authentizität von Selbstaussagen ermöglicht es Müller einerseits, seine politische Position gegen den enormen medialen Rechtfertigungsdruck zu imprägnieren, unter dem ostdeutsche Intellektuelle nach 1989 standen, und gleichzeitig, den utopischen Rest seiner kommunistischen Überzeugungen in all ihrer Widersprüchlichkeit zu artikulieren. Diese funktionale Doppeldeutigkeit der Ironie als Strategie der Imprägnierung und brüchige Artikulation der kommunistischen Utopie soll hier als "postkommunistische Ironie" bezeichnet werden. Die Dichte der Anspielungen auf Brecht—und speziell auf dessen *Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* in den Interviews—verweist dabei nicht nur auf die Bedeutung, die Brecht eben für den Dramatiker und Lyriker Müller hatte, sondern auch auf eine ironische Kommunikationsstrategie, die Müller nach 1989 im Bezug auf sein Verhältnis zum Kommunismus verfolgte. Sie verweist zugleich auf die These der historischen Ähnlichkeit der Jahre nach 1989 mit den letzten Jahren der Weimarer Republik, in denen Brechts *Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner* entstanden.

Interviews are pivotal to Heiner Müller's later work. As will be shown, the genre implies a specific form of structural ambiguity regarding the authenticity of authorial self-expression, which serves Müller in two ways: while interviews allow him to shield his political views from the enormous media-promulgated pressure put upon Eastern German intellectuals since 1989 to justify their stance, they also provide him with a means to express the utopian remnants of his communist beliefs in all their inherent inconsistencies. How Müller avails himself of this functional ambiguity as both a strategy of self-defense and a means of conflicted expression of communist utopian ideals will be treated in the following in terms of a special case of irony, namely, of "post-communist irony." Allusions to Brecht in general, and particularly to Brecht's *Stories of Mr. Keuner*, abound in Müller's interviews. Their abundance not only demonstrates the enormous impact Brecht had on the poet and dramatist Müller but is also indicative of a very specific ironic strategy of communication employed by Müller since 1989 in regard to his relation to communism. Their frequency, furthermore, immediately suggests the underlying notion that the historical conditions prevalent in the wake of 1989 were in certain respects analogous to those existing during the final years of the Weimar Republic, when Brecht created his *Stories of Mr. Keuner*.

Post-Communist Irony: Bertolt Brecht's *Mr. Keuner* in Heiner Müller's Interviews

Stephan Pabst

I. Beyond the Oeuvre: Interviews with Heiner Müller

Hardly any of Heiner Müller's more strictly literary texts date from later than 1989. Apart from a play (*Germania III*) that was never completed, he merely penned several poems (whose actual number was afterwards strategically, albeit artificially, increased by his editors¹) as well as an autobiography, which he was quite reluctant to release for publication. Instead, by far the largest portion of his post-socialist oeuvre consists of interviews, the corpus of which amounts to about 1,500 pages of his complete works. In his final six years, interviews conducted with Müller appeared at least once per month, and the iconic status the author enjoyed after 1989 can be largely ascribed to their impact.

This plethora of interviews—probably unique in literary history—can be attributed to a number of reasons that are either specific to the person of Müller himself or to phenomena related to the interview as a genre. The reasons specific to Müller himself include his elevated status since 1989 as President of the Academy of Arts (East) and Artistic Director of the Berliner Ensemble. Furthermore, Müller, like other intellectuals from the German Democratic Republic who had not severed their ties to the utopian branch of communism, from 1989 onwards experienced a media-promulgated pressure to justify his stance (“medialer Rechtfertigungsdruck”²)—all the more so after his contacts with members of the GDR state security service had become generally known. This pressure not only provided an incentive to give such a vast number of interviews but also underpinned the specific set of ambiguous communication strategies that Müller employed in order to meet public expectations while subverting them at the same time by the inherent irony of his statements.

One genre-related reason for the uncommonly large number of interviews is the fact that, although interviews generally revolve around the interviewee's life and ideas, in following and perusing them the audience hears a regulated concert instead of the interviewee's own individual voice.³ Interviewing an author implies the peculiarity that this action both aggrandizes and fetters its subject. On the one hand, the media attention directed to the life and opinions of a particular individual serves to performatively constitute their status as a public figure of general interest and

importance. As in the case of Müller, this status then can develop a dynamic of its own, independent of the appreciation the interviewee's oeuvre might receive, and become a primary focus of public attention in its own right. On the other hand, under the conditions of an interview, an author's enunciations are "their own" only to a limited extent since they are more contingent upon—and framed by—the specific situation than would be the case in a different media setting. Statements made in an interview situation do not simply reflect an author's own communicative intentions. Interviewees react to an interlocutor's questions, which preconfigure their remarks. Furthermore, the very format of the interview defines not only the length of any potential statement but also its addressee: Statements made in interviews are addressed to both an interlocutor and the audience. This form of "double address" is part of the set of rules governing the genre. Since a speech act's import varies with its addressee, the communicative strategies employed in the course of an interview have to be designed in a manner which takes their own ambivalence into account.⁴ Therefore, it is only to a limited degree the author him- or herself who speaks, not only in the (anti-) hermeneutical sense that in the analysis of texts it rarely ever matters "who speaks"—since textual utterances never simply reveal an author's individual ideas, mindset, and/or intentions—but also in the sense that what is spoken is articulated in a situation which raises expectations of unmitigated authorial self-expression while at the same time refuting these expectations by preconfiguring the very expression it purports to elicit. This has to be kept in mind. Interview statements cannot be taken for expressions of private opinion. And many writers, just like other public figures, have become aware of the particular interrelation between expectations raised by—and constitutive of—the interview genre and its inherent tendency to thwart unmitigated self-expression, and have employed the phenomenon for their own specific purposes.⁵

This is particularly true of Müller, who, after 1989, assumed that any self-expression, however unreserved, was subject to the pressure of expectations generated by the media. He went so far as to describe the relationship between predominantly West German media and East German writers in terms of a "Stalinist structure" ("stalinistisch[e] Struktur"⁶). Furthermore, Müller's own post-communist views began (at least in part) to develop such an escapist streak that he preferred to shield them against criticism by promoting them in the hedged form of alienated self-expression. Indeed (and at the risk of anticipating what is to be developed in greater detail below), it has to be stated that the special attraction that the interview genre held for Müller apparently owed a lot to the fact that it structurally allows for irony exactly because it purports to encompass authentic and unmitigated self-expression, which it at the same time effectively challenges by drawing attention to the formal and situational conditions inevitably shaping and pre-forming such expression.

A third reason for the massive presence of interviews in Müller's oeuvre rests with the diversification and proliferation of media Germany witnessed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the course of this process, the number of channels broadcasting interviews increased rapidly, as is indicated, for example, by Alexander Kluge's interviews with Müller on the late-night programs of the only recently established private television stations RTL plus, SAT.1, and (somewhat later) VOX.⁷ The production company dctp, which was founded by Kluge and produced Müller's interviews, today has its own intellectual channel web TV, the content of which consists mainly of interviews.⁸ The increase of channels generated a form of genre-specific self-reflexivity to the effect that the phenomenon "interview" gradually turned into a literary form in its own right—especially in a case like Müller's, where repetition resulted in such a degree of formal condensation that it was no longer possible to perceive any of the interviews as instances of spontaneous oral utterance alone.

II. Interviews as an Ironic Form of Communication

As mentioned earlier, the interviews with Müller often feature a very drastic form of irony, and many of his remarks are inherently provocative. Indeed, readers or listeners cannot be certain to what extent his statement that "sinnvolle Kriege können nur ohne Atomwaffen geführt werden"⁹ ("sensible wars can only be waged without nuclear weapons") was meant to be taken seriously. Even taken at face value, there might be some truth in it: It is only sensible to wage a war when there is a chance of winning it, which is not the case under the conditions of a nuclear war. Every victory would be bought at the price of turning it into a defeat. Yet, what might cause someone to make this observation? It may have seemed desirable for Müller to go back to waging "sensible" wars, since he dreamt of continuing the revolutionary struggle on a global scale. And if this struggle was to be continued "sensibly," its "sense" (i.e., its winnability, see above) had to hold true also with regard to its technological conditions. Or was that statement meant to justify the existence of nuclear weapons as their threat potential, according to Cold War-era logic, would hold potential warring parties at bay, thus making a real war senseless? Or did he merely try to provoke his interview partners? We will not find out, as none of his interview partners ever ventured to ask him that question.

It is one of the most important signs of Müller's cult-like status in the 1990s that he could utter such *dicta* without objection. Müller himself prevented questions about his claims by means of a skillful strategy, practiced in numerous interviews. He cultivated a habit of conflating two modes, or levels, of argument—one logical, the other normative. Logically speaking, the proposition that only after nuclear disarmament can wars be waged in a sensible (i.e., winnable) manner, is correct. On this level, one

cannot disagree. Yet, the statement also has a normative dimension since it implies the question whether or not wars should be considered as sensible and desirable on principle. It is a level not really addressed and, in fact, only brought up indirectly by Müller's perfectly correct logical statement. The logical dimension of the articulated proposition thus impregnates the unexpressed normative level of the statement, and it remains unclear what Müller's stance regarding this normative aspect might precisely imply. We could classify his utterance as a case of a particularly drastic irony for the reason alone that the ethical dimension touched upon in Müller's statement seems not to brook ironic treatment in the first place. But in addition, the category of "drastic irony" also applies insofar as the form of irony we witness in Müller's interviews does not rest with isolated statements alone but extends to an altogether higher level, in that he refuted the validity claim of any statement made in an interview and thus subverted the expectation that interviews—as opposed to fictional texts—reflect an empirical individual's self-expression. Müller assiduously strove to undermine the authority of interviews by employing a strategy of performative self-contradiction. He regarded the Federal Republic of Germany as a country where there was "too much talk" ("zuviel geredet"¹⁰) and attempted to "radically seal himself off" ("radikal abschotten"¹¹) from the public, yet he granted more interviews after 1989 than any of his colleagues—including those in the West. His late poetology of a "Dialog mit den Toten"¹² ("dialogue with the dead") was enacted in constant dialogue with the living on the subject of the dead. Müller deplored the commodity character art had assumed in the West;¹³ but aside from the fact that a short glance at the awards and prizes garnered by the average FRG author served to disprove this assumption—demonstrating, as they did, that in Germany art was not subject to the same market conditions that govern the production, exchange, and estimation of other consumer commodities—it was Müller himself who transformed himself into a commodity. In the words of Sascha Anderson, he "verkauft [sich]"¹⁴ ("sells himself") successfully, quite conscious of having already sold himself to the state security services before. Müller maintained the collectivist nucleus of his poetics that curtailed the importance of an author's individual personality, yet his person was subject to countless discussions. Given the high degree of functional differentiation prevalent in Western societies, Müller regarded the notion of "representative intellectual" as obsolete. Nonetheless (and not least because of his interviews), he was regarded by many as an "intellektuelle[r] Chefkommentator"¹⁵ ("intellectual chief commentator") himself. Müller not only commented, however ambiguously, on the stance he himself voiced in his capacity as an author *on the occasion* of his interviews, he also at the same time revoked his own statements *by means of* putting them forward in the course of an interview, since the very form of the interview itself is at variance with the views expressed. With

Müller, the interview as a genre of self-expression thus became a genre of self-contradiction.¹⁶

III. Interviews before 1989

As already mentioned, it is indeed the genre's own structure which facilitates the ironizing of statements made during an interview, in that the genre rejects its own constitutive claims to authenticity by force of the formative and preforming frames it introduces and employs. Müller's ability to perceive this clearly enough to harness the genre's potential for his own communicative purposes, however, had its roots in his own history as an author as well as, on a more general level, in the history of authorship in the GDR.

Müller developed his ironic communication strategies over a long period of time. They did not evolve suddenly after 1989 in his dealings with West German media that expected a mostly critical assessment of the GDR, communism, and Müller's own relationship to them. Whenever Müller found himself in the situation of having to explain his position in public, his statements were subject to extremely conflicting and difficult reception conditions. Already the first published conversation, which appeared in the journal *Sinn und Form* in 1966, was arranged in response to the critique Müller's plays *Der Bau* (*The Construction Site*) and *Philoktet* (*Philoctetes*) received at the eleventh plenum of the Central Committee of the East German Socialist Unity Party. The discussion with Wilhelm Girnus, Werner Mittenzwei, and Rudolf Münz thus also had the function of defending him from criticism that was not purely aesthetic but political—and thus dangerous for Müller. Hence, one cannot know for sure if Müller was serious when he agreed with the suggestion that his play *Philoktet* could be read as an antiwar piece and *Der Bau* as critical of capitalism¹⁷—i.e., if he seriously believed this, or if he merely thought that such an interpretation would sit well with GDR officials. Even in retrospect, the matter cannot be cleared up completely. While Mittenzwei claimed this to be an evident reading, Müller later denied its acceptability: "Die einzigen, die das Gespräch ernst genommen haben, waren wohl die West-Germanisten. Für DDR-Leser war klar, dass ich da lüge, dass es nur um die Möglichkeit ging, BAU aufzuführen"¹⁸ ("Germanists from the West were probably the only ones to take that discussion seriously. For readers from the GDR it was clear that I was lying, that I was only concerned with putting *The Construction Site* on stage"). The irony permeating this discussion appertains less to individual statements than to the way the interview was arranged and presented. This very arrangement enacted its own indebtedness to an aesthetics of collective production¹⁹ dealing with similar problems as Brecht's "learning play"—namely, how to activate the audience.²⁰ In the same vein, Müller defended the first two volumes of the Rotbuch edition of his works against the Hessian Broadcasting Corporation (HR). In addition to his "Produktionsstücke"

("plays on/for production"), these volumes comprised documents concerning Müller's reception, including his conversation with Mittenzwei, Girnus, and Münz. As Müller stated, this mode of publication was in accordance with the ethos of socialist literature, as the latter, due to its rejection of any "Privateigentum an Kunst" ("art in private ownership"), had to make transparent the process and the decisive external conditions for the creation of any work of art.²¹ Although Müller, in an unpublished interview dating from 1974, flatly denies the meaningfulness of discussions such as the ones here described,²² the fact remains that the reasons for engaging in these discussions and for presenting them in this manner issued from the idea of a collectivist aesthetics of production. Consequently, his involvement in the discussion cannot only be seen as a strategic form of self-correction but must also be viewed as being grounded in his own beliefs with regard to an aesthetics of production. What Müller actually "meant" back then cannot be decided—looking at his later remarks on this subject, one gets the impression that not even Müller himself seemed able to do so. Speaking to Uwe Wittstock in 1991—i.e., in the same year in which he claimed to have been "lying" for strategic reasons in his earlier conversation on *Philoktet* and *Der Bau*—Müller acknowledges that back in 1966 he might have subjectively regarded his own statements as true, or at least as potentially true.²³

Another aspect of Müller's development of ironic rhetorical strategies is related to the fact that, from the very beginning, his utterances occur within the context of the Cold War, that is to say, under two vastly different sets of reading conditions. Basically, Müller was critical of both political systems: of East Germany, where he felt that utopia was not implemented but perverted, and of West Germany, where he sensed a complete lack of utopian objectives. Criticizing one political system could always be seen as agreeing with the other, which he did not intend. Life in East Germany made strategic concessions necessary, which could be taken at face value by the wrong kind of people. Thus, one had to talk in such a way that personal statements could be interpreted as plain language and its revocation at the same time, and in this, Müller developed unequalled mastery. In an interview he gave in East Germany in 1985, which had to be revised several times before it was finally approved by Kurt Hager, a Central Committee member of the SED, Müller was asked about his definition of communism, which had weakened over the previous years and now meant little more than "Chancengleichheit"²⁴ ("equal opportunities") to him. Müller justified his retraction by stating that the stronger definition, which, according to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, demands the abolition of all conditions where humans are fettered, abandoned, and scorned, could be easily used against the GDR by a critical Western press²⁵ arguing that forms of suppression also existed in the GDR.²⁶ But the qualification of his statement, by referring to the West German communicative situation, partially confirmed the

assumption that there was suppression in East Germany. Here also, Müller was forced not to disallow either interpretation of his statement.

IV. Interviews after 1989: Post-Communist Irony

After 1989, Müller's interviews became increasingly humorous, simply because the political and existential pressure was gradually lifted. But in their structural irony they remained the same. This was also due to the fact that, in Müller's view, good reasons for choosing this particular mode of speech still—or, rather, once again—existed. Firstly, he maintained that Western media perpetuated the systemic competition between East and West notwithstanding the GDR's demise: "Im Feuilleton ist absoluter Krieg angesagt, Krieg gegen die DDR ist jetzt Pflicht"²⁷ ("the feuilleton wages an absolute war; war against the GDR has become a duty"). The same sort of pressure to justify oneself that during the 1950s and 1960s had been characteristic of Stalinist communication structures, according to Müller, now was exerted by Western media. Regarding the way his contacts with members of the security services had been covered in the media, Müller used the term "stalinistische Struktur" (see above) and likened the coverage to the criticism his drama *Die Umsiedlerin* (*The Resettled Woman*) had received in 1961.²⁸ Let us, for the purpose of this paper, waive the question whether Müller's views on Eastern-Western structures of communication were justified. Surely, they were shaped by asymmetrical power relations then pervading the media landscape,²⁹ while the drastic terms Müller employed certainly also owed a lot to an attempt to maintain the particular discursive surround from which his own language originated. Of greater importance was the fact that the necessity to distance himself from the GDR without being pocketed by the Western media, and to cling to the utopian idea without being mistaken for an apologist of the GDR, still existed for Müller. Faced with a still divided public, Müller continued to feel compelled to camouflage many of his own convictions, which partly explains why he so often availed himself of the structural irony inherent to the genre of interview whenever he had to comment on his own relation to the utopian aspects of communism. That Müller resorted to irony in order to react to a discourse he felt to be deeply divided was not only due to the fact that this particular rhetorical device serves to render a speaker's exact intentions indeterminable. A further reason for his choice had to do with a specific semantics that used to be attributed to this device in Germany, based on the allegation that the prevalence of its usage vastly differed in East and West German discourse. The sociologist Heinz Bude, for instance, ascribes to the prevalent mode of communication in former East Germany a "tragic" character, differentiating it from the Western mode, which he declares to be predominantly "ironic."³⁰ Regardless of whether this indeed holds true, it is obvious that claims to a higher affinity for irony were part of the cultural

self-assessment along the lines of which FRG citizens conceptualized their own status in relation to the East. Hence, when Müller presented his slashing criticism of the West and his defense of utopian objectives—which were prone to be interpreted as anachronistic forms of self-assertion on the part of a GDR “Staatsdichter”³¹ (“state poet”)—in the form of irony, he submitted a communication offer which his (predominantly) Western interviewers could only refuse if they were willing to risk their own presumed supremacy regarding the appreciation and adept use of irony. Evidently, his offer met with success. Having reached his historical obsolescence as a historico-philosophical dramatist, in his interviews—according to the Western German literary scholar Moritz Baßler—Müller proves himself as a “virtuoso on all the keyboards of media discourse” (“Meister . . . alle[r] Medien-Klavaturen”³²). And this virtuosity is the virtuosity of irony. Baßler illustrates this by contrasting Müllers portrait with a sculpture by Alexander Kossolapov entitled “Mickey-Lenin”—the head of Mickey Mouse on Lenin’s body.³³

To resume, the camouflaging effect of irony not only resulted from the essential ambiguity inherent to the rhetoric device but also from ascribing this type of communication to a Western discourse. Thus, a Western code—irony—neutralized the Eastern message—the utopian objective—it encoded. Nevertheless, such irony did not only arise from structural aspects of a historical form of communication predicated upon differences perceived between East and West. It also resulted from transformations within the concept of utopian thought—a transformation that commenced before 1989 but after that date acquired an additional and modified dynamics.

That GDR politics could fail in realizing a communist utopia was clear long before 1989.³⁴ After 1989, all doubts concerning not only the realizability of utopia but also the sustainability of the concept itself seemed to have been justified. Books proclaiming the end of all utopias—either in sentimental, derisive, or dogmatic tone—were legion.³⁵ Müller appears to have fit this mood perfectly when he stated for the record that utopia is something “was es nicht gibt”³⁶—inexistent, a non-existing entity. Over and done with, disproved, rejected, finished, once and for all? Every reader or listener even vaguely familiar with Müller will be skeptical about this seemingly clear “final word.” Because quite a number of rather different sounding statements by the same author immediately spring to mind: statements in which Müller, without ever clearly invoking even the remotest chance to ever achieve such an ideal state, still admonishes his audience, in apocalyptic terms, how dispensing with utopia altogether would lead us to decline, thereby implying an ongoing need for utopias. Also, it would have been out of character for Müller to readily play into the hands of those complacently rejecting the concept by simply agreeing with his Western Interviewers—even if in his heart he was secretly sharing their views. The punch line of his statement is, in fact, that he seems to deny

utopia by simply repeating its definition. Yet, utopia only exists as “no(n)-place” according to its etymology. This is no deficit, as it simply defines what utopia means. Which is also why Marx and Engels felt uncomfortable about this term, reserving it for the *socialisme utopique* (“utopian socialism”) of such thinkers as Charles Fourier, Henri de Saint Simon, or Robert Owen,³⁷ and rejecting it with regard to their own stance in favor of *socialisme scientifique* (“scientific socialism”),³⁸ an expression which, in contrast to “utopia,” implies the idea of actually being able to achieve this goal. Müller defends utopia, after 1989, by using an expression that seems to deny it. Müller tries to guard it against criticism by distinguishing it radically from all attempts actually made to realize such an ideal state. In this logic, the reality of socialist dictatorships has no ties with utopia whatsoever. It results from different, country-specific factors. Thus, Müller may be regarded as a proponent of communism as a utopia only if it is clearly understood that this notion implies no vindication of any of its historical manifestations, and if the question whether it could be realized at all in any state or form is deliberately left open.

Against this background, the contention that there is no utopia can be interpreted along the lines of relocating utopia to the sphere of transcendence. This turns utopia into a critique of our post-socialist present. Müller had his reasons for writing in the present tense. The observation that utopia does not exist does not necessarily challenge the status of the concept itself but may also be understood to be directed against a present supposed to know no utopia of its own, against a world of capitalism perceived as a form of utopia-free existence. But even along these lines, one would hardly feel comfortable with claiming that Müller thus revealed his own true adherence to an unabated concept of utopia. Perhaps, we rather ought to regard such utopia-friendly readings as cuckoo’s eggs, cunningly and maliciously slipped into the nest of expectations critical of utopia that Müller’s (mostly) Western interviewers had prepared. The mutually exclusive interpretations simply defy homogenization. The sentence that utopia does not exist offers something for everyone and can be applauded both by those who scorn the concept and those who cherish it.

Consequently, Müller can be credited with post-communist irony inasmuch as he, under conditions of a specific set of Eastern-Western structures of communication, carefully phrased his statements concerning the communist utopia in such a way that they could be interpreted as both rejection and affirmation of the concept in question, thereby shielding himself against criticism from either ideological camp. Yet, if that were all, this form of irony would ultimately prove merely strategic in nature, as it would imply nothing more original than serving a specific, describable, and authentic political conviction palatably disguised as irony out of considerations grounded in a particular communicative rationale. The interviews Müller gave, however, also contain quite a number of remarks concerning

his relation to the communist utopia that can by no means easily be subsumed under the label of merely strategic irony. One of them consists in the striking dictum: “Mein Reich ist nicht von dieser Welt”³⁹ (“My kingdom is not of this world”). Sentences such as this quotation from John 18:36 are indicative of Müller’s endeavor to save utopia by depleting it of its history of attempted realization, even to the extent where the manner in which he evokes utopia as a completely transcendent entity and state-yet-to-come becomes positively messianic. The effect of such diction, of course, is deliberately ironic: However serious we must believe Müller to have been about his attempt to save utopia, the idea of him striking a messianic pose with all its religious consequences and implications in dead earnest seems somewhat outlandish, to say the least. The resulting irony, however, goes far beyond the merely strategic. Instead of simply answering to certain conditions of communication prevalent after 1989, it addresses the fact that any vindication of utopia cannot altogether dispense with metaphysical statements of a kind that Müller himself hardly believed in. Accordingly, what is at stake here is a form of irony grounded not only in the author’s determination to put up willingly with the inconsistencies he deliberately creates but also in his intention to harness such inconsistencies strategically for his own purposes. Post-communist irony in this sense consists not only in the ambiguity of affirming or rejecting communist utopia but, furthermore, in the covering up of the author’s motives to do one or the other. The inconsistencies can be read in terms of a strategic camouflage or an expression of genuine doubt concerning the concept of utopia—a doubt that has arisen in (and resulted from) the very act of the concept’s vindication.

This ironic stance towards his own communist principles is not only to be observed in cases where Müller addressed their residual afterlife explicitly. Rather, it permeated his entire mindset as well as the way he made use of the interview genre. For a long time, Müller’s views on authorship followed the communist tradition by refuting the concepts of intellectual property and individual origin with regard to literary production, favoring instead, at least programmatically, a notion of collective authorship: “Arbeit am Verschwinden des Autors ist Widerstand gegen das Verschwinden des Menschen”⁴⁰ (“Working towards the disappearance of the author means resistance against the disappearance of Man”), he declared in 1979 on the occasion of a debate on the subject of postmodernism, which was held in New York. Of course, even before 1989, such insistence on the authorless nature of literature occasionally appeared quite disproportionate to Müller’s own prominence. And the famous “Zerreiung der Fotografie des Autors”⁴¹ (“tearing up the photography of the author”) in productions of *Die Hamletmaschine* (*Hamletmachine*) served to monumentalize the author Müller to the same extent as it negated him. At least with his continuous presence in the media from 1989 onwards, Müller’s former notion of authorship became openly self-contradictory. Noticing these evident inconsistencies himself,

Müller addressed them in connection with his autobiography. Maintaining his criticism of the authorial subject even where he himself was concerned (“Mein Interesse an meiner Person reicht zum Schreiben einer Biographie nicht aus”;⁴² “I am not sufficiently interested in my own person to write a biography”), Müller, somewhat questionably, strove to justify his decision to publish his autobiography by pointing out the latter’s own inherent discrepancies and origin in a collective body of interlocutors.⁴³ Nevertheless, the contradiction between his communist stance, which negates the author, and his tendency to reflect on his own authorial personality almost excessively in public could only be reconciled by resorting to irony. To a form of irony, however, that points back to Müller’s formerly held communist principles without necessarily spelling them out explicitly.

V. Bertolt Brecht’s *Herr Keuner* in Heiner Müller’s Interviews

Now, what has all of this to do with Brecht? That Brecht had an enormous influence on Müller’s dramatic and poetic works is a truth universally acknowledged among scholars in the field. Indeed, speaking of “influence” alone might actually be saying too little, as Brecht’s work constitutes nothing less than a prefiguring of Müller’s own.⁴⁴ This does not mean, however, that Müller writes “like” Brecht; if anything, the form of Müller’s plays quite often serves to indicate that it is impossible to do so. Yet, in the sense of an exemplary standard, Brecht is being echoed not only in Müller’s dramatic work but also in his poetry. Even the news of the author’s own impending death is turned into a poem (“Ich kaue die Krankenkost”;⁴⁵ “I’m chewing food for sick people”) modeled upon one by Brecht (“Als ich in weißem Krankenzimmer”;⁴⁶ “When in my white room at the Charité”). Both poems deal with the possibility of self-renunciation and remember the communist utopia in the process—Brecht more successfully than Müller, who almost manages to be proud of his tumor which doctors are unable to defeat. And also Müller’s authorial mode harks back to Brecht.⁴⁷ Still, with regard to interviews one might assume that Brecht lost his model character here, simply because of the following reasons: Although he was one of the first authors to regard themselves as “media practitioners” (“Medienpraktiker”), interviews with Brecht were rare⁴⁸ and were often passed on in a somewhat inauthentic manner,⁴⁹ while the genre itself was in its “infancy” in Brecht’s time.⁵⁰ It also had not reached the degree of almost poetological self-reflection that it would gain in the 1990s, in a completely different media climate. Yet, Müller finds a way to bring Brecht into play in this context as well.

Brecht is the author Müller refers to most often, and that is true for his interviews as well.⁵¹ His special role cannot only be measured quantitatively by index entries in Müller’s complete works but also qualitatively. In contrast to other authors quoted by Müller in the interviews,

the Brecht quotes not only refer to some topic currently under discussion. They reference the form of the interview itself—especially those that are not marked as quotations and have been taken from Brecht’s *Geschichten von Herrn Keuner* (*Stories of Mr. Keuner*). Generally, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it is particularly the Brecht of the *Versuche* (*Experiments*) that is of relevance to Müller. In this series of booklets, Brecht had tried his hand at exploring new topics and forms of production without making any claims as to the coherence of the resulting work. Rather, the issue was the reconfiguration (“Umgestaltung”⁵²) of aesthetic production under conditions of social and medial transformation.⁵³ And, significantly, *Drucksache* (*Printed Matter*)—the series of papers edited by Müller after 1992 in his capacity as director of the Berliner Ensemble⁵⁴—in its coloring and format ostentatiously followed Brecht’s *Versuche*. The title of the first collection of Müller’s interviews, *Gesammelte Irrtümer* (*Collected Errors*), quotes the Keuner stories, the first of which had been published in *Versuche*: Keuner, asked what he is working on, answers that he is preparing his “nächsten Irrtum”⁵⁵ (“next mistake”). In Müller’s title, the quote suggests a general reflection on the unreliability, inauthenticity, and artlessness of interview statements, undermining the habitual expectation of an author’s “complete and collected works.” This perspective alone suffices to let the title oscillate between an act of self-revocation and a confident claim to a latter-day poetics of Modernism that takes a critical view of the traditional concept of an author’s work.⁵⁶

But there is even more to it than that: Brecht has an entire education program hidden behind the term “Irrtum.” He does not simply mean a “mistake” but a necessary element in the cognitive process. The individual in a social cognition process only plays the part of one who errs, whose errors might at best be productive. His or her errors are the individual’s actual achievement as part of a social cognition process. I do not mean to suggest that Müller actually thinks along these exact lines, but this meaning of “error” is always present in the way Brecht employs the term. Müller: “Es heißt, begeht Irrtümer, und begeht sie schneller, macht mehr Umsatz an Irrtum, denn woraus wollt ihr sonst lernen”⁵⁷ (“They say: Commit errors, commit them faster, have a higher turnover of errors, because how else are you going to learn”).

Another Keuner story, quoted by Müller without accounting for it in an interview in 1994, refers to a similar context. The “most beautiful” interview ought to be the one, “das alle Fragen sammelt, auf die man keine Antworten hat”⁵⁸ (“which collects all questions that remain unresolved”). Brecht lets his Keuner say: “Könnten wir nicht im Interesse der Propaganda eine Liste der Fragen aufstellen, die uns ganz ungelöst erscheinen?”⁵⁹ (“Could we not, in the interest of propaganda, draw up a list of all the questions that appear to us completely unresolved?”) The attractiveness of the *Lehre* (i.e., “teachings” or “doctrine”) thus would not reside in the answers but in the fact

that questions are generated. Real questions are only those that cannot be answered yet. And only real questions have propaganda value. The propagandistic attraction of such questions would be grounded in the objectivity of non-knowledge. Such questions would neither be merely rhetorical or didactic nor due to an individual's subjective ignorance alone, but they would point to an objective standard of knowledge that excludes certain questions from being answered in the first place.

And Keuner is also setting the scene for Müller's reflections on utopia after the fall of socialism. Müller states in the course of an interview with Frank M. Raddatz shortly after the political demise of the GDR: "Es ist eine Zeit, wo man die Lehre vergraben muss, wie Brecht sagen würde, möglichst tief, damit die Hunde nicht herankommen. Bis man sie wieder ausgraben und einer veränderten Realität aussetzen kann"⁶⁰ ("This is a time when one must bury the teachings as deep as possible, so that the dogs can't get at them, as Brecht would say. Until one can dig them up again and confront them with a new, changed reality"). The metaphor of burying is drawn from Brecht's *Fatzer* material.⁶¹ The *Fatzerkommentar* (*Fatzer Commentary*) includes a short fragment titled "Vergrabung der Lehre" ("Burying the teachings"). Within the commentary to the play, it remains unclear precisely how the title is meant to refer to the observation that punishment turns both "criminal" ("Verbrecher") and "good man" ("guten Mann"⁶²) into criminals, and whether this ambiguity is due to the allegorical nature of the commentary and/or the preliminary character of the entire *Fatzer* material. But the genealogical connection between *Fatzer*, the *Fatzerkommentar*, and the *Geschichten von Herrn Keuner*⁶³ makes it seem reasonable to ascribe the fragment to the Keuner⁶⁴ character and to re-read it along with the Keuner story of that title, written at the same time and later published as *Maßnahmen gegen die Gewalt*⁶⁵ (*Measures against Power*). Keuner speaks out against violence, yet he quickly denies his conviction when confronted by the allegorical Violence itself. Asked about his inconsistency by students, he replies by telling the story of Mister Egge, a communist in hiding whose apartment is occupied by some agent working for a non-specified power who uses him as a kind of domestic servant. He complies with every request, yet does not speak a single word. Not until after the death of the agent does he say "Nein"⁶⁶ ("no"). Mister Egge's late refusal could be read as strategic rationality or as the *aporia* of resistance. Either he refuses and puts himself and the survival of the teachings that he bears at risk. Or he gets himself, as a vessel for the teachings, to safety but comes too late with his refusal.⁶⁷

With regard to its interpretation, things look different when reading the anecdote in the context of the Danish version of *Leben des Galilei* (*Life of Galileo*), into which it was later inserted by Brecht.⁶⁸ Mister Egge is now called Keunos and is a Cretan philosopher. The story serves Galileo as a comment on his revocation before the inquisition. The revocation, it now

seems to say, enables him to continue his research work. With regard to the social importance of his work it would be irresponsible to risk death. What looks like a lack of dignity and steadfastness on the outside is revealed to be both strategically smarter and ethically more acceptable. Any suspicion that the only goal was to save himself is deflected in the story, as survival is tied to a kind of self-obliteration. Who survives as the bearer of teachings only survives as a vessel for something else, not for his own sake. “Vergrabung der Lehre” would mean that the bearer of the teachings—or “bearer of knowledge,”⁶⁹ as he is called in the Keuner stories—should repudiate being such a bearer when it could be dangerous to confess the truth, since the annihilation of the bearer of teachings would endanger their handing down. Thus, it is a process of self-denial in favor of a cause one is committed to.

Brecht, basically, tells a story about a certain communication strategy. The fragment “Vergrabung der Lehre” is not part of the dialogue in the *Fatzer* play but a comment on it. The Keuner story is, like most Keuner stories, dialogic on various narrative levels. Keuner gives a speech against violence but renounces this view as the allegory of Violence itself is encountered. He then explains this to his students by telling a story about Mister Egge, who does not talk to the agent. This explanation is part of a didactic concept of literature as communication with the audience/reader. In *Galilei*, finally, the story of Keunos is also part of the character’s communication. Galilei, talking to his students, comments on his communicative behavior before the inquisition.

Of course, the stories about Keuner are themselves ironic—because an error remains an error, as much as one would like to instrumentalize it in a didactic sense. It is quite impossible to commit an error consciously, one can only be wrong (to “err”) if one believes to tell the truth. To deal with all the unanswered questions in Marxism only strategically, that is, propagandistically, would mean that, in principle, all questions could be answered. And in the cases of Keuner, Keunos, and Mister Egge, who all rescue themselves by being disingenuous, heroic self-denial and cowardly self-preservation have become indistinguishable. Either we deal simply with various forms of strategic communication that are forced into a paradox for strategic reasons, with the reader being supposed to understand that as well, or we are witnessing an attempt to embellish this communication with irony.

It is this ironic indecisiveness for strategic reasons that permeated Müller’s interviews. Negating the individual subject as a fallacious notion, this fallacy is at the same time part of a collective learning experience, just like the unanswered questions. The “ego-denial” of a communist would serve the purpose of secretly handing down communist teachings, views which cannot be held in the post-communist situation without immediately causing their subject’s exclusion from public discourse. Müller’s interviews after 1989 could even serve to reconstruct a motivation for this interpretation. He interpreted the post-socialist reality as a historical step backwards into

the age of capitalism. For him, the seemingly “new” was the “Wiederkehr von etwas Altem”⁷⁰ (“resurgence of something old”), while the “old” was the world of capitalism preceding National Socialism and Socialism. And this diagnosis was the reason for the “attractiveness” of the Brecht of the late 1920s and early 1930s. “Und interessant finde ich jetzt bei Brecht, daß jetzt alles auffällig wird, was er vor ’33 geschrieben hat, und das waren die wichtigsten Sachen, die jetzt wieder aktuell werden. Die Zukunft ist in bestimmter Hinsicht jetzt die Vergangenheit.”⁷¹ (“And what strikes me as interesting with regard to Brecht is that all the things he wrote before ’33 are now becoming noteworthy, and that the most important things are the ones that are now about to become topical again. The future is now, in certain respects, our past.”) The Keuner stories are also from this time, quoted by Müller as a kind of meta-reflective commentary in his interviews. And just like Brecht’s communists had to “bury” their teachings and doctrines, after 1989 Müller elected to bury his own in the irony of his interviews.

Of course, it is hard to believe that, in 1989, Müller actually felt he had returned to the times of 1929. The differences were quite obvious. So are the signs of his attempts to put things into perspective, by means of qualifying statements such as “man sagt viel, wenn der Tag lang ist”⁷² (“well . . . the things one says”) or “was ich wirklich meine, sage ich erst, wenn ich tot bin”⁷³ (“what I really mean I won’t say until I’m dead”). His qualifying statements are so numerous and, as has been demonstrated, so well in tune with Müller’s overall tendency to ironize the interview genre as such, that we should not consider them as merely facetious. Also, the Keuner quotes bring back memories of a time when it made strategic sense to repudiate one’s own beliefs. They name a conspiratorial technique, whose major referent, the teachings of communism (or, perhaps, the “actual” beliefs of an author), have long been lost. In this case, the function of the Brecht quotations would be nothing more than to remind us of the meaning irony once used to deny. Müller’s reference to Brecht served to ironize irony, since it raises the question whether he did not express specific opinions unambiguously in his interviews because he had left them behind, or because the public pressure to justify himself after 1989 was keeping him from stating them more explicitly.

The strategy of veiling utopia in irony is to be observed in other authors as well, no matter whether such kind of rhetorical camouflage is always actually intended or rather potentially effectuated by force of the specific stance taken. The late or neo-Marxist Slavoj Žižek, who occasionally references Müller,⁷⁴ basically creates a similar situation by means of his somewhat exalted appearances in the media. Žižek ironizes his own (partially) radical communist views by projecting an image of himself as a kind of philosophical entertainer of somewhat questionable accountability. Even the titles of several of his books and films, such as *In Defense of Lost Causes*, *A Pervert’s Guide to Cinema*, or *A Pervert’s Guide to Ideology*,

prove self-reflective with regard to their author's discursive authority, practically pathologizing his particular stance. His popularity, Žižek claims, is in itself indicative that he is not being taken seriously, that he is perceived as a "Clown."⁷⁵ Yet this is a role that Žižek readily and willingly takes on. He accepts the medial conditions under which he can say what he means to say, the more so, perhaps, because some of his more radical theses on democracy might otherwise remain widely ignored. Few indeed, for instance, would in this day and age, like Žižek, seriously consider whether we again had to learn to kill with love and humility after the model of the revolutionaries in Brecht's *Die Maßnahme* (*The Measures Taken*).⁷⁶ Taking an approach similar to Müller's, any objections on the part of the audience are anticipatorily deflected by leaving the question undecided, whether Žižek's clownery serves to camouflage the eminent radicalism of his statements, or whether the latter is in fact no more than part of his clownery itself.⁷⁷

VI. Conclusion

In the case of Müller, "post-communist irony" occurs in the form of a strategy to state his defense of utopian notions in a deliberately ironic manner, thus reacting to the dominant discursive environment prevalent in the 1990s, that is to say, to the asymmetrical power relation existing between the former Eastern and Western parts of Germany at that time. Under such conditions, statements of the type mentioned above met with an enormous amount of media-promulgated pressure directed against their speaker subjects, urging the latter to justify their views and personal history. This was all the more the case if the subjects, like Müller, had remained in the GDR up to the very end and, in the wake of its passing, did not unambiguously condemn a political system utterly discredited by the vast majority of their audience. In that regard, the strategic intelligence Müller demonstrated in his communicative approach principally rested in the fact that in order to infuse his own statements with irony, he drew upon structural ambivalences inherent to the interview genre, namely its irredeemable promise to generate and impart statements of authentic subjectivity.

The concept of "post-communist irony," however, also implies that this kind of ironization of communist notions cannot actually be distinguished from a genuinely ambivalent stance towards the claims of communism itself, in that no propagation of the concept of communist utopia can dispense with "messianic" presuppositions. This was something Müller obviously felt obliged to treat with extreme reservation, if not ridicule. Thus, bringing a set of already negotiated communicative strategies to bear in his interviews—strategies already put to the test by Brecht in his characters Keuner, Fatzer, and Galilei—Müller proved himself a follower of their creator. Adopting these strategies, Müller suggested a resurgence of the historical conditions prevalent in the late 1920s, when they were originally

devised by Brecht. Assertions of historical analogy such as these can be neither verified nor dismissed out of hand by means of their irrefutable falsification. But it is striking that the similarities that Müller claimed just over twenty years ago have now become an integral part of German political discourse. Time and again, people invoke the “Menetekel der Weimarer Republik”⁷⁸ (“the writing on the wall of the Weimar Republic”)—though without any irony.

Notes

¹ Peter Geist, “Die Spanne zwischen Nichts und Wenig. Heiner Müllers Gedichte in ‘brutaler Chronologie,’” *neue deutsche literatur*, no. 4 (1998): 127–30; Alexander von Bormann, “‘Meine Scham braucht mein Gedicht.’ Heiner Müllers Gedichte in der Werkausgabe,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, March 25, 1998; Katharina Ebrecht, *Heiner Müllers Lyrik. Quellen und Vorbilder* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001).

² On the topic of “Rechtfertigungsdruck” as a specific situation encountered by Eastern German authors since 1989, cf. Janine Ludwig and Mirjam Meuser, “‘In diesem besseren Land’—Die Geschichte der DDR-Literatur in vier Generationen engagierter Literaten,” in *Literatur ohne Land? Schreibstrategien einer DDR-Literatur im vereinten Deutschland*, ed. Janine Ludwig and Mirjam Meuser (Freiburg: FWPF, 2009), 57.

³ In the diction of Masschalein et al., the term “hybrid genre” also extends to the shared authorship that occurs in interviews. Cf. Anneleen Masschalein et al., “The Literary Interview. Towards a Poetics of a Hybrid Genre,” *Poetics Today* 35, no. 1–2 (2014): 17.

⁴ For such effects of multiple addressing from a linguistic perspective, cf. Peter Kühn, *Mehrfachadressierung. Untersuchungen zur adressatenspezifischen Polyvalenz sprachlichen Handelns* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995) and Hans Jürgen Bucher, “Sprachwissenschaftliche Methoden der Medienforschung,” in *Medienwissenschaft. Ein Handbuch zur Entwicklung von Medien und Kommunikationsformen*, vol. 1, ed. Joachim-Felix Leonhard (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 225.

⁵ With regard to Müller and W. G. Sebald, this has been demonstrated by Torsten Hoffmann. Cf. Torsten Hoffmann, “Die Ausschaltung der Einschaltung des Autors: autorkritische Selbstinszenierungen in Interviews von Heiner Müller und W. G. Sebald,” in *Schriftstellerische Inszenierungspraktiken—Typologie und Geschichte*, ed. Christoph Jürgensen and Gerhard Kaiser (Heidelberg: Winter, 2011), 313–40. On the topic of Christian Kracht’s authorial self-projection, cf. Eckhard Schumacher, “Omnipräsentes Verschwinden. Christian Kracht im Netz,” in *Christian Kracht*, ed. Johannes Birgfeld and Claude D. Conter (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2009), 187–203. On Dietmar Dath’s negotiation of Interviews, cf. Franziska Bomski, “The Making of Dietmar Dath. Zur intermediären Beziehung von Literatur und Internet,” in *Praktizierte Intermedialität. Deutsch-französische Porträts von Schiller bis Gosciny/Uderzo*, ed. Fernand Hörner, Harald Neumeyer, and Bernd Stiegler (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010), 319–40.

society” (“ein neues Verhältnis zwischen Theater und Gesellschaft,” Müller, *Werke* 10, 40). In 1988, Müller’s *Macbeth* in East Berlin was published together with an excerpt from a “conversation with pedagogues about the production” (“Gespräch mit Pädagogen zur Aufführung,” *ibid.*, 253–65). The accompanying playbill for the production contained excerpts from a “conversation with students and teachers of the Extended Secondary School Brandenburg” (“Gespräch mit Schülern und Lehrern der EOS Brandenburg,” *ibid.*, 607–43). In the same year and location, a “conversation with stagehands” (“Gespräch mit Bühnentechnikern”) was published in conjunction with a documentation on *Lohndrucker (The Scab)* (Müller, *Werke* 11, 44–51); and so was a “conversation with drama school students on *The Horatian*” (“Gespräch mit Schauspielstudenten über *Der Horatier*,” *ibid.*, 256–66).

²⁰ But whereas Müller is talking with the audience, Brecht is activating the audience by showing characters performing “a role before an on-stage audience.” Laura Bradley, “Training the Audience: Brecht and the Art of Spectatorship,” *Modern Language Review* 111, no. 4 (2016): 1029.

²¹ Cf. Müller, *Werke* 10, 655–56.

²² Cf. Heiner Müller, “‘Die Gefahr ist das Nette’—Gespräch (1974),” in *Heiner Müller, Tondokumente 1972–1995*, ed. Kristin Schulz (Berlin: Alexander, 2011), no. 4.

²³ See Müller, *Werke* 12, 92.

²⁴ Müller, *Werke* 10, 270.

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.* 325.

²⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

²⁷ Müller, *Werke* 11, 760.

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.* 356.

²⁹ For 2004, Raj Kollmorgen and Torsten Hans estimate the proportion of Eastern Germans among the German “Medienelite” (“media elite”) to have been 5 percent. See Raj Kollmorgen and Torsten Hans, “Der verlorene Osten. Massenmediale Diskurse über Ostdeutschland und die deutsche Einheit,” in *Diskurse der deutschen Einheit. Kritik und Alternativen*, ed. Raj Kollmorgen, Frank Thomas Koch, and Hans Lüdtger Dienel (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2011), 153.

³⁰ Cf. Heinz Bude, *Die ironische Nation. Soziologie als Zeitdiagnose* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 13.

³¹ Such a status (as a GDR state poet) was attributed to Müller by, among others, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung critic Gustav Seibt. Cf. Gustav Seibt, *Damit wir wissen, was wir erlebt haben. Zeit der Geschichte. Zeit des Romans* (Berlin: Alexander, 1998), 30.

³² Moritz Baßler and Christian Rakow, “Das Heiner Müller Lexikon / Der Sound der schweren Zeichen. Das Heiner Müller-Lexikon in Zeiten der Popkultur—ein Nachwort,” *Theater heute* 1 (2004), 4.

³³ Cf. *ibid.*, 12–13.

³⁴ See Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (Leipzig: Kiepenheuer, 1996), 239 and 271.

³⁵ Joachim Fest, *Der zerstörte Traum. Vom Ende des utopischen Zeitalters* (Berlin: Siedler, 1991); Günter Schabowski, *Abschied von der Utopie. Die DDR—das deutsche Fiasko des Marxismus* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994); Wolf-Dieter Narr, "Nach den Umbrüchen in Osteuropa—Verlust der politischen Utopie?" in *Verlust der politischen Utopie in Europa?* ed. Peter Kühne and Klaus-W. West (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1992), 37–52; Wolf Lepenies, *Melancholie und Gesellschaft. Mit einer Einleitung: Das Ende der Utopie und die Wiederkehr der Melancholie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998); Thomas Welzel, *Utopieverlust. Die deutsche Einheit im Spiegel ostdeutscher Autoren* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 1998); Helmut Böttiger, *Nach den Utopien. Eine Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur* (Vienna: Zsolnay, 2004).

³⁶ Müller, *Werke* 12, 585.

³⁷ On the relation between Marx, Engels, and the utopian socialists see Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 697–717.

³⁸ Friedrich Engels, "Socialism. Utopian and Scientific," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 24 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989), 283.

³⁹ Müller, *Werke* 12, 355.

⁴⁰ Heiner Müller, *Werke*, vol. 8: *Schriften*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 212.

⁴¹ Heiner Müller, *Werke*, vol. 4: *Stücke* 2, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 552.

⁴² Müller, *Werke* 9, 287.

⁴³ On Müller's notion of de-individualized authorship as a concept "inspired by Marxism," cf. Wolfgang Emmerich, "Orpheus in der DDR. Heiner Müllers Autorschaft," in *Metarmophosen des Dichters. Das Rollenverständnis deutscher Dichter vom Barock bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Gunter E. Grimm (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992), 298.

⁴⁴ Recently on this subject: Astrid Oesmann, "Tragedy out of Joint: Bertolt Brecht's and Heiner Müller's Interactions with a Genre," *The Brecht Yearbook* 39 (2014), 169–84.

⁴⁵ Cf. Heiner Müller, *Werke*, vol. 1: *Gedichte*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 325.

⁴⁶ *BFA* 15, 300; Bertolt Brecht, *Poems 1913–1956* (London: Methuen, 1976), 451–52. On the affinities between both texts, cf. Marcus Kreikebaum, *Heiner Müllers Gedichte* (Bielefeld: aisthesis, 2003), 361.

⁴⁷ Sue-Ellen Case, "'Wer raucht sieht kaltblütig aus.' Brecht, Müller, and Cigars," *Brecht Yearbook* 23 (1997): 163–69.

⁴⁸ See Barbara Konietzny-Rüssel, *Der Medienpraktiker Bertolt Brecht. Interviews, Rundfunkgespräche und Gesprächsprotokolle in der Weimarer Republik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), 6.

⁴⁹ Cf. Jan Knopf, "Gespräche," in *Brecht Handbuch*, vol. 4: *Schriften, Journale, Briefe*, ed. Jan Knopf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), 458–62.

⁵⁰ Author interviews have only recently come into the focus of Literary Studies. Within a history of journalistic interviews that starts in the middle of the nineteenth century, author interviews make their appearance around the year 1900 and gather major importance in Germany no sooner than 1945. Although newspaper interviews were already “firmly established” (“fest etabliert”) by the 1920s, radio interviews developed their influence only gradually in the course of the evolution of their carrier medium. See Torsten Hoffmann, “Schriftstellergespräche im Radio um 1930,” in *Echt inszeniert. Interviews in Literatur und Literaturbetrieb*, ed. Torsten Hoffmann and Gerhard Kaiser (Munich: Fink, 2014), 179.

⁵¹ See Hoffmann, “Die Ausschaltung der Einschaltung des Autors,” 319. Throughout the three volumes of Müller’s interviews, Brecht is quoted far more frequently than any other author.

⁵² *BFA* 22, 1049.

⁵³ See Joachim Lucchesi, “Versuche,” in *Brecht Handbuch* 4, 407.

⁵⁴ The series *Drucksache* was established by Müller in 1993 and appeared until 1996.

⁵⁵ *BFA* 18, 15; Bertolt Brecht, *Stories of Mr. Keuner*, trans. Martin Chalmers (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2001), 7. Cf. Malcolm Humble, “Heiner Müller’s *Gesammelte Irrtümer*. Bekenntnis und Provokationen,” in *Heiner Müller. Probleme und Perspektiven. Bath-Symposion 1998*, ed. Ian Wallace, Dennis Tate, and Gerd Labrousse (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 176.

⁵⁶ See Emmerich, “Orpheus in der DDR. Heiner Müllers Autorschaft,” 287.

⁵⁷ Müller, *Werke* 12, 850.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 476.

⁵⁹ *BFA* 18, 20; Brecht, *Stories of Mr. Keuner*, 18.

⁶⁰ Müller, *Werke* 11, 535, cf. 487.

⁶¹ For the most recent discussion of Müller’s treatment of the subject matter of *Fatzer*, cf. Uwe Schütte, “Mit, gegen und nach Brecht: Heiner Müllers *FATZER*,” *German Life and Letters* 69, no. 2 (2016): 256–68.

⁶² *BFA* 10, 523.

⁶³ *Fatzer*’s opponent is the Keuner of the later *Stories of Mr. Keuner*. He is a communist, like *Fatzer*, but unlike him, he defers his personal needs and beliefs in favor of the strategic requirements of the revolutionary struggle.

⁶⁴ What also explains the connection between the commentary “Vergrabung der Lehre” and the Keuner story “Maßnahmen gegen die Gewalt,” is that both were written by Brecht on the same sheet of paper. Cf. Reiner Steinweg, *Das Lehrstück. Brechts Theorie einer politisch-ästhetischen Erziehung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1972), 105.

⁶⁵ On the story’s origins, cf. Steinweg, *Das Lehrstück*, 104–8; Maximilian Nutz, “Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner,” in *Brecht Handbuch*, vol. 3: *Prosa, Filme, Drehbücher*, ed. Jan Knopf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002), 134–35.

⁶⁶ *BFA* 18, 14; Brecht, *Stories of Mr. Keuner*, 3.

⁶⁷ On the differences between the Keuner story and their explication as parable by the Egge story, see Maximilian Nutz, “‘Der Lernende ist wichtiger als die Lehre.’ Zum Umgang mit Brechts ‘Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner’ am Beispiel der ‘Maßnahmen gegen die Gewalt,’” *Diskussion Deutsch* 139 (1994): 301.

⁶⁸ See *BFA* 5, 72. Bertolt Brecht, *Collected Plays*, vol. 5, ed. and trans. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), 249.

⁶⁹ Brecht, *Stories of Mr. Keuner*, 4; *BFA* 18, 13.

⁷⁰ Müller, *Werke* 12, 421, cf. also 10.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 172, cf. 62.

⁷² Müller, *Werke* 11, 307.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 515.

⁷⁴ See Slavoj Žižek, “Heiner Müller—Out of joint,” in <http://www.lacan.com/mueller.htm>.

⁷⁵ Astra Taylor, *Žižek! The Elvis of Cultural Theory* (New York: Zeitgeist Films, 2005).

⁷⁶ Cf. Žižek, “Heiner Müller.”

⁷⁷ Regarding commonalities between the ideas of Müller and Žižek, cf. Julia Hell, “Remnants of Totalitarianism: Hannah Arendt, Heiner Müller, Slavoj Žižek and the Re-Invention of Politics,” *Telos* 136 (2006): 76–103. Hell observes differences in their treatment of Stalinism, which Žižek, according to Hell, intends to rid of actuality in order to preserve its potentialities, whereas Müller views Stalinism as nothing more than an element of a history of catastrophes (*ibid.*, 97–98). A slight shift in the nature of the argument conceded, Müller nevertheless follows a similar line, in that he attempts to free communism from the actuality of Stalinism, in order to preserve the former’s potentiality.

⁷⁸ In 2017, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* took up the truism with an article series titled “Weimarer Verhältnisse?” (“Weimar conditions?”), which repeatedly referred to this “Menetekel” (“writing on the wall”). Cf. Andreas Wirsching, “Appell an die Vernunft,” *FAZ*, April 4, 2017; Werner Plumpe, “Die wahren Totengräber der Republik,” *FAZ*, May 5, 2017; Jürgen W. Falter, “Wieviel NSDAP steckt in der AfD?” *FAZ*, June 18, 2017; and Hélène Miard-Delacroix, “Rätselhaftes Deutschland,” *FAZ*, July 16, 2017.

Di dray groshn opere: Bertolt Brecht auf der jiddischen Bühne

Am 29. Dezember 1962 fand im Jüdischen Staatstheater Bukarest (TES) die Erstaufführung von Bertolt Brechts und Kurt Weills *Die Dreigroschenoper* in jiddischer Übersetzung statt. Shulem Rubinger hatte das Werk übersetzt und George Teodorescu führte Regie. Diese Theaterproduktion war zugleich eine nationale sowie eine Weltpremiere: *Die Dreigroschenoper* war zuvor weder ins Jiddische übersetzt noch in Rumänien aufgeführt worden. Dieser Artikel untersucht die Inszenierung des TES im Kontext der sich wandelnden Kulturpolitik im kommunistischen Rumänien seit dem Ende der 1950er Jahre. Es wird zudem der Frage nachgegangen, inwieweit diese Produktion dem Regisseur ganz im Sinne Brechts dazu gedient hat, Kritik an der eigenen Gesellschaft während einer Zeit des leichten politischen Tauwetters zu üben. Da eine Aufnahme der Aufführung nicht vorliegt, analysiert der Artikel das Programmheft und zeitgenössische Rezensionen der Produktion sowie Rubingers Übersetzung.

On December 29, 1962, the Jewish State Theater (TES) in Bucharest, Romania, debuted Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* in Yiddish. Shulem Rubinger had translated the text, and George Teodorescu directed the production. It was simultaneously a national and a world premiere: *The Threepenny Opera* had neither been translated into Yiddish before nor been staged previously in Romania. This article examines TES's performance in the context of communist Romania's changing cultural policies since the end of the 1950s. It also seeks to uncover to what extent Teodorescu attempted a critique of the political class of his time in the same manner in which Brecht had used the play to criticize Weimar Germany. Since no recording of the production is available, the article analyzes the performance's playbill, several reviews of the show, and Rubinger's translation.

Di dray groshn opere: Bertolt Brecht on the Yiddish Stage

Corina L. Petrescu

On December 29, 1962, the curtain rose on the world premiere of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Threepenny Opera*) in Yiddish translation. The stage where this happened was neither in New York City nor in Warsaw, both traditional centers of Yiddish culture, but in Bucharest, Romania. In a nineteenth-century, Neoclassical building on the left bank of the Dâmbovița River, in the heart of the Jewish quarter, situated between the roads Văcărești and Dudești, the ensemble of Teatrul Evreiesc de Stat (TES/Jewish State Theater) made history even if the world did not take notice. Shulem Rubinger had translated the text from the German, and George Teodorescu directed the production. The premiere was also a milestone for Brecht performances in Romania in general, as *Die Dreigroschenoper* had not been previously performed in the country. I found a copy of the translation (believed lost due to the precarious condition of TES's archive) in the Israil Bercovici Collection at Tel Aviv University in May 2017. In this article, I analyze TES's performance in the context of communist Romania's changing cultural policies at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s. If Brecht and Weill had transferred John Gay's *Beggars' Opera* into nineteenth-century London to roast Weimar Germany in the late 1920s, did Teodorescu's production similarly attempt to criticize the opportunism and burgeoning corruption in the Romanian society of his time? Before I answer this question based on the performance's playbill and reviews and the play's translation, I will provide a brief overview of the history of Yiddish theater and of Brecht's reception in Romania to better contextualize my analysis.

Yiddish Theater in Romania

Researchers worldwide agree that Avrom Goldfaden (1840–1908) counts as the father of Yiddish theater.¹ Goldfaden, who was from Staro-Konstantinov in the province of Volhynia in today's Ukraine, was a dandy who straddled the traditions of the typical Eastern European *shtetlekh* culture with that of the Jewish Enlightenment, *Haskalah*. As Nahma Sandrow points out, “[h]e took the title himself, and no one has disputed it” (40) since. His first Yiddish theater performance is said to have taken place in Jassy, a city in Eastern Romania, in 1876 in a beer garden called Pomul Verde (Green Tree) (see Sandrow 41). Following in his footsteps, many other ensembles,

including the famous Vilna Troupe, passed through Romania until the 1940s and delighted their audiences, who did not always speak Yiddish nor were they exclusively Jewish.²

During World War II, between 1940 and 1944, a troupe called Teatrul Barașeum (Barasheum Theater) operated in Bucharest. Their name derived from the hall in which the Romanian authorities allowed them to perform. This enterprise provided employment to Jewish artists who had previously acted on the Romanian stage and played a similar role in Bucharest as the Jüdischer Kulturbund Berlin (Jewish Cultural Association Berlin) had played in the German capital between 1933 and 1941. The company performed in Romanian and did not include any members of earlier Yiddish-language ensembles, who were for the most part rounded up for forced labor or deported further East from Romania to Transnistria.³ With the fall of Marshal Ion Antonescu's nationalist government on August 23, 1944, Romanian society at large began working toward restoring democratic principles before it became obvious that the new normalcy was not leading towards democracy but communism.

The artists interested in producing and promoting Yiddish culture endeavored to reestablish a Yiddish art theater, which Isaac Leib Peretz had already demanded in 1905⁴ and the Vilna Troupe had successfully embodied between 1915 and 1935.⁵ They counted on the artistic ambition of talented performers who had returned from Transnistria or just settled in Romania after the war as well as on the enthusiasm of a still fairly large Jewish audience.⁶ As the communists tightened their grip on society, they also co-opted this phenomenon by favoring the Yidisher Kultur Farband (YKUF/Jewish Cultural Association)—whose own values mirrored those of the new political elites⁷—over other existing Jewish cultural organizations. The theater that the YKUF began to operate in July 1945 was no exception.⁸ For three years, it weathered the political storms that the communists caused as they took over and secured their power. At times, it even succeeded in subverting, though subtly, the role that the authorities had pinned on it.⁹ Yet on August 1, 1948, the YKUF teater (YKUF Theater) became the state theater TES in Bucharest uniting under one roof all Yiddish troupes still active in the country and forming an ensemble of 110 actors.¹⁰

According to the cultural principles of the communist authorities, theater art was supposed to advance the public's intellectual and artistic development and to further its political orientation in line with the country's new ideology. Theaters across the country had to exclude the bourgeois tradition—deemed decadent, mystical, chauvinistic, and deviationist—from their repertoires and to create instead a new canon that served the authorities by propagating their tenets.¹¹ Drama, in particular, was expected to promote the communist doctrine as well as the aesthetics of socialist realism, while theater art in general became an ideological

weapon.¹² Throughout its existence under communism, TES strove to strike a balance between its state-assigned role as the poster child of the regime attesting to the latter's non-discriminatory practices on one hand, and the theater's self-ascribed task as torchbearer of high-quality Jewish culture in Yiddish on the other hand.

Bertolt Brecht on Romania's Stages

Following Joseph V. Stalin's death in 1953, Romania ventured discreetly to distance itself from the Soviet Union, not because the authorities wanted to liberalize the country but because its leaders rejected Nikita S. Khrushchev's de-Stalinization efforts.¹³ In this context, the political establishment sought to diversify the national artistic repertoire by allowing the works of foreign authors other than internationally recognized classics (Shakespeare, Molière, Friedrich Schiller) or Soviet playwrights to be performed. Thus, Bertolt Brecht made his debut in Romanian theater on November 27, 1956, when Teatrul de Stat din Sibiu (State Theater in Sibiu)¹⁴ produced *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (*Mother Courage and Her Children*) in German, under the directorial guidance of Hans Schuschnig.¹⁵ Two years later, Teatrul National Vasile Alecsandri din Iași (National Theater Vasile Alecsandri in Jassy) performed the same play in Romanian.¹⁶ On December 29, 1962, *Die Dreigroschenoper* saw the curtain rise on its national premiere—and the world premiere of its Yiddish translation as *Di dray groshn opere*—at TES Bucharest, where George Teodorescu directed it (figure 1).¹⁷

Charged with implementing the regime's cultural demands on stage, the socialist-realist director had to have "an active attitude toward the dramatic text" and to formulate "his directorial message in rapport with the playwright's,"¹⁸ critic Margareta Bărbuță had already postulated in 1958. The text of a play, and not the director's artistic vision, had to be at the center of each performance. At the same time, the director was not expected to be the executor of the playwright's will, he had to be "the creator of the show" (37) by "illuminating through means specific to stagecraft those aspects [of a play] that made it relevant" (38) to his contemporaries. A socialist-realist director's innovation, Bărbuță contended, was supposed to "consist in discovering new, deeper, broader meanings in a dramatic work based on the text at hand" (38). Teodorescu's stance regarding these requirements becomes evident below in my discussion of contemporary reviews of his production of Brecht and Weill's play.

As Brecht was a Marxist and his social criticism of the Weimar Republic in *Die Dreigroschenoper* uncontested, performing it in Romania at that time seems unproblematic. As Gerd Rienäcker has shown, *Die Dreigroschenoper* is simultaneously an "Opern-Satire" (operatic satire), which combines elements and configurations "der Pariser, Wiener, Berliner Operette, des Varietés, des Singspiels der zwanziger Jahre . . . [und] der



Figure 1. Isac Havis (Mack the Knife) and Henie Levis-Rieber, later known as Hanna Rieber, (Jenny) in the Yiddish production of *The Threepenny Opera*. Private Collection of Lya Koenig-Stolper.

Weimarer und Berliner Revue” (“of the Parisian, Viennese, Berlin operetta, the vaudeville, the musical comedy of the 1920s . . . and of the Weimar and Berlin revue”), and a “Schauspiel mit Musik” (“spectacle with music”), in which, per Brecht’s instructions, music is lifted from its original context.¹⁹ This could have afforded Teodorescu ample possibilities to express—even covertly and staying within Romania’s new ideological parameters—social criticism without relegating it solely to the past of a capitalist society. In line with Brecht’s recommendations for epic theater—“Das Interesse des epischen Theaters ist also ein eminent praktisches. Das menschliche Verhalten wird als veränderlich gezeigt . . .”²⁰ (“The concern of the epic theater is thus eminently practical. Human behavior is shown as alterable . . .”²¹)—Teodorescu’s production could have pursued this modernist notion to highlight the unsettling metamorphosis of Romania’s communist leadership. Less than twenty years after the communists’ takeover, many former idealist fighters for equality and advocates for the common good had mutated into brutal devotees of an authoritarian regime and guardians of their own privileges, despite official claims that their administration acted upon progressive, democratic principles.²² Brecht and Weill had made the point that in a capitalist society capital and personal connections reigned supreme and erased any differences in attitude and lifestyle between a bourgeois and a crook. Following in their footsteps, Teodorescu could have shown how in a self-proclaimed, socialist society *en route* to communism political power and nepotism had replaced the bourgeois with the apparatchik without taking the crook out of the equation. Yet, Teodorescu did not take that leap.

The Performance

Lacking any production notes, the only two sources of information about the performance itself are the show’s playbill and the reviews which appeared in the Romanian media at the time. The playbill correctly placed this Brechtian creation in the early stages of his career, fittingly analyzing Mack the Knife—the gallant, entrepreneurial crook—as Brecht’s compromise between a bourgeois and a proletarian character.²³ In 1928, when the play premiered in Berlin, Brecht was still searching for his artistic voice and a *Weltanschauung* that would mediate his conception of a popular and entertaining, yet also politically and socially critical theater. As Ulrich Weisstein and others have argued, Brecht and Weill’s main concern in *Die Dreigroschenoper* was to show that the bourgeois was a criminal, just as the criminal was a bourgeois.²⁴ To illustrate this, they relied mostly on irony, as Brecht’s political thinking was not clear enough yet to fully grasp the political and social crisis that surrounded him in Weimar Berlin. At the time, Brecht relied on the idea that, to quote Kenneth Scott Baker, “replicating what he [saw] as the inconsequentiality of bourgeois society, the emptiness of its pleasures and self-awareness, best communicate[d] social

criticism.”²⁵ The play’s unexpected overnight box-office success not only proved him wrong but also led him to provide an explanatory apparatus (1931) and to alter the text for its publication in 1932 to ensure that his critical intent came to the fore.²⁶ In the new edition, Brecht incriminated the system in unequivocal terms, when in Act Three, Scene Nine, he had Mack bid farewell to the audience with the following words:

Meine Damen und Herren. Sie sehen den untergehenden Vertreter eines untergehenden Standes. Wir kleinen bürgerlichen Handwerker, die wir mit dem biedereren Brecheisen an den Nickelkassen der kleinen Ladenbesitzer arbeiten, werden von den Großunternehmern verschlungen, hinter denen die Banken stehen. Was ist ein Dietrich gegen eine Aktie? Was ist ein Einbruch in eine Bank gegen die Gründung einer Bank?²⁷

Ladies and gentlemen. You see before you a declining representative of a declining social group. We lower middle-class artisans who toil with our humble jemmies on small shopkeepers’ cash registers are being swallowed up by big corporations backed by the banks. What’s a jemmy compared with a share certificate? What’s breaking into a bank compared with founding a bank.²⁸

For the production in Bucharest, the playbill’s unnamed authors seemed aware of the work’s conceptual evolution. They noted that Brecht underestimated the bourgeoisie’s ability to look beyond his intended criticism and to take delight in the witty lyrics and Weill’s catchy tunes, thus misappropriating the play for its own entertainment. However, and this was what brought the writers’ observations back in line with Romania’s official discourse, Brecht learned from his mistake and subsequently distanced himself from bourgeois art. The playbill surprisingly includes a reference to an article in the West German magazine *Der Spiegel*, which the authors quote to stress the idea that the bourgeoisie of the late 1920s had distorted Brecht’s message to suit its own purposes.²⁹ The playbill does not mention, however, that *Der Spiegel* merely quoted an observation by the essayist Herbert Lüthy from 1928 to question the need for a remake of the film version of *Die Dreigroschenoper* within the context of West Germany in the early 1960s. Lüthy had noted: “Die Songs wurden die großen Schlager der hereinbrechenden Krise [und] Logenbesucher wie vierte Galerie, Bürger wie Kommunisten sangen aus vollem Halse mit: ‘Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral’” (“The songs became popular tunes of the impending crisis, [and] theatergoers with box seats as well as those in the gallery, townspeople as well as communists sang along at the top of their lungs: ‘Food is the first thing. Morals follow on’”) (Lüthy quoted in *Der Spiegel* 123). In the *Spiegel* article, director Wolfgang Staudte doubted that a remake of the film would make sense since Brecht and Weill’s critique had

backfired even in the late 1920s when there had been six million unemployed in Germany. What were its chances at a time, Staudte wondered, when unemployment was no longer the issue but rather six million missing people in Europe (123).³⁰ Quoting out of context due to the absence of a time reference, the playbill's authors created ambiguity about *Der Spiegel* by labelling it a "West German magazine" yet referencing it in the present tense when talking about *Die Dreigroschenoper*'s phenomenal success in 1928. By doing so, they implied that the magazine was a Leftist publication in tune with Brecht's ideals and, therefore, appropriate to cite in a text behind the Iron Curtain.

Available reviews of TES's performance speak to Teodorescu's directorial talent and his cast's professionalism. Radu Popescu welcomed the theater's "boldness" in taking on Brecht and Weill's work "in a serious manner," with "drive" and sustained "efforts."³¹ He judged the production as "remarkable, fresh, pleasant and convincing" (Popescu). Critic E. Elian primarily praised actor Isac Havis for his portrayal of Mack the Knife as a "self-assured businessman simultaneously tough, cynical, [and] merciless with his competitors, just like a big industrialist or capitalist trust holder" (figure 2).³²

Samuel Fischler, in Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum's role, was also credible, as his character alternated between the good-natured father(-figure) and the "wolfish," "ruthless" "exploiter" (Elian). An exception to these laudable evaluations was the assessment of critic Mircea Alexandrescu, who found Havis's transitions between the spoken and the sung parts of his role "unconvincing" and reproached Teodorescu for not having directed the actor better.³³ Alexandrescu was also critical of the set design, which he deemed "unsuitable" for a Brechtian production. The critic further lamented that Teodorescu's wavering between drama and operetta made the show an incomplete epic production which—even if it mirrored Brecht's own incomplete conceptualization of epic theater at the time of the play's first performance—the director should have avoided (86). Alexandrescu's final assessment recalls Bărbuță's demand—quoted earlier in this analysis—for a socialist-realist director to have an "active attitude" toward the dramatic text, which often translated into manipulating it to serve the acceptable ideological views of the country's cultural apparatus. Teodorescu was thus expected to make his performance more epic than Brecht had devised it originally. As Alexandrescu decried Teodorescu's loyalty to Brecht's initial concept for his play, he obviously failed in his role as a socialist-realist director. Teodorescu's allegiance to the young Brecht and his theatrical principles seems to have been the only insubordination that the director dared at that time. While he did not risk transporting Brecht's critique of Weimar society to Romania's social and political reality of the early 1960s, he also did not take away from the play's entertaining character by over-ideologizing it.



Figure 2. Havis as Mack. Private Collection of Lya Koenig-Stolper.

Di dray groshn opere

Since there is no index for TES's archive and its holdings are not easily accessible, it is difficult to ascertain how the TES production of *Di dray groshn opere* came about. Was it the result of Teodorescu's initiative or that of the translator, Shulem Rubinger? Or because of the leadership duo, Franz Auerbach and Israil Bercovici, who had decided that the moment had come for Brecht to be translated and performed into Yiddish? With his Viennese upbringing and his university years spent in Czernowitz, Auerbach, TES's appointed manager since 1955, was more than sympathetic to German-language culture. Bercovici, who had been named TES's literary secretary at the same time as Auerbach had received his appointment, was not only a Yiddish poet but also an accomplished Yiddishist.³⁴ The two learned from each other³⁵ and, together, saw TES through some of the most celebrated and most dreadful moments of its existence under communism. Be that as it may, Brecht's stage premiere in Yiddish took place in Bucharest in December 1962.

The available copy of Rubinger's translation is seventy-nine pages long and a neatly typed-up, mostly clean draft using the Hebrew alphabet. There are only a few minor insertions in ink pen, corrections of typos, and crossed-out phrases. There are neither markings in the text nor on its margins and thus no indication of who decided what was translated or if a censor had worked on it. The text does not, so to say, "speak" at all about its inception or (hi)story (figure 3).

Since Rubinger's translation was never published, it is impossible to know what the final version looked like. Also, without access to TES's production folder of the performance, any questions regarding the version of the text TES used for its show remain unanswerable. The only publicly available Yiddish translation of *Die Dreigroschenoper* came about in the early 2000s as *Di Drayer-Opere*, and it bears the signatures of Shmoyl Naydorf and Leye Robinson. Michaela Naumann Press in Germany published it in 2002 under linguist Walter Sauer's editorial guidance. According to its website, Naumann Press specializes in books that are written in dialect.³⁶ The inclusion of Yiddish texts among its publications suggests that Naumann Press views Yiddish as a dialect of German rather than a distinct language.³⁷ According to Naydorf, who has also translated together with Robinson Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* (*Shock-Headed Peter*), Wilhelm Busch's *Max und Moritz* (*Max and Moritz*) and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* into Yiddish for the same publisher, the idea to pursue *Die Dreigroschenoper* was his.³⁸ Since his mother had taken him to see the 1954 off-Broadway production of Mark Blitzstein's English adaptation at Theater de Lys, with Lotte Lenya as Jenny and Scott Merrill as Mack, Naydorf had been a great admirer not only of Brecht and Weill's play but also of Brecht's vision of the theater. He wanted to make the text available in Yiddish so that contemporary Yiddish

ensembles and audiences would have access both to it and to Brecht's theoretical ideas (email correspondence, July 27, 2018). Ultimately—and although there are very few theater companies worldwide that perform in Yiddish—the goal of the translation was “to expand Yiddish culture, and specifically Yiddish theater culture, to accommodate [the] Brechtian vision” (ibid.). As regards the actual translation process, Naydorf maintains that Robinson and he “tried to both move the setting into a Yiddish milieu and to translate the text as closely as possible” (ibid.). Sometimes, this meant “changing details in the original that had different connotations in German and Yiddish culture” (ibid.). For example, when Mack, in Act Two, Scene Four, must part from Polly and speaks of the distance that he will put between him and London, he mentions that by nightfall he will be “hinter dem Moor Highgate” (Brecht, *Der Erstdruck* 1928, 51; “the other side of Highgate Heath”). Naydorf and Robinson rendered this in Yiddish as “di vilde felder fun Haygeyt”³⁹ (“the wild fields of Highgate”) by building on the Yiddish phrase “vilde felder un velder” (“wild fields and woods”) to suggest not only uncultivated wetlands but a true outside place, even the haunt of demons. Another example of acculturation are the names of the characters. Peachum, for example, becomes Moserem, a name that incorporates the Yiddish noun “moser” for “informer,” which matches the English verb “to peach” in its connotation “to inform against, to turn informer.”⁴⁰ While one would expect such subtlety from Rubinger’s translation, which was done at a time when 146,264 Jews lived in Romania and 34,387 among them declared Yiddish their mother-tongue, such cultural considerations did not play a role in his text.⁴¹

Rubinger’s text notes that he had translated the play directly from the German, yet it is not clear which of the editions available at the time he used. Even after comparing the first edition of 1928 and the most commonly used one of 1932 (as reprinted by Suhrkamp in 1955), it is not possible to make a definitive statement in this respect, as Rubinger’s text oscillates between them.⁴² By way of example, his version of “Die Moritat von Mackie Messer” (“Ballad of Mack the Knife”) only has six stanzas, which corresponds to the 1928 edition since in 1955 the same song had eight stanzas. However, in Act One, Scene Three, the dialog between Mister Peachum and the Beggar includes the following exchange, which is missing in the 1928 edition but included in the 1955 version:

Pitshem:

(*bakukt ba an andern a proteze*) Leder toyg nisht, Selia, gumi iz eklhafter. (*Tsum dri tn.*) Dos geshvir vert oykh shoy n klener, un dertsu iz dos dayn letste gulye. Itzt kanen mir vider onheybn fun fornt. (*Bakukndik dem fertn.*) Avade iz an emeser parekh beser vi a nakhgemakhter. (*Tsum finftn.*) Oy, vi er zet oys! Du host dikh vider oysgefresn!

Betler:

Her Pitshem, ikh hob beemes gornisht bazunders gegesn, mayn shmalts iz umnatirlekh, ikh bin gornisht shuldik.

Pitshem:

Ikh oykh nisht. Gey dir, ikh darf dikh nisht. (*Nokh amol tsum tsveytn betler.*) Fun “rim” eynem biz “aroys-nemen di neshume” iz a groyser khilek, mayn liber. Yo, ikh darf kinstler. Nor kinstler konen haynt rim a harts. Ven ir arbet rikhtik, volt irer publikum gemuzt pylesken in di hent. Du host nisht kayn fantazie! Azoy kan ikh dayn kontrakt nisht farlengern.

(*Di betlers op.*)⁴³

Peachum *tries a false limb on another:* Leather is no good, Celia; rubber is more repulsive. *To the third:* That swelling is going down and it’s your last. Now we’ll have to start all over again. *Examining the fourth:* Of course, natural scabies is never as good as the artificial kind. *To the fifth:* You’re a sight! You’ve been eating again. I’ll have to make an example of you.

Beggar: Mr. Peachum, I really haven’t eaten anything much. I’m just abnormally fat, I can’t help it.

Peachum: Nor can I. You’re fired. *Again to the second beggar:* My dear man, there’s an obvious difference between “tugging at people’s heart strings” and “getting on people’s nerves.” Yes, artists, that’s what I need. Only an artist can tug at anybody’s heart strings nowadays. If you fellows performed properly, your audience would be forced to applaud. You just haven’t any ideas! Obviously, I can’t extend your engagement.

*The beggars go out.*⁴⁴

In and of itself this exchange is not vital to the story, but it exposes that Rubinger’s decision about which edition to use was driven by the intention to depict the most negative image of a capitalist society dominated by vices and moral decay. Whenever the original edition was not explicit enough for his purposes, he reached for the expanded version of 1955. In this case, Peachum treats the beggars as disposable objects rather than as human beings. In Act Two, Scene Four, Mack calls Matthias a drunkard to his face, and in Act Two, Scene Seven, Mack talks unequivocally about Lucy’s pregnancy as a result of her affair with him. By including all these examples of reprimandable behavior in his version of the text, Rubinger intimates that this behavior is common in a capitalist society, which his socialist audiences would identify and condemn as incongruous with their own. That this highly moralizing stand did not correspond to the reality of Romania’s society seems to have been irrelevant.

With respect to the Yiddish used on stage, TES's production employed the Volhynian variety of Southeastern (or Ukrainian) Yiddish.⁴⁵ Since Goldfaden had grown up and gone to school in the province of Volhynia, it is safe to assume that he used this dialect in his stage productions, as a result of which it became the standard dialect of the Yiddish stage. In Romania all theater ensembles used it, except for the Vilner Troupe which performed in Northeastern (or Lithuanian) Yiddish throughout its existence and, consequently, also during its residence in Bucharest between 1924 and 1927. The most important differences between these two dialects pertain to their systems of stressed vowels. Retaining sounds perceptually closer to their Semitic or Germanic origins, Northeastern Yiddish is more conservative in vowel qualities: for example, *zogn* (to say), *zukhn* (to look for), *zeyf* (soap) and *zayd* (silk) compared to *zugn*, *zikhn*, *zayf*, and *zād*. Southeastern and Central Yiddish, however, retain differences in vowel quantity or length: for example, *zun* for both "sun" and "son," or *betn* for "beds" or "to ask," in Northeastern Yiddish correspond to *zin* (sun) and *zīn* (son), and *betn* (beds) and *beytn* (to ask for).⁴⁶ Supposedly positioned midway between Northeastern and Central Yiddish, the Southeastern dialect is considered to be comprehensible to all Yiddish speakers and, by extension, audiences.⁴⁷

The only alteration to the dialect occurred in the Soviet Union in its early years and concerned the naturalization of both the spelling of words and the forms derived from Hebrew and Aramaic.⁴⁸ Orthographic reforms proposed and implemented in the Soviet Union already by 1920 enforced the phoneticization of Yiddish spelling and its emancipation from the strong influence of Hebrew as well as from German orthographic conventions. In Romania, this tendency manifested itself only after World War II under the influence of the Soviet Union, but only with respect to words of Hebrew and Aramaic origins, so that such words as "family" (משפחה) or "dream" (חלום) appeared as מישפאכע and תאָלעם.⁴⁹ In terms of his translation, Rubinger stayed true to the German original. While he spelled the names phonetically, he did not acculturate them nor the characters' professions: Kimball is simply *pastor Kimbol* (pastor Kimbol) or *foter Kimbol* (father Kimbol; Brecht, *Di dray groshn opere*, 18). When he had a choice of synonyms, he chose the one that sounded closest to German, as his use of *better* (rather than *shnorer*⁵⁰) for "beggar" and *gasn-froy* (instead of *zoyn*) for "whore" illustrates.

Conclusion

The driving question behind this analysis was to what extent performing *Die Dreigroschenoper* at TES in 1962 served as a gateway to a critique of the Romanian authorities at the time, even if in a veiled manner. Without substantial and unrestricted access to materials that document Teodorescu's vision for the production, Rubinger's final translation, and the degree to

which censors impacted both, the performance appears as rather conformist, that is, in line with the regime's ideology. Despite the shy attempts at a cultural thaw in Romania since the late 1950s, the performance excelled at pointing fingers at the past and at reminding audiences why their "people's democracy" was preferable to a capitalist republic. The production did not venture into references to the present, when lower or higher ranked apparatchiks had already developed bourgeois tastes and mafioso habits. While disappointing from a contemporary point of view, the decision—whether made by Teodorescu or Auerbach and Bercovici as the leaders of TES—also makes sense. Fear of repercussions that could range from complete exclusion from the country's cultural life to prison sentences still prevailed not only among writers and artists but also in society as a whole. After all, the regime had demonstrated very clearly not so long ago how insubstantial the political thaw actually was and how intolerant it continued to be even toward criticism from within its own ranks and despite its changed rhetoric. In spring 1958, the playwright Ana Novac, previously a strongly promoted and highly acclaimed author as well as a recipient of the State Prize, Third Class, in 1957, had been eliminated from public artistic life. Her play *Ce fel de om ești tu?* (*What Kind of a Person Are You?*), which had premiered in December 1957, had thematized the corruptibility of communist cadres in Romania less than a decade after the country had officially become a people's republic. By April 1958, the production was banned and Novac subsequently excluded from both the Writers' Union and the communist party and blacklisted.⁵¹ TES had staged Novac's play *Di mishpokhe Kovatsh* (*The Kovacs Family*) in 1956 under Nello Bucevski's direction.⁵² Both the theater's leadership and its ensemble were most likely aware of Novac's fate, even if it had not been made public officially. Bearing in mind the price that Novac had paid for her honest depiction of double standards among comrades, TES's decision makers were not willing to expose themselves to the same risk. Furthermore, as the playhouse of a minority that was rapidly shrinking due to massive emigration,⁵³ TES had to be particularly careful about navigating the unstable waters of official policies, lest it endanger the existence of the theater for undermining the state's cultural agenda or insubordination. Consequently, while introducing this Brechtian work to the Romanian public and calling for the play's first Yiddish translation, TES's performance did not call the *status quo* into question. However, as Alexandrescu's review reveals, Teodorescu's decision to follow Brecht's original stage directions enabled his production to remain entertaining—with music that swept the audiences off their feet and made them hum Weill's tunes on their way out of the theater hall and into Bucharest's dark and narrow streets. In those times, even the decision to simply divert the public was audacious.

Notes

¹ The spelling of the name varies considerably. It can also appear as Abraham and Goldfadn, Goldenfudim, or Goldenfodem. See Nahma Sandrow, *Vagabond Stars. A World History of Yiddish Theater* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 40; and Joel Berkowitz, “Avrom Goldfaden and the Modern Yiddish Theater: The Bard of Old Constantine,” *Pakn Treger*, Winter 2004: 11–19, here 11.

² Paul Cernat, *Avangarda românească și complexul periferiei (The Romanian Avantgarde and the Complex of Periphery)* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2007), 269 and 275.

³ See “‘Și s-au dus ca vântul . . .’—un documentar făcut cu ultimii supraviețuitori ai Teatrului Barașeum (1941–1944)” (“And They Went like the Wind . . .”—A Documentary Made with the Last Survivors of the Barasheum Theater [1941–1944]). Dir. Radu Gabrea, 2011.

⁴ Contrast to Yitskhok Leybush Perets, “Dovid in der midber” (“David in the Desert”), in Perets, *Ale verk (Complete Works)* (New York: Tsiko bicher farlag, 1947–8), vol. 7, 189–91, originally published in *Der veg* 10 (January 24, 1906); and Perets, “Oy, dales, dales! teaterfelyeton” (“Oh, Poverty, Poverty! A Theater Feuilleton”), in Perets, *Ale verk*, vol. 7, 174–77, originally published in *Der veg* 51 (March 14, 1906). This spelling of Perets’s name in the main text corresponds to the YIVO orthography.

⁵ See Debra Caplan, *Yiddish Empire. The Vilna Troupe, Jewish Theater, and the Art of Itinerancy* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2018).

⁶ By 1942, 272,629 Jews still lived in Romania and 98,048 of them in Bucharest. Unfortunately, there are no statistics available for the year 1944 (Congresul Mondial Evreesc, Secțiunea din România [World Jewish Congress, Section in Romania], *Populația evreească în cifre. Memento statistic [The Jewish Population in Numbers. Statistical Memento]* [Bucharest, 1945] 44–45).

⁷ Emanuel S. Goldsmith, *Modern Yiddish Culture. The Story of the Yiddish Language Movement* (New York: Fordham University Press, reprinted 2000), 254–55. In Romania, the YKUF was also established in 1937 (“Stenograma ședinței cu conducerea CDE din ziua de 16 martie 1953” [“Report of the Meeting with the CDE Leadership from March 16, 1953”], Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale [ANIC/ Central National Historical Archives], Fond Comitetul Democrat Evreesc [CDE/ Fond of the Jewish Democratic Committee], File 23/ 1953, 15).

⁸ Letter from YKUF leadership to an unnamed official, Arhiva Centrului pentru Studiarea Istoriei Evreilor din România/ACSIER (Archive of the Center for the Study of Jewish History in Romania), Fond 9, File 79, 1.

⁹ For details see Corina L. Petrescu, “‘The People of Israel Lives!’ Performing the Shoah on Post-War Bucharest’s Yiddish Stages,” *Local History, Transnational Memory in the Romanian Holocaust*, ed. Valentina Glajar and Jeanine Teodorescu (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 209–23.

¹⁰ Israil Bercovici, *O sută de ani de teatru evreiesc în România (One Hundred Years of Jewish Theater in Romania)* (Bucharest: Integral, 1998) 202; and “Proces-verbal al ședinței din 21 iunie 1949” (“Minutes of the Meeting from June 21, 1949”) in ANIC, Fond CDE, File 13/1949, 56–67, here 64.

¹¹ Simion Alterescu et al., *Teatrul în România după 23 august 1944 (Theater in Romania after August 23, 1944)* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RPR, 1959), 15–16.

¹² See Florin Tornea, “Reflectarea noii conștiințe sociale în dramaturgia noastră” (“Mirroring the New Social Consciousness in Our Dramaturgy”), *Teatrul (Theater)* 3 (March 1959): 13–20 and Marian Popescu, *Scenele teatrului românesc, 1945–2004. De la cenzură la libertate. Studii de istorie, critică și teorie teatrală (Romanian Theater’s Stages, 1945–2004. From Censorship to Freedom. Studies of Theater History, Criticism and Theory)* (Bucharest: Unitext, 2004), 84.

¹³ See Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2003), 136–67.

¹⁴ Today the theater is called Teatrul Radu Stanca Sibiu (Radu Stanca Theater Sibiu).

¹⁵ Institutul Național al Patrimoniului (INP/National Institute of Patrimony), Distribution of *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*, accessed on July 2, 2018, http://www.cimec.ro/SCRIPTS/TeatreNou/detaliu_premiera.asp?sq=330101135601&sq1=2&sq2=1956.

¹⁶ The poet Tudor Arghezi, who had himself been side-tracked by the regime during its first years in power for his decadent poetry, provided the translation: cf. Sorin Toma, “Poezia putrefacție sau putrefacția poeziei,” I–IV (“Poetry of Putrefaction or the Putrefaction of Poetry, I–IV”), *Scînteia (The Spark)* (January 5–10, 1948): n.p. Mauriciu Sekler, a Yiddish-language actor, who also directed on both the Yiddish and Romanian stage and had studied under Max Reinhard in Berlin before World War II, produced the play.

¹⁷ Bercovici 291–92. INP’s website [cimec.ro](http://www.cimec.ro) erroneously lists *Die Dreigroschenoper*’s Romanian premiere on November 11, 1964 (director: Liviu Ciulei and translators: Ion Cantacuzino, Nina Cassian, and Isaiia Răcăciuni) for Teatrul Lucia-Sturdza-Bulandra (Lucia-Sturdza-Bulandra Theater). Accessed on July 2, 2018, http://www.cimec.ro/SCRIPTS/TeatreNou/prem_detaliu_pag.asp?sq=OPERA+DE+TREI+PARALE&sq3=0.

¹⁸ Margareta Bărbuță, “Conținutul ideologic al muncii regizorului” (“The Ideological Content of a Director’s Work”), *Teatrul* 9 (1958), 35–46, here 36. The Romanian language indicates gender through its use of pronouns and its masculine and feminine forms of nouns; Bărbuță uses only masculine forms, thus clearly identifying “the director” as eminently male. All quotations from this text were translated by C.L.P.

¹⁹ Gerd Rienäcker, “Thesen zur Dreigroschenoper,” *Musik und Ästhetik* 50 (2009): 85–90, here 85.

²⁰ “Über die Verwendung von Musik für ein episches Theater,” *BFA* 22.1, 155–64, here 158.

²¹ “On the Use of Music in an Epic Theater,” *Brecht on Theatre*, 3rd ed., ed. Marc Silberman, Steve Giles, and Tom Kuhn (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), 124–31, here 126.

²² For details see the biographical roster of the Romanian Communist Party’s first leadership in Tismaneanu, *Stalinism*, 255–69.

²³ Playbill in Arhiva Teatrului Evreiesc de Stat (TES Archive), Program 68.

²⁴ Ulrich Weisstein, "Brecht's Victorian Version of Gay: Imitation and Originality in the *Dreigroschenoper*," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 7, no. 3 (September 1970): 314–35. See also Friedrich Dieckmann, "Lust und Schrecken der Desillusionierung. Anmerkungen zur *Dreigroschenoper*," *Merkur* 57, no. 4 (2003): 353–58. The first to notice this had been Alfred Kerr in his review of Brecht and Weill's work right after the premiere on August 31, 1928 (Alfred Kerr, "Die Dreigroschen-Oper," *Berliner Tageblatt* 414 [September 1, 1928]: 5 and 17).

²⁵ Kenneth Scott Baker, "Bertolt Brecht and the Insufficiency of Irony," *Brecht Yearbook* 34 (2009): 207–24, here 212.

²⁶ "Anmerkungen zur *Dreigroschenoper*," *BFA* 24, 57–68. For a timeline of Brecht's work on the play see "Zeittafel zur *Dreigroschenoper*" in Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenoper. Der Erstdruck 1928* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 113–19.

²⁷ *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *BFA* 2, 229–322, here 305.

²⁸ Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*, in *Collected Plays, Vol. 2*, ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015), 91–169, here 166.

²⁹ The article references the following analysis published in *Der Spiegel* on November 7, 1962: n.a., "Dreigroschenoper: Wie am ersten Tag," *Der Spiegel* 45 (1962): 120 and 123.

³⁰ Staudte made the film after all: *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Threepenny Opera*, 1962) with Curd Jürgens as Macheath and Hildegard Knef as Jenny. Reviews of the film considered it a flop.

³¹ Radu Popescu, "Teatrul Evreiesc de Stat: *Opera de trei parale* de Bertolt Brecht și Kurt Weill" ("The Jewish State Theater: *The Three Penny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill"), *Magazinul București* (*Magazine Bucharest*) (January 12, 1963): n.p., in Israil Bercovici Collection, University of Potsdam, 1277w and 818s. (Trans. C.L.P.)

³² E. Elian, "Premieră la Teatrul Evreiesc de Stat: *Opera de trei parale*" ("Premiere at the Jewish State Theater: *The Three Penny Opera*"), *Informația Bucureștiului* (*Bucharest's Information*) (January 17, 1963): n.p., in Bercovici Collection 1276w and 829s. (Trans. C.L.P.)

³³ Mircea Alexandrescu, "Pe marginea unor spectacole brechtienne" ("About some Brechtian Shows"), *Teatrul* 3 (1964): 83–86, here 86.

³⁴ Sheva Zucker, "Yisroel Berkovitch (1921–1988): The Head and the Soul of the Yiddish Theater in Romania—Interview with Dr. Mirjam Bercovici," *Afn shvel* 372–73 (Summer–Fall 2016): 4–12 and 734.

³⁵ See Franz Auerbach's letter to Elvira Groezinger in Bercovici Collection, 2013b.

³⁶ See <http://www.naumann-verlag.de/verlag/>. Accessed July 13, 2018.

³⁷ Email exchange between Petrescu and Walter Sauer, August 13, 2018.

³⁸ Email exchange between Petrescu and Naydorf, July 27, 2018.

³⁹ Brecht, *Di Drayer-Opere* (Nidderau: Verlag Michaela Naumann, 2002), 45.

⁴⁰ See Leye Robinson's letter to Petrescu, July 29, 2018.

⁴¹ Census of 1956, www.recensamantromania.ro/wp-content/uploads/.../vol2_t1.xls, accessed October 23, 2018; and Ladislau Gyémánt, "Evoluția demografică

a populației evreiești” (“The Demographic Evolution of Jews”), in *Trecutul present. Evreii din România: istorie, memorie, reprezentare* (*The Present Past. Jews in Romania: History, Memory, Representation*), ed. Anca Filipovici and Attila Gidó (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2018), 19–25, here 24.

⁴² Brecht, *Der Erstdruck* 1928; and Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenoper* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955).

⁴³ Brecht, “Di dray groshn opera,” 29–30, in Israeli Center for the Documentation of the Performing Arts, Tel Aviv University.

⁴⁴ *The Threepenny Opera*, 119–20.

⁴⁵ Email exchange between Petrescu and former TES actor Carol Feldman, August 23, 2018; and phone interview with Lya Koenig-Stolper, October 16, 2018.

⁴⁶ Dovid Katz, “Yiddish,” in *YIVO Encyclopedia*. Accessed October 24, 2018, <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Language/Yiddish>.

⁴⁷ See also Sandrow 268 for a discussion of Volhynian Yiddish on New York City’s Yiddish stages.

⁴⁸ Gennady Estraiikh, “Soviet Yiddish Orthography,” in *Soviet Yiddish: Language-Planning and Linguistic Development* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 115–40.

⁴⁹ See titles of shows at TES such as *Di mishpokhe Kovatsh* and *A Goldfaden-holem*.

⁵⁰ The noun “der Schnorrer” exists also in German but it means “[jemanden, der] gewohnheitsmäßig andere immer wieder um Kleinigkeiten wie Zigaretten, etwas Geld o.Ä. anhehl[t], ohne selbst zu einer Gegenleistung bereit zu sein” (Duden). The word is a neologism that entered German from Yiddish.

⁵¹ For details on Novac’s story and her surveillance by Romania’s secret police, Securitate, see Petrescu, “Of Sources and Files: The Making of the Securitate Target Ana Novac,” in *Cold War Spy Stories from the Eastern Bloc*, ed. Valentina Glajar, Alison Lewis, and Corina L. Petrescu (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska University Press, 2019), 158–89.

⁵² Native to Transylvania, Novac’s mother tongue was Hungarian and during this period of her life she wrote in that language. The plays were translated into Romanian—*The Kovacs Family* also into Yiddish—and various theaters performed them in different languages depending on their respective geographical location. Aside from the performance in Yiddish at TES, *The Kovacs Family* was, for example, staged in Romanian in Timișoara and Bucharest, and in Hungarian in Sfântu Gheorghe. See comments about the shows in *Teatrul* 1 (April 1956): 76–78; 2 (June 1956): 13; 9 (September 1957): 21; and 12 (December 1957): 21.

⁵³ Between 1948 and 1962, according to historian Radu Ioanid, 182,121 Jews had emigrated from Romania to Israel alone. *Securitatea și vânzarea evreilor: Istoria acordurilor secrete dintre România și Israel* (*The Securitate and the Selling of the Jews: The History of Secret Agreements between Romania and Israel*), ed. Radu Ioanid (Iași: Polirom, 2015), 561.

Brecht's Reception of Mao Tse-tung in Two Poems

Since the early 1930s, Brecht paid special attention to Mao Tse-tung and the Chinese revolutionary movement, and this interest would later be reflected, among other projects, in his *Chinese Poems*. This essay examines which historical sources Brecht might have consulted for his poem "The Other Side" (1951). It also analyses why his poem "Thoughts during a Flight over the Great Wall" (1950), itself an adaptation of Fritz Jensen's translation of Mao's poem "Snow" ("雪"), deviates significantly from the Chinese original. Mao tried to continue the Chinese poetic tradition to represent the current political situation of China, and this attitude towards art probably resonated with Brecht. According to entries in his journal, Brecht assumed that the "rise of the Far East" might lead to another "Renaissance of the Arts."

Seit Anfang der 1930er Jahre schenkte Brecht Mao Tse-tung und der chinesischen Revolutionsbewegung besondere Aufmerksamkeit, und dieses Interesse schlug sich später u.a. in seinen *Chinesischen Gedichten* nieder. Dieser Aufsatz geht der Frage nach, auf welche historische Quellen Brecht für sein Gedicht "Die andere Seite" (1951) zurückgegriffen haben mag. Er untersucht zudem, warum Brechts Gedicht "Gedanken bei einem Flug über die Große Mauer" (1950), eine Bearbeitung der Übertragung von Maos Gedicht "Schnee" ("雪") durch Fritz Jensen, in seiner Aussage deutlich vom chinesischen Original abweicht. Mao versuchte, die dichterische Tradition Chinas fortzusetzen, um die politische Gegenwart Chinas darzustellen, und diese Haltung zur Kunst stieß bei Brecht wahrscheinlich auf Resonanz. Aufzeichnungen in seinem Arbeitsjournal zufolge sah Brecht in der "Erhebung des Fernen Ostens" den potentiellen Auslöser einer erneuten "Renaissance der Künste."

Brechts Rezeption

Mao Tse-tungs in zwei Gedichten

Xue Song

Es ist weithin bekannt, dass Bertolt Brecht sich ab 1926 mit dem Marxismus beschäftigte. Von da an beeinflussten die Werke von Karl Marx und Vladimir Lenin sein Denken tiefgreifend und führten zu entscheidenden Konsequenzen in seinem künstlerischen Schaffen. Durch das Studium des Marxismus veränderte sich Brechts Auffassung der Wirklichkeit sowie seine gesamte Weltanschauung. Nach seiner Meinung sollte man richtig denken: "Er [Brecht] dachte in anderen Köpfen, und auch in seinem Kopf dachten andere."¹ In diesem Sinne haben Marx und Lenin sowie chinesische Philosophen "in Brechts Kopf gedacht" und Gedanken angeregt. Viele Brecht-Forscher sind sich darüber einig, dass die Beschäftigung Brechts mit China in engem Zusammenhang mit dem Kontext des Marxismus steht² und seine Aufnahme der philosophischen Ideen Chinas als Ergänzung zur abstrakten marxistischen Gesellschaftsanalyse betrachtet werden kann.³

Den chinesischen Adaptionen und Transformationen des Marxismus schenkte Brecht besondere Aufmerksamkeit. Bereits in den 1920er Jahren weckte die chinesische Revolution Brechts politisches Interesse an China, als die KPD Ernst Thälmanns große Kampagne "Hände weg von China!" zur Unterstützung der chinesischen Revolution vorbereitete.⁴ Angeregt von Sergei Tretjakows Stück *Brülle, China!* arbeitete Brecht Anfang der 1930er Jahre gemeinsam mit Hanns Eisler an dem Lehrstück *Die Maßnahme*, das sich auf die Vorgänge der revolutionären Phase des Bürgerkriegs in China bezieht. Gerhart Eisler, der Bruder Hanns Eislers, arbeitete von 1929 bis 1931 als Beauftragter der Kommunistischen Internationale in China. Wahrscheinlich machte er Brecht und seinen Bruder mit der Geschichte der chinesischen Revolutionsbewegungen bekannt, für die sich Brecht von nun an lebhaft interessierte. Nach Hanns Eislers Erinnerungen geht Brechts Auseinandersetzung mit Me Ti (Mozi) ebenfalls auf die Jahre 1929–30 zurück. Die chinesische Philosophie hat Brecht "als Denkanregung" gerade in diesem Zeitraum beeinflusst.⁵

Von nun an schenkte Brecht den chinesischen Revolutionsbewegungen unter Mao Tse-tung besondere Aufmerksamkeit und verfolgte ihre Entwicklung mit großem Interesse. Der Sieg der Kommunistischen Partei Chinas (KPCh) 1949 begeisterte ihn besonders und gab ihm Hoffnung.⁶ 1949

schrieb Brecht das Gedicht "Die andere Seite," das zunächst die Titel "Aus allem etwas machen"⁷ und auch "Der Steckbrief" trug, welche aber später für die Veröffentlichung in *Hundert Gedichte* (1951) geändert wurden.⁸ Inhaltlich geht es um eine legendäre Geschichte über Mao Tse-tung, die sich 1934 in China ereignete.⁹ Chiang Kai-Shek hatte von amerikanischen Flugzeugen Flugblätter über von den Kommunisten kontrollierten Gebieten in China abwerfen lassen. Die Vorderseite gab das auf Mao Tse-tung ausgesetzte Kopfgeld bekannt, die Rückseite war leer.¹⁰

"Die andere Seite"¹¹ (1951)
 1934, im achten Jahre des Bürgerkriegs
 Warfen Flugzeuge Tschiang Kai-sheks
 Über dem Gebiet der Kommunisten Flugblätter ab
 Die auf den Kopf Mao Tse-tungs einen Preis setzten.
 Umsichtig
 Ließ der gebrandmarkte Mao angesichts des Mangels
 An Papier und der Fülle der Gedanken die einseitig
 Bedruckten Blätter aufsammeln und brachte sie
 Auf der sauberen Seite bedruckt mit Nützlichem
 Unter der Bevölkerung in Umlauf

Dem geschilderten Ereignis liegt der Bericht einer Zeitung zugrunde, der sich auf die Auseinandersetzung zwischen der nationalistischen Weißen Armee Chiang Kai-Sheks und der kommunistischen Roten Armee Mao Tse-tungs bezog.¹² Um 1934–35 fand diese Auseinandersetzung ihren Höhepunkt in dem Langen Marsch (Changzheng, 长征), also dem Rückzug der Roten Armee durch elf chinesische Provinzen. Der Marsch begann im Oktober 1934 und endete im Oktober 1935. Es war ein mörderischer und endloser Rückzug vor der Blockade Chiang Kai-Sheks und zugleich ein Kampf, der immer wieder an den Rand von Niederlage und Vernichtung führte.¹³ Etwa einhunderttausend chinesische Kommunisten brachen zu einem der außergewöhnlichsten Märsche in der Geschichte der Menschheit auf und entkamen den Angriffen von nationalistischen Streitkräften Chiang Kai-Sheks, Truppen der Provinzial-Kriegsherren, lokalen Banditen sowie feindlichen Stämmen. Der Lange Marsch dauerte ein volles Jahr. Am Ende erreichten nur siebentausend Kommunisten am 20. Oktober 1935 das Ziel Yan'an. Sie hatten einen Umweg von circa 12500 Kilometern hinter sich.¹⁴

Edgar Snow, der amerikanische Journalist, berichtete in einigen Kapiteln seines Buches *Roter Stern über China* über die Kopfgeldprämien für die wichtigsten Anführer der Kommunisten im Roten Gebiet. Auf den Kopf verschiedener Anführer der Kommunisten hatte Chiang Kai-Shek Belohnungen ausgesetzt: z.B. auf Chou En-lais (周恩来) Kopf achtzigtausend Silberdollar, auf die Köpfe von Lin Piao (林彪) und Peng Teh-huai (彭德怀) jeweils hunderttausend Silberdollar.¹⁵ Die höchste Belohnung war

auf Mao Tse-tung ausgesetzt, zweihundertfünfzigtausend Silberdollar.¹⁶ Insgesamt überschritt die Summe der Kopfprämien zwei Millionen Silberdollar. Während Snows Aufenthaltes im Roten Gebiet waren wieder einmal Tausende von Flugblättern abgeworfen worden.¹⁷ Die einseitig bedruckten Flugblätter wurden wegen der Papierknappheit in der Roten Armee später für Propagandaschriften oder Klassenhefte benutzt.¹⁸ Vor der Veröffentlichung seines Buches hatte Snow seine Berichte über Mao Tse-tung in Artikelform der westlichen Presse übergeben, in der auch häufig andere Schriften über Mao und die Sowjetgebiete zu lesen waren.¹⁹ Vermutlich las Brecht wohl auch Edgar Snows *Roter Stern über China* in den Vereinigten Staaten und informierte sich so über Mao Tse-tung. Denn dort ist dieselbe Geschichte über Mao zu finden.²⁰

Anhand dieser Informationen und des oben genannten Zeitungsberichts schreibt Brecht das Gedicht "Die andere Seite" und thematisiert darin das erwähnte Ereignis. Mao Tse-tung befahl, die Kopfgeld-Flugblätter zum eigenen Nutzen aufzuheben, nachdem tausende von ihnen abgeworfen worden waren. Das Gedicht gibt die im Buch Snows beschriebene Funktion der Flugblätter wieder: "Ließ der Gebrandmarkte Mao angesichts des Mangels / An Papier und der Fülle der Gedanken die einseitig / Bedruckten Blätter auf sammeln und brachte sie / Auf der sauberen Seite bedruckt mit Nützlichem / Unter der Bevölkerung in Umlauf."²¹ Brechts Gedicht lobt, dass Mao Tse-tung ganz gelassen auf die Kopfgeld-Flugblätter reagiert und Unnützes in Nützlichem verwandelt. Aus einer Vielzahl von Berichten und Zeitungsnachrichten über Mao Tse-tung trifft Brecht eine eigene Auswahl des Materials, das er für seine Dichtung benutzt.

Vergleicht man das Gedicht "Die andere Seite" mit Brechts berühmtem Gedicht "Legende von der Entstehung des Buches Taoteking auf dem Weg des Laotse in die Emigration" (1939), so zeigt sich eine Verwandtschaft. Brecht bezeichnet in diesem Gedicht Laotse's Auswanderungsgeschichte als "Legende," als eine Erzählung über das Leben eines Heiligen. "Diese Bezeichnung gibt eher Brechts Verehrung für Laotse als Brechts Skepsis gegenüber der Entstehungsgeschichte zu verstehen."²² Wie die "List des Konfutse,"²³ die Brecht in seinem Essay "Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit" als eine geschickte und flexible Kampfkunst im Kampf gegen "die Lüge und Unwissenheit" erörtert,²⁴ erscheint auch Laotse's Verhalten in Brechts Gedicht "Legende" als vorbildlich für die Verbreitung der Wahrheit im Exil. Denn laut Brecht ist das Exil für die Mutigen, die auf ihrer Lehre bestehen, "keine Flucht, sondern die Fortsetzung der Arbeit und die neue Chance zur Verbreitung der Wahrheit."²⁵ Das ganze Gedicht ist somit ein Ausdruck der Verehrung für Laotse. In "Die andere Seite" macht Brecht seine Verehrung für Mao Tse-tung durch seine Verarbeitung des Materials ebenfalls deutlich erkennbar. Das Gedicht spielt einerseits auf den politischen Zustand Chinas zur Zeit des Bürgerkriegs an, andererseits bringt es ein legendäres Bild von Mao Tse-tung lebhaft zum

Ausdruck. Wie Laotse in "Legende von der Entstehung des Buches Taote-king" verbreiteten auch die chinesischen Kommunisten trotz ihrer schwierigen Lage im Kampf gegen die nationalistischen Streitkräfte das "Nützliche" und brachten es "unter der Bevölkerung in Umlauf." Das Gedicht offenbart Brechts Sympathie für die chinesische Revolution und seine Zustimmung und Hochschätzung für Mao Tse-tung.

Brecht schätzte Maos Gedanken zur revolutionären Dialektik sehr. 1954 erklärte er Maos *Über den Widerspruch* zum eindrucksvollsten Buch des Jahres.²⁶ Er las es "eben wieder mit Genuss" und beschaffte fünfzig Exemplare des Buches und ließ sie verteilen.²⁷ Brechts Hochschätzung für Maos Dialektik ist in "Die andere Seite" ebenfalls deutlich erkennbar. Im Gedicht benutzt Brecht das Papier mit seinen zwei Seiten als Symbol der zwei Seiten eines jeden Widerspruchs, d.h. der hauptsächlichen und der nebensächlichen Seite.²⁸ Nach Jürgen Link symbolisiert das Gedicht drei der Widersprüche, die die politische Situation Chinas im Jahr 1934 charakterisieren.²⁹ Der erste Widerspruch ist der zwischen dem chinesischen Volk und der politischen Reaktion, bei dem diese noch die Hauptseite bildete. Der zweite Widerspruch im Gedicht ist der zwischen Basis und Überbau. Damals fehlten der Roten Armee materielle Güter, z.B. Papier für die nützlichen Gedanken, also für die Theorie. Jedoch half ihm seine Theorie, die materiellen Mittel des Feindes dialektisch umzudrehen, sie zu seinem eigenen Mittel zu machen. Schließlich liegt ein dritter Widerspruch zwischen Mao Tse-tungs "Massenlinie"³⁰ und der "Massenfeindschaft" Chiang Kai-Sheks.³¹ Mao ließ Nützliches unter der Bevölkerung verbreiten, während Chiang Kopfgeld-Flugblätter unter der Bevölkerung abwerfen ließ.

Ebenfalls in diesem Zeitraum, Ende 1948, erhielt Brecht von seinem Freund Hanns Eisler ein von Fritz Jensen und seiner Frau Wu-an ins Deutsche übersetztes Gedicht Maos mit dem Titel "Chinesische Ode" und zeigte großes Interesse daran. Bereits in den folgenden Tagen überarbeitete Brecht Jensens Fassung in seinem Gedicht "Gedanken beim Überfliegen der großen Mauer." Das dieser Übertragung zugrundeliegende Original ist das berühmte Gedicht "Schnee" ("雪"),³² das Mao Tse-tung im Februar 1936 schrieb und das am 14. November 1945 in Chongqing veröffentlicht wurde, nachdem Mao und Chiang Kai-Shek dort zusammen konferiert hatten.³³

Wie zahlreiche westliche Intellektuelle verfolgte Brecht ständig die politische Entwicklung in China sowie die der Kommunistischen Partei unter Mao Tse-tung. Nach seinem Marxismus-Studium beschäftigte sich Brecht mit den politischen Themen, die besonders "im Zentrum der internationalen und deutschen Politik stehen: sozialistischer Aufbau in der Sowjetunion—. . . die chinesische Revolution."³⁴ In den ersten Jahren nach 1949 las Brecht regelmäßig die Zeitschrift *Neues China*.³⁵ Brecht hat die chinesische Revolution als eine weitere Befreiung wahrgenommen, als

einen Beitrag zur Weltrevolution. Zu Brechts besonderem Interesse an Mao Tse-tung trug bei, dass Mao Gedichte schrieb. In seinem Arbeitsjournal erläuterte Brecht am 29. Dezember 1948 die Umstände, unter denen er zur Bearbeitung des Gedichts von Mao kam: "Eisler hier für vier Wochen. . . . Er gibt mir aber eine Ode des Mao Tse-tung, geschrieben auf dessen ersten Flug über die Große Mauer, ein herrliches Gedicht, das ich gleich bearbeite. Mein Rechnen mit einer Renaissance der Künste, ausgelöst von der Erhebung des Fernen Ostens, scheint sich früher zu lohnen, als man hätte denken sollen."³⁶ Nach dieser Notiz hat Brecht zudem eine Zeitungsnachricht in sein Arbeitsjournal geklebt, die er aus der *Times* vom 18. Dezember 1948 ausgeschnitten hatte. Der Titel der Zeitungsnachricht lautet "Chinese Destiny," und einen Satz dieser Nachricht hat Brecht unterstrichen: "The Chinese are, in a sense, too subtly intelligent for the business of war."³⁷ Als er 1949 die Nachricht von dem Sieg der Kommunistischen Partei Chinas hörte, war Brecht sehr aufgeregt und bezeichnete den Sieg als eine große Veränderung.³⁸ Angeregt durch diesen Sieg übertrug Brecht Jensens Fassung von Maos Gedicht in sein eigenes Gedicht "Gedanken beim Überfliegen der Großen Mauer" und veröffentlichte es 1950 im zehnten Heft der *Versuche*.³⁹ Zu seiner Übertragung schrieb er am 18. Januar 1949 in sein Arbeitsjournal: "Durch alle diese Wochen hindurch halte ich im Hinterkopf den Sieg der chinesischen Kommunisten, der das Gesicht der Welt vollständig ändert. Dies ist mir ständig gegenwärtig und beschäftigt mich alle paar Stunden."⁴⁰ Vom chinesischen Sieg begeistert, notierte er nur zwei Tage später: "Übersetze Mao Tse-tungs 'Gedanken beim Überfliegen der Großen Mauer.'"⁴¹ Nach Antony Tatlow hat Brecht das Gedicht anhand der deutschen Vorlage von Jensen und Wu-an gleich zweimal bearbeitet: zunächst zusammen mit seiner Mitarbeiterin Elisabeth Hauptmann und später nochmals ohne sie.⁴² Die erste Fassung, "Ode des Mao Tse Tung," wurde nicht publiziert. Paula Hanssen zufolge war Hauptmann allerdings auch an der zweiten Fassung beteiligt, da ihr Name im Typoskript von Brecht vermerkt wurde. Im ersten Typoskript notiert Hauptmann selbst: "mit Brecht zusammen korrigiert für *Versuche* 12 E. H."⁴³

Brechts Informationen über den Hintergrund des ursprünglichen Gedichts waren allerdings fehlerhaft. Seine Anmerkungen zu den "Chinesischen Gedichten" machen sein Missverständnis deutlich erkennbar, denn Brecht schreibt: "Das Gedicht 'Gedanken bei einem Flug über die große Mauer' wurde von Mao Tse-tung geschrieben, als er zu politischen Verhandlungen nach Südchina flog."⁴⁴ Offensichtlich beruht das Missverständnis Brechts auf Jensens Vorlage, aus der Brecht die irreführende Information direkt übernahm. In Jensens Vorlage findet sich ebenfalls eine Anmerkung zu Maos Gedicht: "Mao Tse Tung schrieb dieses Gedicht während seiner ersten Reise im Flugzeug, als er im Jahre 1945 auf die Einladung Tschiang Kai Scheks nach Tschungking flog, um über die Möglichkeiten einer Koalitionsregierung zu verhandeln."⁴⁵ Der Brecht-Forscher Tatlow nimmt

an, dass Maos Original "im August 1945 veröffentlicht wurde," zu dem Zeitpunkt also, an dem Mao und Chiang Kai-Shek in Chongqing konferierten: "Das war kein bloßer Zufall."⁴⁶ Mao habe sein Gedicht erst 1945, "als politische Geste,"⁴⁷ vor der wichtigen Konferenz von Mao und Chiang Kai-Shek veröffentlicht. Diese Behauptung beruht aber auf fragwürdigen Mutmaßungen. Über das Veröffentlichungsdatum von Maos Original wird in der chinesischen Literatur eindeutig festgestellt, dass Maos Original aufgrund der Abschrift vom 14. November 1945 zum ersten Mal in der *Xinmin Abendzeitung* veröffentlicht wurde, also nachdem Mao Chongqing bereits verlassen hatte. Vorher, am 7. Oktober 1945, hatte Mao sein Gedicht dem Dichter Liu Yazi (柳亚子; 1887–1958) geschenkt und in einem Brief vermerkt: "Als ich zum ersten Mal in Shanbei⁴⁸ den großen Schneefall sah, habe ich ein Ci-Gedicht (词)⁴⁹ geschrieben."⁵⁰ Als Mao Anfang Februar 1936 die Rote Armee über den Gelben Fluss führen und die japanische Invasion in Nordchina bekämpfen wollte, bestieg er einen Berg, um das Gelände zu besichtigen, und sah von dort aus Schneefall über Shanbei. Vor diesem Hintergrund schrieb er das Gedicht "Schnee" (雪) in der "Qinyuanchun"-Form (沁园春).⁵¹ Am 21. Dezember 1958 hat Mao sein Gedicht selbst interpretiert: "'Schnee' ist eine Anspielung auf Antifeudalismus und kritisiert die zweitausend Jahre alte reaktionäre Seite des Feudalismus. 'Bildung' (文采), 'Geschmack' (风骚), 'Großer Adler' (大雕), haben keine spezielle Bedeutung, denn das ist ein Gedicht. Könnte man diese Menschen schmähen? Die anderen Interpretationen sind nicht korrekt. Die letzten drei Zeilen sind eine Anspielung auf das Proletariat."⁵² Wir können also festhalten, dass Mao sein Gedicht nicht speziell für die politischen Verhandlungen in Chongqing verfasst hat. Er wollte seine Mitstreiter nicht wissen lassen, dass er ein altmodisches "Ci-Gedicht" schrieb, denn "nach Mao legt das altmodische 'Ci-Gedicht' viel Wert auf Rhythmen. Das schränke die Intelligenz des Menschen ein. Man sollte es nicht befürworten."⁵³ Da Brecht bei seiner Bearbeitung die irreführende Information zur Entstehung des Gedichts von Jensens "sinnentstellender"⁵⁴ Vorlage übernahm, ist nicht schwer zu verstehen, dass Brecht Maos Gedicht nicht sinngetreu übersetzt hat. Die inhaltliche Bearbeitung Brechts und die Veränderung des Titels zeigen, dass Brecht bei der Übertragung dieses Gedichts zugleich seine eigenen Gedanken zum Ausdruck bringen wollte.

Sehen wir einmal genauer hin: Maos Gedicht wurde 1949 zuerst unter dem Titel "Chinesische Ode" von Jensen und seiner Frau Wu-an ins Deutsche übersetzt und erschien 1949 in Jensens Buch *China siegt*.⁵⁵ Später erkannte Jensen manche Fehler in seiner ersten Fassung und korrigierte sie. Die zweite Übertragung, bei der er insbesondere die Schlussverse verbessert hat, wurde 1955 in Jensens Buch *Opfer und Sieger*⁵⁶ veröffentlicht. Offensichtlich diente Brecht die erste Übersetzung von 1949 als Vorlage, nicht die korrigierte Version von 1955. Hier ist das Gedicht Maos:

沁园春·雪

毛泽东 1936

北国风光,
千里冰封,
万里雪飘。
望长城内外,
惟馀莽莽;
大河上下,
顿失滔滔。
山舞银蛇,
原驰蜡象,
欲与天公试比高。
须晴日,
看红妆素裹,
分外妖娆。

江山如此多娇,
引无数英雄竞折腰。
惜秦皇汉武,
略输文采;
唐宗宋祖,
稍逊风骚。
一代天骄,
成吉思汗,
只识弯弓射大雕。
俱往矣,
数风流人物,
还看今朝。⁵⁷

Jensen übersetzte dieses Gedicht 1949 wie folgt unter dem Titel “Chinesische Ode”:

Leuchtendes Bild der nördlichen Landschaft
Erde umschlossen
von tausend eisigen Meilen
zehntausend Meilen
geflügelten Schnees—und siehe:
Zu beiden Seiten der Großen Mauer
streckt sich
die weite Unendlichkeit.
Der Gelbe Fluss
unbeweglich, reißend nicht mehr,
Und über ihm hauchzarte Bündel
aus Purpur und Weiß.

So lockten Ströme und Berge,
 geschmückt
 mit überschwenglicher Grazie,
 unzählige Werber, die verlangend sich neigten.
 Armselige
 Könige der Tsch'in und der Han,
 die zu wenig
 begriffen. Und die Tang und die Sung,
 Leichtsinn im Übermaß. Dschingis-Khan,
 hochmütiger
 einziger Sohn einer Dynastie—
 er wusste nichts,
 als den Bogen nach dem Adler zu spannen.
 Sie alle verdarben—und siehe,
 auch heute
 All die großen, glänzenden Herren,
 immer noch
 So voll der alten Begehrlichkeit.⁵⁸

Brechts Version dieses Gedichtes von 1950—"Gedanken bei einem Flug
 über die Große Mauer"—lautet:

Unter mir das Bild der nördlichen Landschaft.
 Zehntausend Meilen geflügelter Schnee.
 Unbeweglich
 Der Gelbe Fluss, von solcher Höhe
 Nicht mehr reißend. Zwischen ihm und uns
 Hauchzarte Wolkenbündel aus Weiß und aus Purpur.
 Weidland und Äcker zu beiden Seiten
 Der Großen Mauer. Wie viele Freier schon
 Sich vor ihnen verbeugten!

Alle die armseligen
 Könige der Tsch'in und der Han
 Die nur wenig wussten.
 Die Tang und die Sung, mit dem Leichtsinn im Übermaß!
 Und der hochmütige
 Einzige Sohn einer Dynastie, der Tschingis-Khan!
 Mehr als den Bogen spannen

Konnte auch er nicht.
 Alle verdarben.
 Aber auch heute

Seht euch die großen Herren an: immer noch
Voll der alten schlimmen Begehrlichkeit!⁵⁹

Das Gedicht Maos gliedert sich inhaltlich in zwei Teile. Im ersten Teil geht es um die "schöne Nördliche Landschaft," wohingegen der zweite Teil vom Ehrgeiz und von der Offenherzigkeit des lyrischen Ichs handelt. Bei Jensen ist das Gedicht nicht gegliedert. Brecht unterscheidet drei Teile, ohne dabei der inneren Struktur des Originals zu folgen.⁶⁰ Darüber hinaus hat Brecht, auf der Grundlage der Vorlage Jensens, das Gedicht stark gekürzt. Das Originalgedicht hat insgesamt fünfundzwanzig Zeilen, Jensens Vorlage dreißig, während Brechts Fassung lediglich einundzwanzig Zeilen lang ist. Eine sehr auffallende Besonderheit bei Jensen ist, dass er die ursprünglichen Zeilen aufteilt. Beispiel dafür sind die Zeilen 2 und 3 ("千里冰封, / 万里雪飘") des Originals, die bei Jensen zu vier Zeilen werden: "Erde umschlossen / von tausend eisigen Meilen, / zehntausend Meilen / geflügelten Schnees."⁶¹ Brecht fasst sie dagegen in eine Zeile zusammen: "Zehntausend Meilen geflügelter Schnee."

Brecht nimmt an: "Das Gedicht wurde von Mao Tse-tung geschrieben, als er zu politischen Verhandlungen nach Südchina flog."⁶² Deswegen betitelt Brecht es zunächst als "Ode des Mao Tse Tung."⁶³ In der zweiten veröffentlichten Fassung verwendet er aber den Titel "Gedanken bei einem Flug über die Große Mauer," der aber zu logischen Widersprüchen führt. Einerseits konnte Mao während der Fahrt von Yan'an nach Chongqing geografisch die Große Mauer und den Gelben Fluss nicht überfliegen, andererseits konnte es nicht schneien, als Mao im August 1945 nach Chongqing flog.⁶⁴ Sowohl in seinem Arbeitsjournal als auch in seinen Anmerkungen zu den "Chinesischen Gedichten" hat Brecht angenommen, dass Mao das Gedicht auf seinem ersten Flug über die Große Mauer geschrieben hat,⁶⁵ und hat deshalb z.B. die Zeile "Leuchtendes Bild der nördlichen Landschaft" aus Jensens Vorlage in "*Unter mir* das Bild der nördlichen Landschaft"⁶⁶ ungeändert. Brechts Übertragung enthält noch weitere Zeilen, die auf ein Flugzeug hinweisen: "Der Gelbe Fluss, / von solcher Höhe / Nicht mehr reißend. / Zwischen ihm und uns."⁶⁷ Hier ist der Gelbe Fluss "nicht mehr reißend," weil er "von solcher Höhe"⁶⁸ gesehen wird. Im chinesischen Original ist der Fluss "nicht mehr reißend," da er zugefroren ist. Brechts Formulierungen sind weder in der deutschen Vorlage noch im Original zu finden. Brecht nutzt seine dichterische Freiheit zu weiteren erheblichen Abweichungen, beispielsweise gehen die Zeilen 4–5 sowie die Zeilen 8–14 des Originals in seiner Überarbeitung völlig verloren. Die Auslassungen folgen zum Teil der Vorlage Jensens, bei dem auch bereits die Zeilen 8–11 fehlen. Aus der Vorlage Jensens—Tatlow nennt sie eine "irreführende Übersetzung"⁶⁹—übernahm Brecht einige offenkundige Fehler. Ein deutlicher Fehler findet sich in Jensens Übertragung der letzten Zeilen: "俱往矣, 数风流人物, 还看今朝。," die man übersetzen könnte als: "Alle

dahin! / Zählst du auf frei gesonnene Menschen, / wende den Blick zum Heute.”⁷⁰ Jensen hat bei seiner ersten Fassung diese Zeilen überhaupt nicht verstanden; so lautet seine Übersetzung: “Sie alle verdarben—und siehe, / auch heute / All die großen, glänzenden Herren, / immer noch / So voll der alten Begehrlichkeit.”⁷¹ Dieser Fehler ist in der Übersetzung Brechts auch zu finden, dort kann man lediglich den feinen Unterschied erkennen: “Alle verdarben. / Aber auch heute / Seht euch die großen Herren an: immer noch / Voll der alten schlimmen Begehrlichkeit.”⁷² In der zweiten Fassung von 1955 hat Jensen diesen Fehler korrigiert: “Sie alle verdarben. So findet, / weithin / übers Vergangene schweifend, / das Aug / Die wahren Helden erst heute.”⁷³ Diese Version Jensens entspricht im Großen und Ganzen dem chinesischen Original, jedoch hatte Brecht keine Möglichkeit, seine eigene Übersetzung nochmals zu überarbeiten. Die Abweichung führt in seinem Gedicht zu einem völlig anderen Schluss. Mao will im chinesischen Original sagen, dass die Zeit der wahren Helden Chinas erst mit der Gegenwart angebrochen sei, wohingegen Brecht vor einem über den Untergang von Dynastien hinaus in die Gegenwart hineinragenden Herrschaftsgebaren warnt. Jensen war der Fehler aus Unverständnis unabsichtlich unterlaufen, denn er hatte das Original nicht richtig verstanden, und Brecht übernahm den Fehler. Nach Brecht sind nicht nur zweitausend Jahre reaktionärer Feudalismus, sondern auch die “großen Herren” der Gegenwart zu kritisieren. Die Kritik an den Herrschern von heute wird bei Brecht durch Ausrufungszeichen noch zusätzlich verschärft. Er hat großes Interesse an Mao Tse-tung, der als sozialistischer Anführer Gedichte schreibt. Was Brecht begeistert, ist ein Gedicht, in dem die zweitausend Jahre alte reaktionäre Seite des Feudalismus kritisiert wird. Er nimmt Mao als einen Schritt in der Entwicklung der chinesischen Tradition wahr.

Darüber hinaus hat Jensen bei der Übersetzung der chinesischen Kaiser unrichtig formuliert. Zum einen hat er das Wort “König” benutzt, was dem obersten Herrscher Chinas nicht entspricht,⁷⁴ zum anderen unterschlägt er vier chinesische Kaisernamen. In Mao Tse-tungs Originalgedicht sind fünf wichtige Kaiser zu finden: 秦[始]皇 (Tschin Schih-huang, 259–210 v. Chr.) von der Qin-Dynastie, 汉武[帝] (Han Wu-ti, 156–87 v. Chr.) von der Han-Dynastie, 唐[太]宗 (Tang Tai-tsung, 598–649 n. Chr.) von der Tang-Dynastie, 宋[太]祖 (Sung Tai-tsu, 927–976 n. Chr.) von der Song-Dynastie und 成吉思汗 (Dschingis-Khan, 1162–1227 n. Chr.) von der Yuan-Dynastie. Ihnen allen ist gemeinsam, dass sie in der chinesischen Geschichte eine wichtige Rolle gespielt und deren Lauf verändert haben. Sie gelten als bedeutende Vertreter der Kaiser aller bisherigen chinesischen Dynastien. Der Dichter stellt offenbar absichtlich durch die Aufzählung der fünf Kaiser seine Intention dar. Vier der fünf Kaiser sind die ersten Kaiser der jeweiligen Dynastien, womit Mao seinen Ehrgeiz zum Ausdruck bringen wollte, die alten Helden abtreten und die wahren, also die proletarischen Helden die Bühne der Gegenwart betreten zu lassen. Tatsächlich erklärte Mao selbst in seiner

Interpretation zu diesem Gedicht, dass "die letzten drei Zeilen auf das Proletariat anspielen."⁷⁵ In Jensens Vorlage kommt lediglich ein chinesischer Kaiser vor, nämlich Dschingis Khan (成吉思汗). Nach Tatlow liegt der Grund darin, dass Dschingis Khan sicherlich der einzige den Europäern bekannte Herrscher war. Jensen beabsichtigte "eine einem Europäer leicht verständliche Übersetzung."⁷⁶ Tatlows Analyse ist aber nur zum Teil stichhaltig, denn außer "Dschingis Khan" kommen im Original die Namen der anderen vier Kaiser in der Kurzform vor. Solche Kurzformen waren Jensen wahrscheinlich unbekannt, und so wusste er wahrscheinlich nicht, dass sie jeweils einen bestimmten Kaiser vertreten und übersetzt sie deshalb allgemein mit "Könige der Tsch'in und der Han, . . . Und die Tang und die Sung." Einen weiteren Fehler hat Brecht ebenfalls direkt von Jensen übernommen, und zwar den Ausdruck "一代天骄" (eigentlich: "eines Zeitalters Himmelsstolz") in der zwanzigsten Zeile, den er mit "einzige[r] Sohn einer Dynastie" übersetzt. Jensens irreführende Vorlage trug dazu bei, dass Brechts Übersetzung weder inhaltlich noch formal dem chinesischen Original entspricht. Im Vergleich zu Arthur Waley,⁷⁷ einem Sinologen und Dichter, war Jensen von Beruf Arzt. Aufgrund seines mangelhaften Verständnisses finden sich in der Vorlage Jensens viele Abweichungen vom Original. Eine wortgetreue Übertragung des chinesischen Originals war für Brecht nicht verfügbar. Wenn Brecht viele Fehler einfach aus Jensens Vorlage übernahm, spielte die Vorlage dabei sicherlich eine wichtige Rolle. Kein anderes Gedicht Maos ist so bekannt und so oft übersetzt worden wie "Schnee."

Trotz der Abweichungen von einigen Zeilen des Originals wird der Gedankengang des Gedichts in Jensens Übersetzung im Wesentlichen beibehalten, wodurch auch der ursprüngliche Hauptinhalt des Originals sichtbar bleibt. Im Gegensatz dazu hat Brecht die ursprüngliche Intention umgeändert. Wie schon der Titel "Gedanken bei einem Flug über die Große Mauer" ankündigt, macht sich das lyrische Ich Gedanken bei einem Flug, es beschreibt und beobachtet aus einem Flugzeug alles "unter mir," während das lyrische Ich im Original einen Berg im Freien besteigt und die nördliche Landschaft beim ersten großen Schneefall in Shanbei bewundert. Durch die Personifikation der Ströme, Berge und nördlichen Landschaft bringt das lyrische Ich in Maos Text seinen Ehrgeiz und seine Offenherzigkeit zum Ausdruck. Denn im Februar 1936, als Mao sein Gedicht schrieb, war die Rote Armee gerade in Shanbei angekommen. Sie war in eine schwierige Lage geraten: einerseits wurde sie von der Weißen Armee Chiang Kai-Sheks angegriffen, andererseits musste sie den Widerstandskrieg gegen die japanische Aggression führen. In dieser kritischen Situation wollte Mao durch das Gedicht seinen revolutionären Ehrgeiz sowie seine Entschlossenheit, die Feinde zu besiegen, unter Beweis stellen. Die nördliche Landschaft (einschließlich der Großen Mauer) als Symbol Chinas und der Gelbe Fluss als die Mutter Chinas beziehen sich weniger auf eine materielle Landschaft, sondern vielmehr auf eine Landschaft im Kopf des lyrischen Ichs.

Aufgrund der Annahme, dass Mao das Gedicht auf dem ersten Flug über die Große Mauer verfasst habe,⁷⁸ hat Brecht die Intention des Originals verändert. Bei der Übertragung nahm sich Brecht, seinem Selbstverständnis entsprechend, sehr viel Freiheit, und man kann in ihr seinen eigenen Rhythmus und Tonfall hören. Es konnte Brecht nicht darum gehen, "ein Gedicht getreu wiedergeben zu wollen, das er nicht gekannt hat."⁷⁹ Er selbst erklärt in seinem Aufsatz "Die Übersetzbarkeit von Gedichten," dass Gedichte bei der Übertragung in eine andere Sprache meist dadurch am stärksten beschädigt werden, dass man zu viel zu übertragen sucht. "Man sollte sich vielleicht mit der Übertragung der Gedanken und der Haltung des Dichters begnügen. Was im Rhythmus des Originals ein Element der Haltung des Schreibenden ist, sollte man zu übertragen suchen, nicht mehr davon."⁸⁰ Nach Brecht ist die "Übertragung der Gedanken und der Haltung des Dichters" von großer Bedeutung. Daher ist bei der Übertragung von Maos Gedicht "Schnee" die revolutionäre Haltung des Dichters eindeutig bemerkbar.

Bemerkenswert ist zudem, dass Brechts seine Hochschätzung für Mao Tse-tung und dessen Werke im alltäglichen Leben deutlich zu erkennen gab. Im Jahr vor seinem Tod ließ Brecht den chinesischen Übersetzer und Kalligraphen Yuan Miaozi (袁苗子) eine Abschrift von "Schnee" erstellen und hängte sie in seinem Arbeitszimmer auf.⁸¹ Am 31. August 1955 schrieb Brecht Yuan einen Brief, um ihm zu danken: "Haben Sie vielen Dank für das Aufschreiben des Mao-Tse-tung-Gedichts. Ich habe es an die Wand gehängt."⁸² In seinen letzten Jahren schätzte Brecht Maos Gedanken zur revolutionären Dialektik hoch ein und betrachtete ihn als einen großen Dialektiker unter den führenden Sozialisten. Brechts Gedicht "1954, Erste Hälfte" bezieht sich ausdrücklich auf Maos Schrift *Über den Widerspruch*.⁸³ Angeregt von dieser Schrift schrieb Brecht seinen Aufsatz über "Dialektisches Theater."⁸⁴ Über die Anregung und den Nutzen von Mao Tse-tungs Text berichtete Brecht im Brief an Yuan Miaozi: "Wir haben im Theater großen Nutzen von Mao Tse-tungs Schrift über den Widerspruch."⁸⁵ Während dieser Zeit hängte sich Brecht ein Foto Mao Tse-tungs über seinen Schreibtisch.⁸⁶

Darüber hinaus faszinierte Rotchina unter Führung Mao Tse-tungs Brecht so sehr, dass er erwog, sich ins chinesische Exil zu begeben. Am 3. Juli 1952 kamen Hanns und Louise Eisler bei Brecht in Buckow zu Besuch. Sie überarbeiteten den Text "Kulturelle Betreuung. Vorschläge von Brecht und Eisler für die II. Parteikonferenz des SED" für eine Zeitungsveröffentlichung und sprachen über ein Exil in China, wozu Brechts Assistentin Käthe Rüllicke notierte: Thema der Abendspaziergänge ist "noch immer das chinesische Exil."⁸⁷ In den 1950er Jahren schrieb Brecht noch das kurze Gedicht "Gleichklang," in dem er in symbolischem und konzentriertem Stil den Gedanken zum Ausdruck brachte, nach China auszuwandern: "Bidi in Peking / im Allgäu Bie / Guten, sagt er / Morgen,

sagt sie.”⁸⁸ Möglicherweise entstand die Idee eines Exils in China, weil es Brecht damals in der DDR schlecht genug ging, um sich in die weite Ferne zu wünschen,⁸⁹ aber sicher zeigte Brecht große Begeisterung und starkes Interesse am real-politischen Rotchina unter der Führung Mao Tse-tungs.

Der Revolutionär Mao schrieb das Gedicht “Schnee,” das sich sowohl auf seine politische Gegenwart als auch auf die dichterische Tradition Chinas bezog. Ausgehend von Jensens Übersetzung verfasste Brecht ein eigenes Gedicht, das uns nicht zum chinesischen Original zurückführt. Anstatt “Schnee” oder “Chinesische Ode” als Titel zu benutzen, gab Brecht seiner Übertragung den Titel “Gedanken bei einem Flug über die Große Mauer.” Bei Jensen stimmen die letzten drei Zeilen unabsichtlich mit dem Original nicht überein, doch gerade diese Gedanken stießen bei Brecht auf Resonanz, denn er wollte mit diesem Gedicht Kritik an den “großen Herren” seiner Zeit ausüben. Obwohl eine andere Intention als die des Originals verfolgend, wird die revolutionäre Haltung Brechts sowie seine große Begeisterung für Mao offenkundig. Diese Haltung wird durch das Gedicht “Die andere Seite,” in dem Brecht Mao in wenigen, einfachen Versen als einen dialektischen und weisen Kommunisten porträtierte, noch unterstrichen: Wie Laotse in “Legende von der Entstehung des Buches Taoteking” brachten die chinesischen Kommunisten unter Mao Tse-tung trotz der schwierigen Lage das Nützliche “unter der Bevölkerung in Umlauf.”

Mao Tse-tung versuchte, die dichterische Tradition Chinas fortzusetzen, um das politische Jetzt Chinas darzustellen. Zu dieser Zeit war die Kunst für ihn nicht nur Instrument für die politische Propaganda, sondern auch ein eigenständiges Ausdrucksmittel: Sie darf nicht von der Politik daran gehindert werden, zu entwerfen, zu experimentieren und Neues zu versuchen.⁹⁰ Diese Haltung zur Kunst stieß bei Brecht, der in der jungen DDR nicht so frei experimentieren konnte, wie er wollte, sicherlich auf Resonanz. Aufzeichnungen in seinem Arbeitsjournal zufolge interpretierte Brecht Maos Gedicht “Schnee” als Signal des “Sieges der chinesischen Kommunisten, der das Gesicht der Welt vollständig ändert”⁹¹ und sah in der “Erhebung des Fernen Ostens”⁹² den potentiellen Auslöser einer erneuten “Renaissance der Künste.”⁹³

Anmerkungen

¹ Zur Ästhetik Brechts. Fortsetzung eines Gespräches über Brecht und Marxismus, hrsg. von Werner Hecht (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1986), 8.

² Vgl. die Anmerkung 1 von Klaus Völker in Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke in 20 Bänden. Prosa 2*, Bd. 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), keine Seitenzahl.

³ Antony Tatlow, *The Mask of Evil: Brecht's Response to the Poetry, Theatre and Thought of China and Japan. A Comparative and Critical Evaluation* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1977), 18.

⁴ Jürgen Link, "Die andere Seite," in *Das neue China: Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Chinesische Freundschaft*, Sondernummer (Mainz: 15. November 1976), 16.

⁵ Hans Bunge, *Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht: Hanns Eisler im Gespräch* (München: Rogner & Bernhard, 1970), 149.

⁶ Vgl. Sibylle Bergemann, *Chausseestrasse 125: Die Wohnungen von Bertolt Brecht und Helene Weigel in Berlin Mitte* (Berlin: Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste, 2000), 41.

⁷ *BFA* 15, 208–9.

⁸ Ebd., 438.

⁹ 1934 ist das achte Jahr des Bürgerkriegs in China. Der Zweite Bürgerkrieg Chinas zwischen den Kommunisten (KPCh) unter Mao Tse-tung und Nationalisten (KMT) unter Chiang Kai-Shek beginnt 1927 und endet 1937 mit dem Zwischenfall von Xi'an. 1927 beginnt der Feldzug der Truppen Chiang Kai-Sheks gegen die Kommunisten zur Einigung Chinas. Die KPCh wird durch den Langer Marsch nach Shaanxi gedrängt.

¹⁰ Vgl. *BFA* 15, 438.

¹¹ Bertolt Brecht, *Die Gedichte von Bertolt Brecht in einem Band* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 958. Das Gedicht "Die andere Seite" (1951) steht in der *BFA* nicht, dort gibt es nur die erste Fassung "Aus allem etwas machen" (1949). Zwischen beiden Fassungen gibt es kleine Unterschiede, deshalb habe ich das Gedicht "Die andere Seite" (1951) aus dem Buch *Die Gedichte von Bertolt Brecht in einem Band* zitiert.

¹² Dieser Zeitungsausschnitt befindet sich im Nachlass Brechts, aber ohne Quellenangabe. Vgl. *BFA* 15, 438.

¹³ Vgl. Harrison E. Salisbury, *Der lange Marsch*, übers. aus dem Amerikanischen von Elke vom Scheidt (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985), 7.

¹⁴ Vgl. Dick Wilson, *Mao Tse-tungs Langer Marsch 1935* (Wiesbaden: F. A. Brockhaus, 1974), 7.

¹⁵ Vgl. Edgar Snow, *Roter Stern über China* (Frankfurt am Main: Forscher, 1975), 9–11. Edgar Snow hatte bereits sieben Jahre als Journalist in China verbracht, als er im Juni 1936 seine Reise in das von den nationalistischen Truppen blockierte "rote Gebiet" im Nordosten Chinas antrat. Er verbrachte dort vier Monate, während derer er Mao Tse-tungs autobiografischen Bericht über seinen Lebensweg als Revolutionär niederschrieb. Snow kehrte im Oktober 1936 in die Vereinigten Staaten zurück, veröffentlichte seine aufsehenerregenden Artikel in der Presse und schloss das Manuskript zu seinem Buch *Roter Stern über China* im Juli 1937 ab. Vgl. Snow, *Roter Stern über China*, 73, 116–17 und 269.

¹⁶ Vgl. Snow, *Roter Stern über China*, 92–93.

¹⁷ Vgl. ebd., 92–93 und 269.

¹⁸ Vgl. ebd., 116 und 269.

¹⁹ Vgl. Edgar Snow, *Mao Tse-tung et al. Fundamental Laws of the Chinese Soviet Republic* (London: Martin Lawrence Ltd., 1934). Ders.: *Mao Tse-tung, Red China:*

President Mao Reports on the Progress of the Chinese Soviet Republic (London: Martin Lawrence Ltd., 1934).

²⁰ Snow, *Roter Stern über China*, 116 und 269.

²¹ BFA 15, 209.

²² Yuan Tan, *Der Chinese in der deutschen Literatur unter besonderer Berücksichtigung chinesischer Figuren in den Werken von Schiller, Döblin und Brecht* (Göttingen: Cuvillier Verlag, 2007), 168.

²³ “Konfutse fälschte einen alten, patriotischen Geschichtskalender. Er veränderte nur gewisse Wörter. Wenn es hieß, ‘Der Herrscher von Kun ließ den Philosophen Wan töten, weil er das und das gesagt hatte,’ setzte Konfutse statt töten ‘ermorden.’ Hieß es, der Tyrann soundso sei durch ein Attentat umgekommen, setzte er ‘hingerichtet worden.’ Dadurch brach Konfutse einer neuen Beurteilung der Geschichte Bahn” (BFA 22, 81).

²⁴ Vgl. BFA 22, 81–82.

²⁵ Vgl. Tan, *Der Chinese in der deutschen Literatur*, 180.

²⁶ Vgl. BFA 23, 339.

²⁷ Werner Hecht, *Brecht Chronik, 1898–1956* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 1117 und 1128.

²⁸ Vgl. Mao Tse-Tung, *Über den Widerspruch* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1958), S.4.

²⁹ Vgl. Link, “Die andere Seite,” 16.

³⁰ “Massenlinie” (群众路线): eine von der KPCh unter der Führung Mao Tse-Tungs beschlossene dialektische Führungsmethode. Die richtige Führung sei der Volksmasse zu entnehmen und müsse an sie zurückgehen. Dieses Konzept sicherte der KPCh in den 1940er Jahren eine große Anhängerschaft. (Im Gegensatz dazu steht, aus maoistischer Sicht, die “Massenfeindschaft” Chiang Kai-Sheks.) Über die “Massenlinie” vertritt Mao die Ansicht: “Das Volk und nur das Volk ist die Kraft, die Weltgeschichte macht.” Laut Mao sind die Massen die wahren Protagonisten der Geschichte. Brecht vertritt eine ähnliche Ansicht. Er schreibt in seinem Text über “Volkstümllichkeit und Realismus”: “Wir haben ein Volk vor Augen, das Geschichte macht, das die Welt und sich selbst verändert.” Vgl. *Das Rote Buch. Worte des Vorsitzenden Mao Tse-tung*, hrsg. von Tilemann Grimm (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Bücherei, 1967), 63. Vgl. BFA 22, 408.

³¹ Vgl. Link, “Die andere Seite,” 16.

³² In China ist das Gedicht unter dem Namen “沁园春·雪” (“Qinyuanchun-Schnee”) bekannt.

³³ Antony Tatlow ist der Meinung, dass Maos Gedicht im August 1945 als politische Geste, kurz vor der wichtigen Konferenz mit Chiang Kai-Shek, veröffentlicht wurde, was aber nicht korrekt ist. Vgl. Antony Tatlow, *Brechts Chinesische Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), 149; vgl. *Brecht Handbuch, Bd. 2: Gedichte*, hrsg. von Jan Knopf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), 312.

³⁴ Klaus Schuhmann, *Der Lyriker Bertolt Brecht 1913–1933*. (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1964), 211.

³⁵ Vgl. Link, “Die andere Seite,” 16.

³⁶ BFA 27, 293.

³⁷ Ebd., 294.

³⁸ Vgl. ebd., 298.

³⁹ Bertolt Brecht, *Versuche*, Heft 10 (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1950). Vgl. *Brecht Handbuch* 2, 304–5.

⁴⁰ Ebd.

⁴¹ Ebd., 299.

⁴² Vgl. *Brecht Handbuch* 2, 311.

⁴³ Paula Hanssen, *Elisabeth Hauptmann. Brecht's Silent Collaborator* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995), 95.

⁴⁴ BFA 11, 388.

⁴⁵ Fritz Jensen, *China Siegt* (Berlin: Dietz, 1950), 131. Für seine zweite Fassung hat Jensen diese Anmerkung dahingehend umgeändert, dass Mao nun 1945 nach Tschungking flog, „um über die Möglichkeit der Vermeidung eines Bürgerkriegs und die Bildung einer Koalitionsregierung zu verhandeln“ (vgl. Fritz Jensen, *Opfer und Sieger* [Berlin: Dietz, 1955], 94).

⁴⁶ Tatlow, *Brechts Chinesische Gedichte*, 149.

⁴⁷ *Brecht Handbuch* 2, 312.

⁴⁸ Shanbei, hauptsächlich sind die Städte Yulin und Yan'an gemeint. Sie befinden sich im Norden der Provinz Shaanxi. Während der Kriegsjahre gegen die Japaner und während des Bürgerkriegs war Shanbei Operationsbasis der Kommunistischen Armee Chinas und galt als „Revolutionsgebiet“ Chinas.

⁴⁹ „Ci-Gedicht“ (词): auch als „Ci-Dichtung“ bezeichnet, eine chinesische Lyrik-Gattung, die als Variation der Gedichtform „Tangshi“ (唐诗; Tang-Gedicht) aus der Tang-Zeit gilt. Das „Ci-Gedicht“ entsteht in der Han-Zeit, erlebt eine selbständige Entwicklung in der Tang-Zeit und erreicht in der Song-Zeit seinen Höhepunkt. Es wird als die größte Errungenschaft der Literatur der Song-Zeit bezeichnet. Anders als die Strukturen und Formen des „Tangshi“ sind die des „Ci-Gedichts“ komplizierter. Es existieren unterschiedliche Varianten mit unterschiedlich streng vorgeschriebenen Schriftzeichenzahlen, Zeilen, Satzlängen, Rhythmen und Reimen. Die Melodie eines „Ci-Gedichts“ heißt „Ci-Diao“ (词调) oder „Ci-Pai“ (词牌), wobei es einstrophige, zweistrophige sowie mehrstrophige „Ci“ gibt. Ein wichtiges Merkmal, das die „Ci“ von den „Shi“ unterscheidet, ist die unterschiedliche Länge der einzelnen Verse einer Strophe sowie die unterschiedliche Verteilung der Reime. Vgl. *Chinesische Literaturgeschichte*, hrsg. von Reinhard Emmerich (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), 201–2.

⁵⁰ Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong Shuxin Xuanji* (Ausgewählte Briefe von Mao Zedong) (Beijing: Renmin Verlag, 1983), 263. Chinesisches Original: „初到陕北看见大雪时, 填过一首词“ (Übersetzung X.S.)

⁵¹ „Qinyuanchun“ (沁园春) ist der Name des Cipai (词牌), die Bezeichnung der Formen des „Ci-Gedichts.“ Es gibt insgesamt über tausend Arten von Cipai. „Schnee“ (雪) ist der Titel des Ci.

⁵² Mao Tse-tung am 21. Dezember 1958. Chinesisches Original: „雪, 反封建主义, 批判二千年封建主义的一个反动侧面。文采、风骚、大雕, 只能如是, 须知这

是写诗啊!难道可以谩骂这一些人们吗?别的解释是错的。末三句, 是指无产阶级”(Übersetzung X.S.).

⁵³ Vgl. Shuren Wang, “Mao Zedong ‘Qinyuanchun·Xue’ Gongkai Fabiao Shimo” (“Die Erscheinungsgeschichte von Mao Zedongs ‘Qinyuanchun·Xue’”), in *Dangshi Zongheng* (Über die Geschichte der Partei), Nr. 7 (2008), 7. Hier zitiert nach Jie Shi, *Bulaixite Zuopin zhong de Zhongguo Wenhua Yuansu* (Chinesische kulturelle Elemente in Brechts Gedichten), Philosophische Dissertation (Shanghai: Shanghai Fremdsprachenuniversität, 2010), 74. Chinesisches Original: “旧体诗词太重格律, 束缚人的灵性, 不宜提倡” (Übersetzung X.S.).

⁵⁴ BFA 11, 390.

⁵⁵ Jensen, *China Siegt*, 130–31.

⁵⁶ Jensen, *Opfer und Sieger*, 94–95.

⁵⁷ Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong Shici* (Mao Zedong Gedichte), hrsg. von Gong Mu (Changchun: Changchun Verlag, 1999), 124.

⁵⁸ Jensen, *China Siegt*, 130–31.

⁵⁹ BFA 11, 265–66.

⁶⁰ Beide Ausgaben der *Versuche* (Frankfurt am Main 1950 und [Ost-] Berlin 1951) weisen die Strophentrennung auf. Vgl. BFA 11, 388.

⁶¹ Jensen, *China Siegt*, 130.

⁶² Vgl. BFA 11, 388.

⁶³ Vgl. Hanssen, *Elisabeth Hauptmann. Brecht's Silent Collaborator*, 95.

⁶⁴ Vgl. Shi, *Bulaixite Zuopin zhong de Zhongguo Wenhua Yuansu* (Chinesische kulturelle Elemente in Brechts Gedichten), 78.

⁶⁵ Vgl. BFA 27, 293; vgl. BFA 11, 388.

⁶⁶ Hervorhebung X.S.

⁶⁷ Hervorhebungen X.S.

⁶⁸ Hervorhebung X.S.

⁶⁹ Tatlow, *Brechts Chinesische Gedichte*, 149.

⁷⁰ Mao Tse-tung, *37 Gedichte*, übers. und erl. von Joachim Schickel (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1967), 26.

⁷¹ Jensen, *China Siegt*, 131.

⁷² BFA 11, 266.

⁷³ Jensen, *Opfer und Sieger*, 95.

⁷⁴ Vgl. Shi, *Bulaixite Zuopin zhong de Zhongguo Wenhua Yuansu* (Chinesische kulturelle Elemente in Brechts Gedichten), 79.

⁷⁵ Mao Tse-tung am 21. Dezember 1958. Chinesisches Original: “末三句, 是指无产阶级”(Übersetzung X.S.).

⁷⁶ Vgl. Tatlow, *Brechts Chinesische Gedichte*, 151 und 154.

⁷⁷ Einige der von Brecht übertragenen chinesischen Gedichte basierten auf den englischen Übersetzungen von Arthur Waley, deren Qualität er 1938 sehr hoch einschätzte. Vgl. BFA 11, 387–88.

⁷⁸ BFA 27, 293.

⁷⁹ Tatlow, *Brechts Chinesische Gedichte*, 153.

⁸⁰ BFA 20, 132.

⁸¹ Vgl. Bergemann, *Chausseestrasse 125*, 22; vgl. *Brecht-Handbuch. Gedichte*, 311.

⁸² BFA 30, 370.

⁸³ Siehe BFA 15, 281.

⁸⁴ Vgl. Ding, "Bulaixite he Zhongguo Wenhua" ("Brecht und die chinesische Kultur"), 8.

⁸⁵ BFA 30, 371.

⁸⁶ Vgl. Link, "Die andere Seite," 16.

⁸⁷ Hecht, *Brecht Chronik, 1898–1956*, 1021.

⁸⁸ "Bidi" war Brechts Spitzname unter seinen Freunden während seiner Jugend in Augsburg. "Bie" war der Spitzname seiner ersten Freundin Paula Banholzer. Brecht stellt sich im Gedicht vor, seine letzten Lebensjahre in Peking zu verbringen. China ist für ihn das Land der revolutionären Morgenröte und vertritt die neue Gesellschaft. Die Drehung der Erde von "Morgenland" zu "Abendland" symbolisiert den Fortschritt der Geschichte. (Vgl. Link, "Die andere Seite," 16–17).

⁸⁹ Vgl. Hartwin Gromes, "Bertolt Brechts Chinoiserien: Von der 'Maßnahme' bis zu 'Der gute Mensch von Sezuan,'" in *Literarische Orte—Orte der Literatur*, hrsg. von Hans-Herbert Wintgens und Gerard Oppermann (Hildesheim: Universitätsverlag Hildesheim, 2005), 165.

⁹⁰ Vgl. Mao Zedong, "Reden bei der Aussprache in Yan'an über Literatur und Kunst," in ders., *Ausgewählte Werke Band III* (Beijing: Renmin Verlag, 1991), 860–61.

⁹¹ BFA 27, 298.

⁹² Ebd., 293.

⁹³ Ebd.

Book Reviews

Ela E. Gezen. *Brecht, Turkish Theater, and Turkish-German Literature: Reception, Adaptation, and Innovation after 1960*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2018. xiii + 159 pages.

Brecht's works have been discussed in many international contexts; the *Brecht Yearbook* alone published two issues on *Brecht in Asia and Africa* (1989) and *Brecht in/and Asia* (2011). Brecht's reception in Turkey, however, has received little attention so far. Only one dissertation, Albert Nekimken's *Brecht in Turkey, 1955–1977* (1998), focuses on Brecht's impact on Turkish dramatists and Turkish revolutionary theater. This dearth of research on Brecht's reception in Turkey may be particularly surprising since the Turkish-German community represents the largest minority in Germany and since Brecht's plays and theatrical theories played an important role in left-wing artistic movements in Turkey.

Ela Gezen's book now fills this important lacuna. Following an introduction, her monograph is divided into three chapters. The first chapter offers a historical overview of Brecht's reception in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s, between Turkey's first military coup in 1960 and its third one in 1980. The following two chapters focus on two Turkish-German artists whose work is strongly influenced by Brecht: Aras Ören and Emine Sevgi Özdamar.

The first chapter, "Intersections of Politics and Aesthetics: Bertolt Brecht in the Turkish Context," concentrates on cultural relations between Germany and Turkey as they relate to Brecht. Transnational cultural practices are never unidirectional (15); and while many Turkish citizens emigrated to Germany for economic or political reasons beginning in the 1960s, in an earlier period, during World War II, Turkey took in German and Jewish intellectuals: Leo Spitzer, Ernst Reuter, and Erich Auerbach are famous examples. Brecht could have traveled through Turkey as well, as he expressed in a 1941 letter from his Helsinki exile to Hanns Eisler, but the route through Turkey never materialized. Brechtian theater came to Turkey after the 1960 military coup, when a new constitution established a parliamentary democracy in Turkey and allowed freedom of expression. Marxist literature was translated into Turkish and new socialist journals emerged—such as *Yön*, *Ant*, and the arts and theater journal *Oyun* and its successor *Tiyatro*. New theater ensembles were established in the 1960s and theater departments were founded at major Turkish universities, for example, the

Ankara University Theater Institute (19). Brecht's plays were increasingly performed, although not without heated debate. We learn in detail about the significance of a "Brecht incident" in 1964, when a performance of *The Good Person of Szechwan* at Istanbul's Dram Tiyatro was interrupted by protests, primarily by religious students of *Imam Hatip Schools* that train prayer leaders and preachers. A committee later decided that Brecht's play did not contain communist propaganda, and the performance could continue. Although the event reflects the beginnings of anti-communist sentiment in Turkey, it is widely viewed as a victory for progressives. Brechtian dramatists could flourish in Turkey, the most prominent being Genco Erkal, Haldun Taner, Sermet Çagan, and Vasif Öngören. Genco Erkal, a Turkish actor and dramatist, co-founded the Brechtian ensemble Dostlar Tiyatrosu; as director, he also staged *The Ballad of Ali Keshan* by the Turkish playwright Haldun Taner. *Keşanlı Ali Destanı* has been dubbed the Turkish *Threepenny Opera*, and it toured West Germany in 1966. Reinhold Grimm presented a close reading of this play in his book *Die Erweiterung des Kontinents: Brechts "Dreigroschenoper" in Nigeria und der Türkei (The Expansion of the Continent: Brecht's "Threepenny Opera" in Nigeria and Turkey*, 2007). Genco Erkal also directed plays by Vasif Öngören, a Turkish author and left-wing activist who spent two years in a Turkish prison because of his political convictions. Öngören founded the theatrical ensembles Birlik Sahnesi (solidarity stage) in Ankara and Istanbul and later the Kollektiv-Theater in West Berlin. He was an important artistic figure for Aras Ören and for Emine Sevgi Özdamar who acted in several of Öngören's plays and in his Brecht productions. Other important points of contact between German and Turkish Brechtian theater practitioners include the student theater festivals in Erlangen and Istanbul and the Brecht-Dialog in East Berlin.

The second chapter, "Didactic Realism: Aras Ören and Working-Class Culture," turns to a Turkish-German author and actor who was influenced by Brecht and by Nazım Hikmet. Born in 1939, Aras Ören began his acting career in Istanbul, West Berlin, and Frankfurt am Main in the 1960s, and together with his friend Öngören, he regularly attended stage rehearsals at the Berliner Ensemble between 1962 and 1966. He adapted several Brecht plays for the Turkish stage and, in 1969, settled permanently in West Berlin. His association with *Die rote Nelke (The Red Carnation)*, a progressive, anti-fascist group of artists, and his choice of Rotbuch Verlag, a socialist publishing house, prove his left-wing, working-class leanings. Ören wrote most of his works first in Turkish, and H. Achmed Schmiede and Johannes Schenk translated them into German in collaboration with the author. Ören's literature documents the experience of Turkish immigrants and introduces them as individuals to the German public (76). Gezen's analysis focuses on two of Ören's works: *Was will Niyazi in der Naunynstraße? (What's Niyazi Looking for in Naunyn Street?)* and *Lehrstück für türkische Arbeiter (Learning-Play for Turkish Workers)*.

Was will Niyazi in der Naunynstraße? (1973) is the first part of Ören's poetic Berlin trilogy that also includes *Der kurze Traum aus Kagithane* (*The Short Dream from Kagithane*, 1974) and *Die Fremde ist auch ein Haus* (*A Foreign Place Is also a House*, 1980). It presents a genealogy of workers, both Turkish and German, who are inhabitants of Naunynstraße in Berlin's working-class district Kreuzberg. Brechtian devices include montage, *Verfremdung*, fragmentation, non-linear structures, summarizing subheadings, and *analepses*. Ören poetically anthropomorphizes Naunynstraße, a street that is named after a former mayor of Berlin and has gone through many transformations in the twentieth century because of its location near the Berlin Wall and its working-class and multi-ethnic population. By emphasizing the friendship between Niyazi and Horst Schmidt, two workers who attend a Marxist night school, the book promotes solidarity between Turkish and German workers against oppression.

Ören's *Lehrstück für türkische Arbeiter* is an unpublished manuscript, available at the Aras-Ören-Archiv at Berlin's Academy of the Arts. The Turkish Workers' Theater Berlin performed the play in May 1971 at the Technical University cafeteria. The word "Lehrstück" refers to Brecht's early plays and dramatic theory, and Ören uses Brechtian dramaturgical techniques—chorus, prolog, epilog—to establish his Marxist critique of society and to call for a united proletariat.

Chapter three, "Staged Pasts: Emine Sevgi Özdamar's Dramatic Aesthetic," discusses an artist who has spoken openly about Brecht's influence on her work. Born in 1946, Emine Sevgi Özdamar studied theater at the renowned Language and Culture Center in Istanbul from 1967 until 1970 and settled in Germany in 1976. Unlike Ören, she writes primarily in German. From 1976 until 1978, Özdamar, a multi-faceted actress, dramatist, and novelist, worked as director's assistant at East Berlin's Volksbühne, where she collaborated with Benno Besson, Matthias Langhoff, Heiner Müller, and Manfred Karge, specifically to learn Brechtian theater practice. Özdamar chronicles the early decades of her life in three autobiographical novels that were combined in 2006 under the title *Sonne auf halbem Weg* (*The Sun at the Halfway-Point*), the Istanbul-Berlin trilogy. *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* (*Life Is a Caravanserai*, 1992) covers her childhood years in Turkey. *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (*The Bridge of the Golden Horn*, 1998) juxtaposes Berlin and Istanbul, as we learn about her first years in Berlin—her factory work, her theater experiences, and her involvement in the student movement—as well as her return to Istanbul and her voyage to Hakkari in Eastern Turkey. *Seltsame Sterne starren zur Erde* (*Strange Stars Stare at the Earth*, 2003) describes her theatrical work in East Berlin in the 1970s, when she lived in West Berlin and commuted between the two sectors of the city.

Gezen concentrates on the second and third volumes, *Die Brücke* and *Seltsame Sterne*. She describes Özdamar's work not only as transnational

but rather as transtheatrical. The transtheatrical approach includes various geographical locations—Ankara, Istanbul, East Berlin's Volksbühne, the Schauspielhaus in Bochum (West Germany)—and highlights particularly the aesthetic dimension. Brecht's theater emerges as the link between these different geopolitical contexts (84). In her analysis of the two novels, Gezen emphasizes Özdamar's writing process as a form of Brechtian theatrical staging, which is visible in her use of montage, the supreme importance of music, in film techniques, and the inclusion of different temporalities.

Özdamar's Turkish citizenship allowed her the privilege of moving easily between both parts of Berlin during the Cold War, and in her analysis of Özdamar's transnational topography in *Seltsame Sterne*, Gezen emphasizes the interplay of three cities: East Berlin, West Berlin, and Istanbul. Özdamar's life in Berlin before 1989, when she worked in East Berlin and lived in West Berlin, is continually connected to her memories of Istanbul. Looking at her earlier novel *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*, one might add a fourth city since, like Berlin, Özdamar perceives Istanbul as a divided city, separated into a European and an Asian part. In *Die Brücke*, Özdamar's world in Istanbul is also a split one: She lives on the Asian side of Istanbul with her parents and takes a daily boat to the city's European side for her theater studies, after which she returns to Asia at night. In *Seltsame Sterne* the Berlin Wall takes on the role that the Bosphorus plays in *Die Brücke*. One could speak of four cities (Asian and European Istanbul, East and West Berlin) rather than three, although in the Cold War context the East–West division in Berlin predominates.

Gezen uncovers fascinating connections between different Turkish-German Brechtian artists. Özdamar's and Öngören's work intersected frequently. Öngören was the Turkish Brechtian left-wing dramatist who introduced her to the Berliner Ensemble in the 1960s, and Özdamar immortalized him in her work. In *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*, Öngören is the hostel warden in Berlin; in the book's Turkish section, the "politische Hurenstück" ("political whore's play"), as Özdamar calls it, refers to his successful play *How Can Asiye Be Saved?*; and the closing of Öngören's theater in Turkey during a performance of *Asiye* and his arrest and that of other ensemble members also appear in *Die Brücke* (89–90).

Gezen's rich and informative book provides deep insights into Turkish-German cultural history, as seen through the lens of Bertolt Brecht. We learn much about Brecht's reception in Turkey, about the forms in which Brecht's aesthetics shaped Turkish-German artists and about the ways in which they adjusted his aesthetics to their situation in Germany. The relationship is a multidirectional one: Turkish-German artists not only adopted Brecht, they adapted him (2). Gezen's study is substantiated by her inclusion of archival sources, primarily photos and documents from the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv and the recently founded Aras-Ören-Archiv, and by her profound knowledge of multiple languages—English, German, and Turkish. In her

conclusion, Gezen hints at further possibilities of study, such as a lively Turkish-German art scene in Berlin or Shermin Langhoff's work as initiator of postmigrant theater at the Gorki Theater. One might also include works by other well-known Turkish-German authors like Feridun Zaimoglu who may not be as directly influenced by Brecht as Ören or Özdamar were, but in whose work traces of a connection to Brecht are clearly visible. Such an invitation to further research is a clear strength of this book that can pave the path for new directions in German Studies and for a more global understanding of Brecht's aesthetics.

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Marvin Carlson. *Shattering Hamlet's Mirror: Theatre and Reality*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016. 145 pages.

It is an interesting experiment to read *Shattering Hamlet's Mirror* side-by-side with Carlson's important earlier *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (1996), published twenty years before. Both trace crucial watersheds regarding the status of theater and performance; the earlier book marked the history of the performative turn that radically distinguished performance as an intervention into reality in contrast to the theater that depended on the conjuring of an illusion separate from such reality. This divide in its various well-established iterations of text and performance, the dramatic and post-dramatic, or the actor versus the performer, continues to influence current theatrical debates and ultimately impacts our conceptions of reality. In turn, what is maybe most remarkable about the later book, *Shattering Hamlet's Mirror*, is the fact that it is governed by a willingness to undermine these distinctions and instead stresses the continuities across history in theater's struggle with the real; or, as Marvin Carlson formulates it with the help of Bert States, it explores the dynamic of "devouring the real in its realest forms" (15). On a very fundamental level then, the book posits the question of how reality enters the stage while also focusing on theater's materiality as uniquely able to accommodate real objects in its processes of production (104). It is a further credit to Carlson's unwavering intuition for the latest developments in theatrical expression that he has embarked on an analysis of (mostly) Western theater's hunger for the real in its various forms, since reality and realism—long shunned as outmoded in academic discourse—have returned with a fresh urgency to the current theatrical debates. Thomas Ostermeier's call for a "new realism" at the beginning of his tenure as the Artistic Director of Berlin's Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz in 1999 speaks to this fact as much as Swiss director Milo Rau publishing his aesthetic treatise *Global Realism* (2018) on the occasion of his taking over the Nederlands Toneel Ghent. In the US context, the hyperrealist aesthetic of

Richard Nelson's *The Apple Family Plays* (2010–13) and the trilogy *The Gabriels* (2016) offer a further case in point. The reason for such a preoccupation with the real is, first of all, political: it is a response to the much-touted crisis of democracy in the face of neoliberal globalization strategies, as the work by Ostermeier, Rau, and Nelson can attest to. Interrelated is the transformation of reality into the sphere of the virtual real as generated by digital technology. That is to say, the possibilities of cultural production in the virtual sphere have crucial intermedial effects that reshape the current understanding of theater as an aesthetic medium. Time, then, to take another look at theater and reality.

Shattering Hamlet's Mirror is a neatly structured “five-act” piece that, in each chapter, takes the reader through a different part of the theatrical machinery. It begins by analyzing the words spoken in theatre and then moves on to explore how the grounding of bodies, space, props, and spectators in reality shapes, transforms, or undercuts the act of representation. In doing so, the monograph maps out the wide range of transfers between stage and real world. At the same time, it is also a more sprawling ride through theater histories and cultures and their performance practices at the limit of imitation. And it is this most ancient of theatrical terms, mimesis, with which the book opens. Its treatment by Plato and Aristotle, Carlson suggests, has grounded imitation within a dominantly literary context, which has resulted in an oversight of theatrical mimesis, the process in which real objects and beings are employed to create an aesthetic event (5). Carlson goes on to diversify our understanding of mimesis by offering instances of material (scenic design) and behavioral (acting technique) rather than literary verisimilitude. His wealth of examples also foregrounds the fact that the mirror that Hamlet holds up to nature is never singular but instead has all along been a fractured collage of broken glass—a multitude of fragments. A survey across a diverse collection of such reality bites on the stage lies at the heart of this monograph.

Strikingly, language lies at the core of the first chapter, entitled “Verbatim,” which deals with words as “material from the real world” (20). These words, in turn, point to a lineage that runs from the documentary theater tradition of the twentieth century to witness and testimonial drama and the day-to-day language experimentation of more recent forms of verbatim theater, as used, for example, by the Nature Theater of Oklahoma or the Wooster Group. In this case, it is not the words that make up the illusion, as would be the case for Early Modern drama which uses the power of verse to conjure up a fictive world. The previously documented words instead intervene and point beyond the stage to often highly contentious political contexts.

From words, Carlson moves to the bodies that inhabit the stage, most notably the dual body of the actor/character. Picking up on the multiple theatrical ghosts that memorialize the making of theater in his seminal

Haunted Stage (2001), Carlson complicates the simple dualism of actor/character by tracing how the multiple personas that become projected onto the actor's body have a long history of undercutting the clear distinction between real and fictional worlds. A case in point is the celebrity actor, who manages to merge fictional and biographical worlds by harnessing the fame or notoriety of previously embodied characters while their own celebrity status and personal history equally intervene into and reshape established processes of reception. Moreover, Carlson offers a whole cluster of real bodies from a wide variety of performance contexts—both historically and aesthetically—that exist in a curious tension to dramatic role-playing: be it William F. Cody's Buffalo Bill and the Wild West Show, the soldiers reenacting the Storming of the Winter Palace, or the experts of the everyday who Rimini Protokoll puts on stage.

The following two chapters share a common concern with material environments and material objects combined with a foregrounding of visual realism for the stage, offering a curiosity shop full of pertinent examples: from Marie-Antoinette's purpose-built hamlet in the Versailles gardens to Max Reinhardt's open-air productions to R. Murray Shafer's site-specific performance *Patria*. In the context of material objects, Carlson most memorably shows the auratic power of real objects on stage by following Yorick's skull: from Shakespeare's introduction of skulls onto the Renaissance stage in *Hamlet*, he turns to the use of real skulls that gained celebrity status in nineteenth-century *Hamlet* productions and prompted a variety of bequests to theaters by thespian aficionados who envisaged their afterlife as Yorick's skull onstage (86). In the case of the skull, the audience is taken in by the real skull bones that mark the passing of time outside of the theater.

The breadth of material considered in *Shattering Hamlet's Mirror* is impressive, although the challenge that goes along with it lies in a tendency towards historical de-contextualization, as the reader moves back and forth between different historical moments and cultural contexts. While Carlson foregrounds theatrical developments from the Romantic period to the present—or, in other words, the transformations from modern to postmodern theater and performance—history mostly appears as a self-referential process within the halls of the theater itself. The reader thus encounters the wealth of material as a series of anecdotes in which the situatedness within a specific cultural or historical context remains marginal. This methodology recalls the elaborate surveys that George Steiner engages in with *The Death of Tragedy* (1961) or *Antigones* (1984). The difference in Carlson's work is that the theme of "theater and reality" requires an even broader frame and encompasses so many different iterations that it is at times hard to see which aspect of theatrical culture might not offer itself up for consideration. The final chapter, which deals with audience involvement and participation largely set in a contemporary context, is an exception in this context. Here, Carlson interconnects the environmental theater of the 1960s with the more

recent immersive theater practices of the twenty-first century, in order to show that they shift the interaction “between the real and fictional from the control of the producing organization to the assumptions and choices of the spectator” (89). Carlson’s nuanced critique of the shift towards spectatorial choices and interactivity in the work of such theater companies as the British Punchdrunk or the Danish SIGNA suggests that this is a “largely illusory emancipation” (115) of the spectators because they, instead of being able to actively influence the performance, are reintegrated into the rigid rule set of a game structure. Ultimately, the theatrical process and its engagement with reality is subsumed by capitalist commercialization strategies and the gamification of the theater (116). While Carlson critiques immersivity as an expression of neoliberal capitalism, he does not mourn the disappearance of reality as a distinct sphere but instead manages to celebrate the stunning variety of theatrical output this has led to.

Throughout, Carlson’s shattering of Hamlet’s mirror reminds us that there is no single reality available to be imitated and, likewise, that the real has always crept into the theater in various guises. Moreover, the move beyond the traditional division between stage and audience that shapes much of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is not an overcoming of the tension between real and mimetic impulses but rather a process of re-orientation towards a layering of levels of reality and representation no longer exclusive to the stage but now part of our day-to-day experience. However, the fundamentally political nature of foregrounding the permeability of reality—whether throughout history or, more pressingly, in the present context of social media’s erosion of facts—remains on the sidelines of this study.

Given his prolific theatrical knowledge as one of the foremost American theater scholars of the present, the ease and authority with which Carlson is able to navigate the vast scope of theatrical expression from drama to spectacle, or from medieval mystery play to intercultural performance while making these performances speak to each other, is impressive. As an overview of Western theater aesthetics and their engagement with reality, *Shattering Hamlet’s Mirror* will serve its reader well and inspire them to explore individual cases and companies further. And still, there are moments when one would want to stop Carlson in his speedy journey and call out a Faustian “ah, stay a while!” in order to confront the specific political and cultural reality of any number of his truly fascinating theatrical cases.

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Anna Teresa Scheer. *Christoph Schlingensief: Staging Chaos, Performing Politics and Theatrical Phantasmagoria*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018. 304 pages.

Mag das Formenspektrum des deutschsprachigen Gegenwartstheaters ein sehr reichhaltiges sein, so hat der Tod Christoph Schlingensiefs im Jahr 2010 doch eine empfindliche Lücke hinterlassen. Seine teilweise an die Performancekunst grenzenden Theaterprojekte waren gekennzeichnet von einer Unberechenbarkeit und Direktheit, die, nicht zuletzt durch seine regelmäßige persönliche Beteiligung am szenischen Geschehen, wohl einzigartig bleiben werden. Die immer sichtbare politische Motivation seiner Projekte und deren Provokationspotential und Originalität hat ihn in den letzten Jahren seines Schaffens als Künstler und Regisseur zu einer Reizfigur in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit gemacht, die Begeisterung und Bewunderung, aber auch Spott, Anfechtung und Verständnislosigkeit hervorrufen konnte. Eine theatergeschichtliche (und filmgeschichtliche) Einordnung seines Werks ist längst fällig und bislang nur in wenigen Ansätzen erfolgt. Inzwischen aber ist die Rezeption immerhin in eine Phase übergegangen, in der mehr und mehr monografische und damit ausführlichere Beiträge entstehen. Mit dem Buch von Anna Teresa Scheer liegt nun auch eine erste solche Abhandlung auf Englisch vor, die sich dem Künstler alleine widmet.

Das Buch ist erkennbar für eine internationale Leserschaft geschrieben und konzentriert sich auf Schlingensiefs theatrales Schaffen seit Mitte der 1990er Jahre. Angaben zur Biografie sind auf eine Seite begrenzt: Erwähnt wird, dass er als Einzelkind den Wunsch seiner Eltern nach fünf weiteren Geschwistern kompensieren musste und in der Familie schon früh Umgang mit der Super 8-Kamera hatte, was, wie seine langjährige Bindung an die Katholische Jugend und die Ministrantentätigkeit auch, immer wieder als Ursachen für seine virtuosenszenierungen und sein Spiel mit liturgischen Formen diskutiert worden ist—auch von ihm selbst. Damit ist auf die sich mit diesen Anknüpfungspunkten ergebende Möglichkeit einer biografischen Werkdeutung hingewiesen, mehr aber auch nicht, denn Scheer verzichtet auf jede weitere Ausarbeitung dieser Lesart. Zufällig beeinflusst wurde seine künstlerische Tätigkeit allerdings durch seine Herkunft, denn der Geburtsort Oberhausen ist zugleich Schauplatz der 1954 begründeten jährlichen Internationalen Kurzfilmtage, einem Konzentrationspunkt der filmischen Avantgarde in Deutschland. Deren Protagonisten, Regisseure wie Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge, Wim Wenders oder Werner Herzog, begründen in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren den sogenannten Neuen Deutschen Film. Schlingensiefs frühes Interesse für dieses Medium knüpft hier an. Ein akademisches Studium hat er nicht durchlaufen: Auf ein abgebrochenes geisteswissenschaftliches Studium in München folgen lediglich zwei gescheiterte Bewerbungen für einen Platz an der dortigen Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film.

Scheer gibt einen Überblick über Schlingensief's Filme, die in formaler Hinsicht schon auf seine späteren Theaterstücke und die Aktionskunst verweisen. Einflüsse des Trashkinos und des Absurden Theaters sind unverkennbar, die Wirkung der Filme oft witzig und grotesk, zugleich anspruchsvoll im Sinne einer formalen Herausforderung des Publikums durch die Aufkündigung von Sehgewohnheiten. Laut Scheer bezeichnet Schlingensief selbst seine Filme als "Cinema Direct" (eine Originalquelle hierfür gibt sie nicht an, stattdessen verweist sie auf Sekundärliteratur)—der Begriff bezeichnet eigentlich eine Form des auf die Erfassung von Realität abzielenden Dokumentarfilms, die in den 1950er Jahren in den USA entstanden und dem französischen *cinéma vérité* vergleichbar ist. Diese Vorprägung des Begriffs bleibt in Scheers Darstellung unerwähnt. Hingegen erkennt sie in der Bezeichnung eine Anspielung auf die "direkte kunst" des Wiener Aktionismus (Otto Muehl) und dessen sakral anmutenden Einsatz menschlicher und tierischer Körper(-flüssigkeiten). Mag diese Assoziation in Anbetracht der Schlingensief'schen Trash-Ästhetik und seiner Anlehnung an den Splatterfilm naheliegen, so verkennet sie doch die spezifisch filmgeschichtliche Bedeutung des Begriffs. Seine Adaption durch Schlingensief weist demnach nicht in die Richtung der Aktionskunst, sondern in die einer künstlerischen und experimentellen Überformung des Dokumentarfilms, die dessen Unmittelbarkeit in inszenierte Settings überträgt—wie etwa in *100 Jahre Adolf Hitler. Die letzte Stunde im Führerbunker*, einem knapp einstündigen Film von 1988/89, der den im Untertitel benannten historischen Moment in einem ununterbrochenen 16-Stunden-Dreh nachstellt, bei dem sich alle DarstellerInnen in einem Mülheimer Bunker aufgehalten haben.

Der knappe Blick auf die Forschungslage, den Scheer wirft (12–17), unterstreicht die Notwendigkeit ihres Buches: vor allem die bisherige Forschung auf Englisch befasst sich überwiegend mit dem aus praktischen Gründen leichter rezipierbaren filmischen Werk und scheut die Theaterstücke; hinzu kommt, dass die deutsche Literatur zu Schlingensief von den auf Englisch schreibenden Kommentatoren kaum wahrgenommen wird. Die Analysen zu sechs Theaterprojekten (*Rocky Dutschke '68* [1996], *Save Capitalism: Throw the Money Away!* [1999], *The Berlin Republic—or the Ring in Africa* [1999], *Hamlet* [2001], *ATTA ATTA—Art Has Broken Out!* [2003], *Church of Fear* [2003]), die den Hauptteil des Buches ausmachen, füllen daher eine große Lücke und öffnen die Tür für eine weiterführende Beschäftigung im internationalen Rahmen—im Folgenden werden zwei ihrer informativen Deutungen und Einordnungen exemplarisch kommentiert. Den selbst erhobenen Anspruch, den Künstler Schlingensief nicht nur mit tiefgreifenden Analysen einer Auswahl von Werken vorzustellen, sondern auch durch den Einbezug von deren soziohistorischem Rahmen und politischen Konstellationen, mit denen sie sich kritisch auseinandersetzen (17), erfüllt Scheer ohne Zweifel.

Einen großen Wert gerade für LeserInnen außerhalb des deutschen Sprachraums, aber mit größer werdendem zeitlichem Abstand auch für die deutsche Leserschaft, haben vor allem die historischen und politischen Kontextualisierungen und Hintergrunddarstellungen. So ist der kulturelle Stellenwert der Volksbühne Berlin, Schlingensief's erster Wirkungsstätte als Theaterregisseur, jeder/m deutschen Theaterinteressierten noch in deutlicher Erinnerung. Die mit der deutschen Entwicklung nicht Vertrauten dürften dagegen dankbar sein für die Erläuterungen Scheers, die nicht nur auf die rein dramaturgischen und personellen Aspekte der Erfolgsära des Theaters eingeht, sondern etwa auch dessen historische Sonderstellung verständlich macht: Als ein wichtiges Ostberliner Theater in der neuen Hauptstadt steht die Volksbühne nach der Wiedervereinigung 1989 zunehmend für den Protest gegen eine von kritischen Zeitgenossen als Vereinnahmung des sozialen, politischen und kulturellen Erbes der DDR wahrgenommene Haltung der BRD. Scheers Darstellung ist umfassend: So geht sie etwa auch auf die zu Beginn der 1990er Jahre neuartige Öffentlichkeitsarbeit der Volksbühne ein—unkonventionelle Öffnungszeiten, subkulturelles Rahmenprogramm, Merchandising-Artikel, etc. (60)—die zu deren Beliebtheit beigetragen haben dürfte, aber aus dem Fokus einer rein werkhistorischen Theatergeschichtsschreibung herausfällt.

Den Sprung vom Film ins Theater verdankt Schlingensief der Vermittlung des damaligen Volksbühnen-Dramaturgen Matthias Lilienthal. Die erste dortige Inszenierung von 1993—*100 Jahre CDU: Spiel ohne Grenzen*—deutet in ihrem einer Fernsehshow entsprechenden Bühnenbild und in der wiederholten Verspottung eines Zitats von Wim Wenders ("Ich mache bessere Bilder von der Welt, damit die Welt besser wird") während der Aufführung bereits auf die komplexe Intermedialität der späteren Stücke voraus. Zu den (fiktiven) Gästen der schrill inszenierten Bühnentalkshow gehören Politiker wie der damalige Bundespräsident Richard von Weizsäcker, Pornostars und ein NATO-General. Das Geschehen ist irrational, laut und provozierend vor allem deshalb, weil es den Finger in die Wunde der deutschen Geschichte wie Gegenwart legt: Die Verwendung des Hakenkreuzes und die szenische Einbindung des 1992 von Neonazis verübten, ausländerfeindlichen Mordes an drei Türkinnen in Mölln wird scheinbar respektlos verknüpft mit den Inhalten und medialen Formen der Boulevard- und Unterhaltungsmedien.

So verdienstvoll die Kontextualisierungen Scheers sind—in diesem Fall erläutert sie etwa den Titel der Inszenierung mit einem Verweis nicht nur auf die langjährige Regierungszeit Helmut Kohls, sondern auch auf die in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren in Europa beliebte TV-Game-show *Spiel ohne Grenzen*—so kurz greifen manche ihrer Deutungsansätze: So sieht sie "the notion of 'hysteria' as central to Schlingensief's stylistic approach in the 1990s" und zitiert *Collins English Dictionary* für eine Definition des Begriffs "Hysterie." In medizinischer bzw. psychiatrischer Hinsicht gilt

dieser inzwischen aber als überholt, zumal er, auch aufgrund seiner (auf die griechische Bezeichnung für “Gebärmutter” zurückgehende) Etymologie, eine einseitige Pathologisierung von Frauen impliziert. Zwar gibt es weiterhin eine umgangssprachliche Verwendung, die von neueren wissenschaftlichen Entwicklungen weitgehend unberührt geblieben ist, mit dem Einsatz einer Lexikondefinition ruft Scheer aber das akademische Register auf. Die Zitation des *Collins* von 2003 nun erfasst die jüngere Kritik am Begriff offensichtlich nicht (ein aktuelles psychologisches bzw. psychiatrisches Fachlexikon hätte davon gewusst). Dass Schlingensiefs gezielter Einsatz von plakativ trashigen Inszenierungsformen die Mechanismen der Medien überzeichnet und ausstellt, benennt die Deutung, trotz ihrer unangemessen Begrifflichkeit, durchaus (“reflects the discourse of an increasingly hysterical public sphere,” 71).

100 Jahre CDU ist nicht nur Schlingensiefs erste Theaterarbeit, sondern auch formal ein werkgeschichtlicher Markstein. Mag Schlingensief Verständnislosigkeit und Ablehnung auf Seiten des Publikums bewusst in Kauf genommen haben, so ist er doch unzufrieden mit den belustigten Reaktionen des Publikums und entscheidet sich (Matthias Lilienthal zufolge auf dessen Anraten hin) nach der dritten Vorstellung, selbst ins Bühnengeschehen einzugreifen und durch eine persönliche Erzählung vom Tod seiner Großmutter die Glaubwürdigkeit der Aufführungen zu steigern. Dieses Gestaltungselement einer aktiven Beteiligung wird fortan zu einem wichtigen Charakteristikum zahlreicher Inszenierungen. So etwa auch in einem der Stücke, die er wesentlich konventioneller umsetzt, in der *Hamlet*-Version, die 2001 im Schauspielhaus Zürich Premiere hat. Während die eigentliche Handlung der Tragödie durch ein professionelles, renommiertes Schauspielensemble umgesetzt wird, besteht das Provokationselement in der Besetzung der fiktiven Schaustellertruppe am Hof zu Dänemark: Die Rollen werden von tatsächlichen Neonazis übernommen, die an einem Aussteigerprogramm teilnehmen und mit dem Publikum nicht nur über ihre Absichten diskutieren, sondern ihm zugleich schon allein durch ihre Anwesenheit den Spiegel vorhalten—wie die Schauspieler im Originalstück dem Brudermörder Claudius, wenn sie diesem seine Tat vorspielen. Zugleich arbeitet Schlingensief mit der Tonaufnahme der *Hamlet*-Aufführung von 1963 des wegen seiner Nähe zum NS-Regime in Verruf geratenen Gustav Gründgens. Auch in den Ausführungen zu diesem Projekt liegt die Stärke der Darstellung in der Verbindung einer archivalischen Aufbewahrung vergangener Theaterereignisse mit deren Erläuterung und historischen Kontextualisierung: Die Einbeziehung rechtsradikaler Laiendarsteller erscheint mit dem Wissen um den damals rasant wachsenden Erfolg der rechtspopulistischen Schweizerischen Volkspartei und durch den Hinweis auf das damalige, offizielle Aussteigerprogramm der Bundesregierung in einem anderen Licht. In einer Reihe von Unterkapiteln legt Scheer Schlingensiefs komplexe, scheinbar widersprüchliche Strategie dar: Die Erscheinung des

Geistes von Hamlets Vater in Shakespeares Tragödie ist die Blaupause für die geisterhafte Originaltonspur der Gründgens-Inszenierung, zu der das Zürcher Ensemble Teile des Textes parallel und im typischen, Gründgensschen “Reichskanzlerstil” deklamiert (Scheer benennt sowohl Fritz Kortner als auch Brecht als Quelle dieser spöttischen Bezeichnung). Der Auftritt “echter Nazis” auf der Bühne wirkt wie eine weitere Dimension solcher Geisterhaftigkeit, gemahnt er doch, wie etwa auch die Hakenkreuzdekoration des Bühnenbilds, an den (vermeintlich) vergangenen NS-Faschismus. Scheer stellt darüber hinaus den Vergleich mit Heiner Müllers Inszenierungen des *Hamlet* und des eigenen Stückes *Die Hamletmaschine* von 1990 an, die auf ähnlich unmittelbare Weise den klassischen Stoff in einen aktuellen, politischen Rahmen stellen—in diesem Fall den der Wende und der Wiedervereinigung Ost- und Westdeutschlands. Die Analogie macht über dieses Interpretationsmoment hinaus aber auch in dramaturgischer Hinsicht viel Sinn, ist doch Müller einer der wichtigsten Wegbereiter eines postdramatischen Regietheaters, wie Schlingensief es praktiziert. Sehr deutlich wird in der Rekapitulation des Projekts aber auch dessen Spiel mit der Authentizität: Ob die rechtsgesinnten Darsteller tatsächlich “aussteigen” wollen, bleibt letzten Endes unklar, und die publicityträchtigen Aktionen Schlingensiefs, der mit den Laiendarstellern in der Stadt auftritt und politische Forderungen stellt (und im Stück selbst als Fortinbras auftritt), trägt zur Verwirrung noch bei.

Solche weit ausgreifenden Erläuterungen und Interpretationen sind erhellend und dokumentieren die flüchtigen Theaterarbeiten Schlingensiefs mit einer aufwendigen Einbindung in den politischen und kulturellen Horizont des jeweiligen Entstehungszeitpunkts. Scheers Buch ist damit wohl auch ein Ausdruck der beginnenden, akademischen Historisierung des Werks dieses eigenwilligen Künstlers. Es demonstriert, dass es durchaus möglich ist, sich dieses seine Gegenwart so herausfordernde Werk auch aus zeitlicher und regionaler Distanz zu erschließen. Abstriche aber sind in punkto Genauigkeit zu machen, was umso ärgerlicher ist, als die historisierende Methode nach Exaktheit verlangt. Die regelmäßig auftretenden, terminologischen, sachlichen und sprachlichen Fehler hätten durch sorgfältigere Korrektur der deutschen Sachbezüge und Bezeichnungen vermieden werden können. Neben den oben erläuterten seien hier nur einige weitere genannt: Frank-Walter Steinmeier war zur Publikationszeit seines Textes über Schlingensief (2011) noch kein Bundespräsident (2); man schreibt (mit Bezug auf die Aktionskunst) “Aktionen,” nicht “aktionen” (17); Wolfgang Schäuble wird nicht “Schaüble” geschrieben und war während der Wiedervereinigung nicht Vorsitzender der CDU (wie die Formulierung “leader of the Christian Democratic Union” suggeriert, 47); und schließlich: als Schauplätze von Brandanschlägen auf Asylunterkünfte zu Beginn der 1990er Jahre “in the former East” werden Solingen und Mölln in eine Reihe mit Hoyerswerda und Rostock gestellt, dabei liegen sie im

Westen Deutschlands. Wer sich mit dem Theaterschaffenden Christoph Schlingensiefels vertraut machen will, dem sei die Lektüre des Buches dringend empfohlen—ebenso aber ein aufmerksam prüfender Blick auf die Details darin.

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Erdmut Wizisla (Hrsg.). *Benjamin und Brecht: Denken in Extremen*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2018. 284 pages.

Ideas, some say, do not belong to a single person, not even the one who originally voiced them. True, unlike palpable products such as books, they call for more sophisticated legal efforts to be protected, or discerned at all, than private property. But regardless of whether ideas might naturally, as it were, tend towards a sort of software communism, it remains beyond dispute that some of them are primarily associated with at least two persons. The history of ideas, particularly in German literature and philosophy, offers a few outstanding examples of intellectual couples: Goethe and Schiller, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Marx and Engels, or, a little less illustrious, Horkheimer and Adorno. Or—as the present volume suggests—Benjamin and Brecht. What again did they share?

Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht, who first met in 1924 and became friends by the end of that decade, have indeed been friends, above all else; and in some ways perhaps also comrades, though neither of them ever joined the untouchable Party they both marvelled at from afar. However, they never co-authored a single piece of text, at least not publicly. If they had done so, they would have probably come up with a play of two peculiarly stubborn characters. A likely stage design for a performance of that would-be drama can be found on the frontispiece of this beautifully illustrated book, picturing two chess players sitting back to back, staring at the chequerboard on the table or at the invisible photographer (the audience, respectively), but never looking at each other.

Brecht, more or less overtly, drew his inspirations from many different sources among which the writings of Benjamin played only a minor part, at best. Most of what Benjamin brought up remained fairly enigmatic to him, as Brecht quite bluntly, or ironically, admitted. Who knows if, or in which regard exactly, he might have recognized his friend's genius, as did, from different angles, Gershom Scholem, Theodor W. Adorno, and Hannah Arendt. Benjamin, in turn, was very much impressed, almost awed, by Brecht, both his personal demeanour and his works. And he wrote articles on some of these works which are now considered among the best ever written on Brecht. Hard to believe that back in 1931 the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, at the instigation of Bernhard Diebold, refused to publish an essay

of Benjamin's on epic theater. Nowadays, Benjamin appears to be an ever-rising star across multiple disciplines, while Brecht, far from what he, in conversations with his friend, called *eingreifendes Denken* ("interventionist thinking"), has long since been approved as a modern classic to be taught at school.

Erdmut Wizisla, the editor of this volume, has given a detailed account of that intriguing relationship already years ago (*Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht: The Story of a Friendship*, Verso, 2007). The present book makes a more colourful impression at first glance, resembling a piece of art rather than a scholarly anthology. Actually, it is the catalogue of an exhibition that took place under the same title at the Berlin Academy of Arts in 2017–18. The centrepiece of that exhibition, a series of juxtapositions of quotes from Benjamin and Brecht on various topics, presented along with documents and material objects, is missing from this book; only a very small selection of those quotes has been preserved to introduce single chapters. Right at the outset, apropos, there is another fine collection of equally telling quotes from others about Benjamin and Brecht and their supposedly woeful relationship. In addition to images of artworks that have been exhibited already in Berlin, including a reproduction of a woodcut graphic novel by Steffen Thiemann who thus accomplished a crime story Benjamin and Brecht had merely envisaged, the catalogue contains several more pictures which do not testify to the past exhibition but instead form an integral part of literary essays published here for the first time; see, for instance, the neatly illustrated "Benjamin–Brecht–Kontainer" by Alexander Kluge.

The title—*Thinking in Extremes*—sounds almost obtrusively catchy. Yet it remains somewhat obscure what it is pointing to. Communism, said Brecht, is the middle term, arguably the nearest and most reasonable thing to think of, certainly not to be deemed extreme. On the contrary, he sought to portray the ordinary humdrum life in a bourgeois society as an intolerable extremity. It was Benjamin who occasionally used this word. In a letter from June 1934, for example, he revealed to Gretel Karplus that his thinking as much as his life was moving in extreme positions. Regarding his intellectual and personal situation in exile, this self-description rings true. If there was his long-time friend Scholem on the one end, then Brecht would loom large on the other. Adorno and the Institute for Social Research as well as Arendt would occupy varying positions between the two. But while Brecht apparently did not care much about his friend's other allies, these always kept alert to his pernicious influence on Benjamin.

Interestingly, Wizisla opens his introduction to this book with a reference to Benjamin's most puzzling comment on Brecht, written down in 1939, in which he suspects him of complying with the methods of the Soviet secret police GPU, if only "poetically." Nobody can tell what this sinister suspicion might have entailed or what it might have done to their relationship in years to come. Benjamin, facing arrest and extradition to

Nazi Germany on his way out of France, killed himself with an overdose of morphine in September 1940, having seen his friend Brecht for the last time in October 1938 in Denmark. It is still a matter of dispute whether or to what extent Brecht endorsed Stalin's reign of terror and the infamous GPU methods in particular; at least he knew well enough that the Soviet authorities on their part did not trust him. Well-meaning critics may be inclined to make accommodations for Brecht's politically ambiguous gestures and his rough sense of humour. Less conciliatorily, Jan Philipp Reemtsma further expounds this issue in his essay "Massenmordphantasien als Abendunterhaltung" ("Fantasies of Mass Murder as Evening Entertainment"), relating to a macabre proposition Brecht made to Benjamin already in 1931, namely, that at least 200,000 Berliners ought to be eliminated in some "collective action" to be executed by no less than 50,000 proletarians. Reemtsma, for one, is not convinced that Brecht was entirely ironic in this matter.

Most of the other essays and pieces of prose (and even poetry) assembled here are less likely to arouse harsh controversies, irrespective of their different accentuations. The authors are mostly artists, painters, writers, directors, and designers, rather than academics; which may be good news to the majority of readers, though even those keen on annotations will not be wholly disappointed. More than twenty short-length contributions offer reflections of manifold aspects of that "tenacious literary friendship" (Elisabeth Hauptmann) from just as many perspectives, sometimes tentatively, sometimes playfully. Among these texts, there are tiny treatises on appropriately "serious" topics such as Brecht's and Benjamin's understanding of Marx and communism, Freud and sexuality, the legacy of Brecht's theater in Benjaminian terms (as inherited by Heiner Müller), and the possibilities of radio broadcasting, to mention but a few examples. Besides, there are *essais*, in a quite literal sense of the word, on the vicissitudes of housing and living which both Benjamin and Brecht regarded as an expressive index of modern society, and on chess, of course, their favourite pastime, although it seems neither of them was a formidable player. To be sure, in those days of yore games were being played together at a table, not on separate desktops. As if to fuel the reader's imagination of the real setting of those matches, there is also a travelogue from Svendborg included in this anthology, accompanied by a series of photographs from contemporary Skovsbostrand. This otherwise pretty unknown backwater on the Danish island of Funen was once Brecht's provisional home, where he fancied he would neither pull off his coat nor drive a nail into the wall, and where he eventually dwelt for six years. It was there, indeed, that his relationship with Benjamin fell into place, both personally and intellectually, much more so than in their correspondence. As for Benjamin, he wrote his more passionate letters to Margarete Steffin who, on her part, responded way more affectionately (and more often) than Brecht ever did.

Perhaps the most hilarious piece, or so it seems with hindsight, is a virtual dispute between Benjamin, Bernhard Diebold, Friedrich T. Gubler, and Karl Kraus, arranged by Erdmut Wizisla. They are arguing about Benjamin's first essay on epic theater to be published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in early 1931 on the occasion of a performance of *Mann ist Mann* (*Man Equals Man*) in Berlin under the direction of Brecht himself. But theater critic Diebold, distrustful of both Brecht's drama and Benjamin's reasoning about its concept, forestalls the publication of the already accepted article and complains to feuilleton editor Gubler about this *Affentheater*, as he deigns to call it. Fortuitously, a proof-sheet of Benjamin's article, complete with the critic's handwritten objections, has been retrieved from Diebold's papers. (Only in 1939, a second essay Benjamin wrote on epic theater would be published in Thomas Mann's journal *Mass und Wert* in Zurich.) The imaginary drama to be read in this volume, more than eighty years later, offers a vivid example of some albeit serious "monkey business."

By contrast, Zoe Beloff's casual reflections on fascism give much less pleasure, not only because of their gloomy subject matter. Particularly her attempt at drawing a parallel between past and present, that is, between Nazi Germany and the United States under Donald Trump's presidency, seems largely misplaced. Of course, "being black in America today is not the same as being Jewish in Nazi Germany," she asserts. Then why bring it up? It would be tricky enough to bring *Arturo Ui* up to date for some such purpose, since even Brecht hardly grasped what was really transpiring in Germany back then.

Speaking of bizarre comparisons, in a letter to Scholem from February 4, 1939, Benjamin quipped that Kafka, like Stan Laurel, might have felt the burden to look out for his Oliver Hardy, whom he hence found in Max Brod. In his wake, Beloff now fantasizes about Benjamin and Brecht being—exactly—Laurel and Hardy. No matter if Benjamin's remark was eminently witty, its unmotivated reprise does not make any sense whatsoever—unless it were to raise the question if Benjamin and Brecht ever really formed a proper couple, comical or not. But this question needs not be answered. The contributions to the present anthology suffice to enhance the story of a marvellous friendship already told.

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Günther Heeg (Hrsg.). *Recycling Brecht: Materialwert, Nachleben, Überleben*. Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2018. 222 Seiten.

Make sure when you ready yourself to die
That no marker stands and betrays where you lie
With an inscription that points at you

And the year of your death that convicts you
 Once again:
 Cover your tracks!
 (That's what I was taught)

(From *The Reader for City Dwellers*, in *The Collected Poems of Bertolt Brecht*, ed. and trans. Tom Kuhn and David Constantine [New York and London: Norton, 2018], 311.)

These are the final lines of part one of Brecht's poem "Verwisch die Spuren" ("Cover your Tracks"). They serve as a provocation, with Brecht's typically sarcastic tone, and ask his readers to wipe out their own tracks after their time has run out. Of course, this should not be understood literally but rather should be read as a plea for us to think about what we all want to leave behind and how we wish to be remembered by future generations. "Verwisch die Spuren" was also the title of an anthology published in 2008 by Rodopi on the usefulness and "use value" of Brecht and his works. Such questions and provocations have indeed been a preoccupation (and/or perhaps even a small obsession!) in contemporary Brecht scholarship, one that doesn't seem to be subsiding any time soon. Brecht and his works are as timely as ever in our current world; he still has much to say and we still have much to learn and change. The anthology under review here, *Recycling Brecht*, seeks to intervene in this discussion. One can readily see Brecht's popularity by simply perusing through Theater der Zeit's own publication list in the series "Recherchen," of which this volume is number 136: studies on various aspects connected to Brecht constitute thirteen volumes out of 137 in total, by far the greatest number of any artist in the list, with Heiner Müller (also Brecht-related!) coming in second.

Recycling Brecht offers fifteen essays by scholars and artists from Europe (Germany, Italy) and Asia (Korea, Japan) and is a very welcome and diverse contribution to current Brecht scholarship. The volume is divided into three main sections: "Wiederholungen, Trennungen/Übertragungen, Resonanzen" ("Repetitions, Separations/Transferences, Resonances") and includes both scholarly and performative essays, production images, an interview, and a short story touching on a wide range of topics, literary works, and theories on the theme of "recycling" Brecht. The book's editor and current Vice President of the International Brecht Society, Günther Heeg, lays out in his preface and introductory essay the impetus and need for our continued reengagement with Brecht's "Gebrauchswert für die Gegenwart" ("use value for the present"; 8). The real question is not whether Brecht and the legacy of his works are still relevant to us today, i.e., whether, as stated in the title of the book, Brecht has "Materialwert, Nachleben und Überleben" ("Material Value, Afterlife, and Viability"); of this there should be no doubt. Rather, it is how we as theater scholars,

critics, and practitioners employ new ways of using and learning as well as what exactly Brecht means for us in the twenty-first century. To put it in another way, as one author in the book explains: “Die Frage, ob das Brechttheater tatsächlich überholt oder aktueller denn je ist, kann man trotz dieser Ansätze nicht sofort beantworten. Zuvor wäre zu klären, was eigentlich das Brechttheater von heute ist” (“The question whether Brechtian Theater is indeed dated or more topical than ever, cannot be immediately answered, despite these approaches. What needs to be clarified first is what Brechtian theater actually means today”; 177). Actively working to re-use, update, and challenge Brecht—to resist paying homage to the “Mausoleum” (7) of the Brecht industry—is the most productive way to keep Brecht’s legacy alive and relevant.

In the first section “Wiederholungen,” the authors focus on the task of re-using Brecht for today. In their interview, dramaturg Jeanne Bindernagel and director Michael von zur Mühlen frame their production of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (*Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*) against the Brechtian challenge of “Trennung der Elemente” (“separation of the elements”). In his contribution, Michael Wehren relies on contemporary theater practices to scrutinize and revise Brechtian pedagogical theories. Francesco Fiorentino analyzes the dramaturgical structure of Brecht’s *Die Maßnahme* (*The Measures Taken*) against Sigmund Freud’s dictum “Erinnern, Wiederholen, Durcharbeiten” (“remembering, repeating, working through”), which strikes directly at the heart of the volume’s overall goals. Andrea Hensel examines instances of “Historisierung” (“historization”) in the 2006 novel by Jonathan Littell, *The Kindly Ones* (original French: *Les Bienveillantes*).

The contributions under the heading “Trennungen/Übertragungen” investigate the application, re-use, and transgressions in contemporary artistic practices that engage with Brecht and his works. Picking up from Bindernagel/von zur Mühlen’s discussion of “Trennung der Elemente” from the previous section, Mai Miyake investigates “Rhythmisierung” (“rhythmicization”) in a production of Brecht’s *Fatzer* by the Japanese theater group Chiten. In her essay, Carolin Sibilak finds examples of the *Verfremdungseffekt* in a Berlin production of Mozart’s *Zauberflöte* (*Magic Flute*) by the British theater group 1927 and Barrie Kosky. Hyun Soon Cheon details how Alexander Kluge’s science-fiction film *Der große Verhaß* (*The Big Mess*, 1971) returns again and again to Brechtian techniques of epic theater and the *Verfremdungseffekt*. The artists Veronika Darian and Jana Seehusen, in the final contribution to this section, offer a clever, performative “sprachbildnerische Fortsetzung” (“language-forming continuation”) of Brecht’s short story “Der Arbeitsplatz oder Im Schweiß deines Angesichts sollst du kein Brot essen” (“The Workplace, or You May Not Eat Bread in the Sweat of Your Brow”) (see *BFA* 19, 345–49) that pushes the boundaries of the original story in terms of time (past/present) und genre (art and science).

“Resonanzen,” the third section in the volume, collects the contributions dealing with transculturalism broadly defined, presenting the reader with concepts and practices represented in Europe and Asia. Chikako Kitagawa’s essay examines the “Ästhetik der Lücke” (“aesthetics of the gap”) of Brecht’s theory of the social Gestus in Japanese Nô theater, mainly in the plays and musical theater of Toshio Hosokawa. In the essay “Schattendramaturgie” (“Shadow Dramaturgy”), Eiichi Hirata traces the affinities of these “shadow dramaturgies” between Brecht and traditional Japanese theater. Eun-Soo Jang offers a convincing approach to Brecht’s use value today and how we can continue to engage with his many works (see quote above, 177), offering a close reading of Roland Schimmelpfennig’s critique of globalization in his play *Der goldene Drache* (*The Golden Dragon*). In “Zwischen Text und Tanz” (“Between Text and Dance”), Suk-Kyung Lee considers how the notions of body and space play central roles in the production of *TRUST* by Hamburg-born theater director Falk Richter. Patrick Primavesi, in his contribution “Recycling Mick Levčik,” returns to the main theme of the entire anthology and provides a description of multifaceted recycling and repurposing of Brecht in René Pollesch’s appropriation of *Antigone* and the associated models to which they belong. Finally, Thomas Lehmen presents “Die Straße” (“The Street”), an excerpt from a larger artistic project of collected texts and choreography titled *A Piece for You* (website: <http://www.apieceforyou.com>). It details a road trip with both highlights and tribulations, and provides a thought-provoking and creative finale to the anthology in the form of an ode to Brecht’s own practice piece “Die Straßenszene” (“Street Scene”). As Lehmen writes: “Ob im Theater oder auf der Straße, fokussiert die Praxis die reziproke Kreativität der Beteiligten untereinander. Eine direkte Handlung zwischen Menschen, die ihre eigenen künstlerischen Kriterien erstellt” (“No matter if in the theater or on the street, the practice is focused on the reciprocal creativity among all those involved. A direct action between people generating their own artistic criteria”; 212).

Overall, the essays in this collection are well written and offer new insights into Brecht scholarship, reading more like a discussion than separate entities. The volume is constructed with impeccable editing and flows nicely. Readers familiar with Brecht will find this volume thought-provoking and timely; those seeking a more general overview of Brecht’s theories of performance will first need to look elsewhere.

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Matt Cornish. *Performing Unification: History and Nation in German Theater after 1989*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017. 190 pages.

Matt Cornish's recent book *Performing Unification* (2017) is an important contribution to German theater history. Following the introduction and a chapter on the role of theater in the consolidation of the nation state in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Cornish investigates the theatrical representation of German unification in 1990. He arrives at his main discoveries through the analysis of the narrative forms of history—historiography—in relation to narrative forms in theater—dramaturgy. Cornish develops Hayden White's analysis of historiographic approaches as narrative emplotments—that is, how the historian organizes events into story using archetypical narrative forms. Through the analysis of performances of unification, Cornish expands the scope of analysis to contemporary theater dramaturgies, and to theater's function as historical account.

Central to his investigation is the idea that articulating a past event as history is a form of “collectively imagining a future” (6). This idea puts him in direct conversation with the literature on theater and history, particularly with scholarship that explores theater's participation in imagining political projects through the staging of history. Indirectly, this concern for collective imagination also links the book with works on theater and the public sphere. His overall focus, though, remains “internal” to theater. Cornish is not interested in the role of theater within a wider public dialog. He develops a theory of theater's participation in the emplotment of history and of theater's recourse to historiography, not of its function as an institution and interface with the public. He discusses how dramaturgies translate ideas of history and change or perpetuate historiography's political function. More specifically, he examines theater that challenges state historiography. His decision to discuss “unification” rather than “re-unification” is already a “hint” to his political motivation. The book is an attempt to organize and explicate how theater challenges a deterministic (and celebratory) account of unification.

Cornish moves deftly between theoretical discussion, drama, and performance analysis. This back and forth is a flexible and productive scaffolding. It allows him to both discuss plays that are explicitly about unification and plays that are less explicitly so, excavating the ways in which their “historiographic intervention” resists the determinism of post-unification state historiography. He lays the foundation for his analysis in chapter 2, showing how the state historiography (nationalist and conservative) of unification used a comedic “dramaturgy,” a narrative whereby a series of obstacles were finally overcome in the joyous union (*faux* wedding) of the two Germanies in the new liberal-democratic state (51). The problematization of this comedic dramaturgy through tragic treatments by West German leftist

playwrights is at the center of the following chapter. It highlights the central role that dramaturgy plays in interrogating official narratives. Cornish then turns to the refusal of allegory and veiled political commentary by East German playwrights, which was so prevalent in the GDR (chapter 4). In this chapter we find what is perhaps the book's central discovery: that narrative emplotment—the well-formed, cause-and-effect, rational sequence of historical events—is essentially linked to power. This insight transcends the question of state or non-state narrative. It pertains to any history crafted to rationalize a political project (for example, Marxist Hegelian historiography) and allows Cornish to move away from performances of unification towards productions from the 1990s and early 2000s that resist any form of narrative historiography.

Cornish's account of the relation between narrative and power is based on a distinction between Hegelian and non-Hegelian readings of history. According to Cornish, Hegel inaugurates a teleological historiography which views history as progress towards the realization of an end internal to itself (44). Every narrative is consigned to a Hegelian idea of history, an imposition of structure in the aid of some ideological interest. Yet understanding narrative in this way risks oversimplifying and losing the particularity of a historical-philosophical argument. Cornish arrives at a simple dichotomy between narrative and non-narrative depictions, between a commitment to meta-narratives or to the dismantling of the narrative form.

Not surprisingly then, Cornish's own commitment to the dismantling of the narrative form leads to a problem of overdetermination. If narrative historiography finds in moments of reversal and sublation the lynchpins of its structure, the rejection of narrative dramaturgy will have to emphasize the centrality of a particular historical event even more. Overdetermination becomes a trap: Once the epochal event has "occurred," productions cannot escape it anymore. Does the recognition of the place of unification in German historiography mean that any performance addressing questions of German history post-1990 is necessarily "Performing Unification"? Although this question looms large in a few of the chapters, Cornish never directly addresses it.

Cornish offers a compelling argument for a postdramatic dramaturgy of history—that is, of history "as landscape," where different historical moments are set alongside one another in a way that allows them to be seen at one glance and without hierarchy or determination. However, this compels him to take two problematic stances. First, his argument seems to position postdramatic theater in general as a response to the events of unification. Paradoxically, this discussion appears to de-historicize the emergence of postdramatic theater and to dislocate it from its wider avant-garde, poststructuralist context. This is particularly counterintuitive given how important the rejection of "master narratives" is for many of the aesthetic shifts of poststructuralism. Second, Cornish simplifies Hegelian

teleology, reducing the potentially complex relationship between history, dramaturgy, and the narrative form to dichotomies: a performance or play either employs narrative, and is therefore deterministic, or it disrupts it. For example, Hans-Werner Kroesinger's documentary theater that challenges traditional epistemology joins postdramatic theater as a disruptive dramatic practice in chapter 6.

That such an approach loses its differentiating force becomes clear at the latest, when Cornish discusses Volker Braun, the East German poet and playwright. Braun's play *Die Übergangsgesellschaft* (*The Transitional Society*), originally written in 1982 but produced only in Berlin in 1988, appears to him as "patently allegorical" (92). Reading it as an allegoric narrative is important, but within the context of Cornish's narrative/non-narrative dichotomy it misses how Braun engages with Benjamin's theory of allegory and *Jetztzeit* (present time), a different form of complicating dramaturgy as well as historiography.

It is no surprise that Brecht appears time and again throughout the book, particularly Brecht's idea of historicization. Cornish goes beyond the traditional (limited) reading of historicization as estrangement (*Verfremdung*) through historical displacement. He puts Brecht's idea in its materialist context of engaging the field of social relations within which behavior can be understood (34–35). Cornish foregrounds the way Brecht's dramaturgy allows for a break with the determinism of the present and its positivist affirmation. Historicization in his reading of Brecht means primarily an opening up of history to human action (that is, to social change). History is non-ordained and anything but inevitable. Focusing on the dramaturgy of Epic Theater and the fragmentation of the unity of classical narratives through leaps in space and time, Cornish defines Brecht's rejection of history as a totality of necessary "turning points"—as a materialist historiography of class relations playing out in the quotidian. Subsequently, he tracks the mutation of Brecht's historicization in Heiner Müller and Frank Castorf. Both place any historical moment within an indiscriminate series of historical events. Whereas Brecht employs historicization to show "the forces of history," Müller and Castorf relate each historical event to other events of its kind. They turn the event into a discursive fragment, a linguistic element that can only be understood from its similarity to and difference from others. Cornish describes this kind of non-hierarchical, non-causal displaying as "knotting." The juxtaposition of Brecht's historicization with Müller and Castorf's practice sheds light on this brand of poststructuralism: Politics, which functions in Brecht as the potential for change based on the contingency of history, becomes inconceivable. Cornish uses Benjamin's metaphor of Paul Klee's angel who can only see history as piling wreckage upon wreckage. Devoid of the potential of change through politics, this is all we are left with, the sameness of accumulating wreckage. Following this line of argument, the conclusion Cornish's argument arrives at in regard to Brecht is not very surprising: Brecht's dramaturgy is not a break

from “classical dramaturgy,” not a disrupting narrative, but a dramaturgy to “help stories be understood” (26).

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Alberto Benedetto. *Brecht e il Piccolo Teatro Milano: Una questione di diritti*. Milano: Mimesis Edizioni (Collana Filosofie del Teatro), 2016. 196 pages.

Massimo Bucciattini. *Un Galileo a Milano*. Bologna: Saggi Einaudi, 2017. 272 pages.

The privileged relationship between Bertolt Brecht and the Piccolo Teatro in Milan (PTM) is no secret, the PTM was the center of the “divulcation” and of icastic installations of Brecht’s plays. Yet, the role the PTM played as a mediator between the holders of the rights to Brecht’s estate, Helene Weigel and Suhrkamp Verlag, and all other Italian theaters had never been considered in depth before Alberto Benedetto’s *Brecht e il Piccolo Teatro. Una questione di diritti* (*Brecht and the Piccolo Teatro. A Matter of Rights*). Benedetto, since 2009 production manager at the PTM, has delved into the PTM archive to uncover unpublished correspondence that sheds new light on the complex mixture of artistic vocation and ideological protection as PTM’s directors Paolo Grassi and Giorgio Strehler attempted to balance and exploit the grey area between exclusivity and exclusion.

Founded by Grassi, his wife Nina Vinchi, and Strehler on May 2, 1947, the PTM opened on May 14 with Maxim Gorky’s *The Lower Depths*. The PTM was the first municipal theater in Italy. Antonio Greppi, the socialist mayor of Milan after the Liberation, granted Strehler and Grassi the Broletto Theatre in Via Rovelli, in the heart of the city, which the infamous Legion Ettore Muti, the political-military body of the fascist police, had made their headquarters during the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (1943–45). Strehler would later recall “the blood stains on the walls” (Bucciattini, 68). Thus, the PTM acquired a symbolic charge even before it started. The symbolism of the PTM and its setting is summed up in this passage from Grassi: “Theater . . . because of its intrinsic nature, is . . . the best tool for spiritual elevation and cultural education available to society among the arts. . . . [It] has to be considered . . . a collective necessity, a citizen’s need, a public service, like the underground and firefighters,” Paolo Grassi had written in “Teatro, Servizio pubblico” (“Theater as Public Service”) one year before the theater’s founding on April 25, 1946 in the socialist newspaper *Avanti!* (Bucciattini, 78). Consequently, the program of the PTM reads: “Every civilization develops according to a process that combines and integrates groups in their variety and multitude. For this, we will recruit our spectators as much as possible from workers and young people, in factories, offices, and schools, offering simple and convenient forms of subscription

... while still providing high-level artistic performances at prices as low as possible. ... [A] theater of art, [a] theater for all."

Almost immediately after its founding, the PTM sought to establish contact with Brecht. Between 1948 and 1953, Paolo Grassi submitted many unsuccessful requests for the performing rights of *Antigone*, *Mother Courage and her Children*, and *The Threepenny Opera*. It took several more years and negotiations until the *The Threepenny Opera* premiered with acclaim on February 10, 1956 at the PTM.

Brecht's interest in the PTM's mission and vision is attested not only by his presence at the premiere but by his attendance of the dress rehearsal and the second performance, which was organized in collaboration with the trade union for factory workers. The production was an enormous success, and Brecht wrote two notes (27, 28), one to Grassi and one to Strehler: "Mr. Paolo Grassi, the performance is superb. Many Thanks, Bertolt Brecht"; "Dear Strehler, I would like to entrust you with every single work of mine for all Europe. Thanks, Bertolt Brecht."

These lines are the *corpus delicti*. Suhrkamp Verlag, ignorant of the Italian theater scene, followed suit, at least as long as Peter Suhrkamp was alive, and entrusted the PTM with the granting of performing rights to Italian theater companies as well as the rights for translations and song recordings. Grassi and the PTM controlled the rights to Brecht's work in Italy, although Suhrkamp Verlag never committed to a written contract nor remunerated them for this service. The only written evidence of this arrangement is a letter by Helene Weigel from 1962, confirming that the PTM and Strehler had absolute priority concerning the choice of Brecht's plays and their staging in Italy (Bucciantini, 94). Benedetto's book documents how, over the course of twenty-four years and with indefatigable energy, Grassi attempted to obtain official recognition for the PTM's role as the referee—he often used the German word "Zentrum"—for the staging of Brecht's work (with Strehler as its artistic director); comparable to the case of Robert Voisin and the magazine *Théâtre populaire* in France—as Benedetto points out (92).

At stake for Grassi was not so much the PTM's monopoly but "its artistic responsibility"—often reformulated and finally extended to "aesthetic, cultural, moral, civic, and ideological responsibility"—towards Brecht's theatrical legacy. In a letter to the councilor Alfio Beretta (Democrazia Cristiana) from May 22, 1963, he describes his objectives as follows: Responsibility means to "produce at an accepted standard the greatest works of Brecht and ... (to) make sure that (his) works are produced in a worthy way, so that their meaning and the prestige of the author are not compromised."

On the Italian front, Grassi's "manipulating" power produced "fearful subjection" to him among theater directors and producers wanting to stage Brecht. Very often, they turned to him first, before even contacting

Suhrkamp Verlag. Needless to say, this position also allowed Grassi, who had the Italian law on his side, to eliminate possible competitors. Staging the same play at different theaters in the same season was not permitted.

This "censorship" exercised by the PTM over many years began to annoy not only Italian theater directors but also the rights holders themselves, so that they began to question the privileges granted. Apparently, Helene Weigel moved towards a more pluralistic policy and finally met with other Italian directors. The municipal theaters of Genoa and Turin, for example, were granted performing rights originally reserved for Strehler. When the students' protests in 1968 made Strehler leave the PTM, Grassi remained behind with an even more arduous task to tackle.

Only Weigel's death in 1971 and Strehler's return in 1972 changed the situation again. In 1972, Grassi took over the direction of the La Scala opera house, but before leaving the PTM he finally managed to achieve his long sought-after goal. The first written agreement with Suhrkamp Verlag was signed on May 1, 1972 in Frankfurt between him, Strehler, and Suhrkamp (represented by Siegfried Unseld). It guaranteed Strehler a monopoly concerning the representation of Brecht's work.

The correspondence is chronologically ordered and annotated with considerable contextual information, and Benedetto largely abstains from providing commentary. Nonetheless, he succeeds in creating a mosaic of tactics, vetoes, (cultural) misunderstandings, relationship breakdowns, alliances, and controversies. One of the book's great achievements is that all of the protagonists maintain a certain ambiguity. Grassi, for example, might have been manipulative, but the arguments he lays out in his letters are often convincing. As far as the debates on and engagement with Brecht within the larger Italian theater scene are concerned, the author has chosen, for better or worse, the PTM's point of view in preference to other positions. There was something like a "Brecht inflation" in 1960s Italy: Brecht, at this time, was "consumed like a football match"—so the theater critic E. Capriolo in "Brecht come bandiera, medicina e strenna" ("Brecht as Flag, Medicine, and Gadgets," *Sipario*, December 1970, 15). In this sense, Grassi probably was not entirely wrong in claiming that in Italy "we should do less, but better" (Grassi to Strehler, June 29, 1964; Bucciantini, 238).

The book closes with a letter by Strehler to Helene Ritzerfeld from April 13, 1979, which summons up what the debate and the battle were about and laments the "dramatic state of misunderstanding" of Brecht's theater "which has been turned into a Theater of Cruelty, Irrational Theater, or Horror Theater . . . a theater which is basically fascist even if it claims to be revolutionary." Strehler appeals "to those who believe in a theater of reason, of humanity" to defend "an aesthetic and ideological correctness that seems to have disappeared outside the Berliner Ensemble and the Piccolo Teatro" (173).

That the battle for Brecht in Italy was a battle for hegemony also becomes perfectly clear from *Un Galileo a Milano* (Saggi Einaudi, 2017), an exciting and richly documented journey into the genealogy of Brecht's *Life of Galileo* and its Italian premiere at the PTM on April 22, 1963, directed by Strehler. The journey begins in Nazi Europe and ends in Milan during the so-called economic boom, via California, New York, and Zurich. Massimo Bucciantini, the book's author, teaches the history of science at the University of Siena and has several publications on Galileo in his portfolio. Here, the object of his interest is the "biography" (xviii) of a theater production legendary far beyond Italy. Within the context of the author's larger research interests—the history of ideas—his study is meant to be a contribution to the construction "of a secular and civic memory" of the country (xix). *Galileo* figures as a "bright luminous point" in the construction of this memory, urgently needed to be remembered and reflected upon.

Strehler's *Galileo* was a show of superlatives. It lasted over five hours and involved more than one hundred people on stage; forty actors, a chorus of children, mimes, acrobats, and a dwarf. It required four months of rehearsal and the closing of the theater for two months for the construction of the set. There were more than 160 sold-out performances in Milan alone and many more in other Italian cities. A cycle of conferences with young philosophers such as Pier Aldo Rovatti and Salvatore Veca—explaining and discussing Ludovico Geymonat's recently released study on Galileo—as well as an exhibition of documents by the astronomer in the atrium of the PTM were part of the side program. Production costs ballooned to sixty million lire (some say 120 million), but the play made more than twice as much at the box office.

Bucciantini's book opens, however, with the list of the main protagonists of the production's development: first, and surprisingly, Georgi Dimitrov, the Bulgarian communist politician accused of having set fire to the Reichstag. (Brecht had already dedicated two poems to him.) His Galileo quote in his defense at the trial in Lipsia in September 1933 may have been the inspiration for Brecht's play. Its working title reads *Die Erde bewegt sich* (*The Earth Is Moving*). As the author explains, the play was first completed in 1938 in Skovsbostrand, where Brecht was in exile. Galileo figures as an illuminist *ante litteram*, making use of subterfuge for his survival, much like the fleeing Brecht. (However, Brecht did not seem satisfied with the emotional involvement his character elicited.) Bucciantini then discusses at length Walter Benjamin's critical comments as well as Brecht's conversations with Otto Frisch (i.e., Lise Meitner's nephew and a collaborator of Niels Bohr) and his correspondence with Albert Einstein after Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassman's discovery of nuclear fission, which had suddenly put the Galileo theme into an altogether different perspective. We follow Brecht fleeing the advancing *Wehrmacht* to Sweden, then to Finland,

and to and through the Soviet Union where his beloved Grete Steffin succumbs to tuberculosis and he finally boards a ship to Los Angeles.

We learn about Brecht's difficulties in Hollywood, and plenty of space is dedicated to the friendship he developed with Charles Laughton, whom he met at Berthold and Salka Viertel's house where all the exiled European intelligentsia in Los Angeles would sooner or later show up. With Laughton, Brecht began to work extensively on *Galileo*. After the atomic bomb, physics lost its innocence, it ceased to be a discipline with the potential to liberate people from their irrational worldview and to relieve them of the drudgery of existence. Galileo had become a traitor, the archetype of a scientist who refuses to accept his responsibility. Brecht and Laughton worked together on the translation of the play into English. They also spent some time at the New York Public Library studying drawings and sketches by Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Pieter Bruegel the Elder for the costumes and props.

The play was first produced at the Coronet Theatre in Los Angeles in 1947 (and later in New York) under the direction of Joseph Losey. Among the audience were Charlie Chaplin, Ingrid Bergman, Anthony Quinn, Gene Kelly, Billy Wilder, and Frank Lloyd Wright. The production fell short of being a success. The McCarthy era was about to begin, and Brecht returned to Europe. The Berlin premiere of the play in 1957 took up many features of the California production; however, a truly memorable and path-breaking rendition was not delivered until Strehler's stage version at the PTM in 1963.

Bucciantini enumerates a great number of factors that had made this production possible. He first traces the path that had led to the publication of Brecht's work in Italy, initially at Rosa e Balbo, where Grassi curated the theater section. He takes a close look at the major restructuring of Einaudi and at the creation of new publishing series such as Einaudi Politecnico and Einaudi Universale, which included play collections by theater authors: Vito Pandolfi was in charge of the "Project Brecht." Brecht's contacts with Einaudi made him even consider moving to Northern Italy. Bucciantini then discusses the postwar cultural atmosphere, which was so readily receptive of Brecht, as well as the political activism and the Gramscian ideals which animated the Brecht promoters. They had all actively fought fascism in the *Resistenza* and played key roles in the founding of many institutions such as the PTM, the Casa della Cultura (House of Culture), the Circolo Filologico (Philological Circle), and the Jesuit Centro San Fedele. These institutions, which were intended to be places of dialogue across generations, were real "laboratories" of democracy (66). The author also points to the abolition of censorship in 1962 as another decisive moment for the staging of *Galileo*. Other Italian directors such as Ivo Chiesa had tried to produce the play before but had not succeeded. The play was considered an attack on the Church's authority and a falsification of the historical character of Galileo. Bucciantini provides an overview of all Brecht productions in Italy

until 1963 and the controversies caused by them, before finally turning to the massive preparatory work that had gone into Strehler's staging.

Strehler went, for example, on a two-month retreat in Venice with his set designer, Luciano Damiani, a former scholar of Giorgio Morandi at the Art Academy in Bologna. The scenic design gives an idea of the intensity and quality of their working method. They wanted to use "harsh white light" and build a "place of reason." They found their inspiration in Leonardo's *Atlantic Code* for the truss, which is at the same time church and laboratory, as well as in Piet Mondrian's white and grey tones. In contrast to this, they used sounds and colors for the carnival scene, in which an authority-desecrating procession takes place (scene 9), as well as for the vestment of the Pope (scene 12). Some of the sketches as well as photos of the production are reproduced in the appendix.

Once exposed to the staging, in the context of the cold war and new nuclear threats, the audience saw instantly that *Galileo* was not just a historical play but a play about power, politics, and the purpose of science. The controversy was manifold and began even before the show. It started with the choice of the main actor: not the popular in-house actor Tino Carraro but Tino Buazzelli (who was as corpulent as Charles Laughton). Politically, the most conservative currents of the Democrazia Cristiana—Milan was the first Italian city to have a center-left city council on which both the Democrazia Cristiana and the Socialist Party were represented—and the Church as well as the newly founded, radical Catholic group Gioventù Studentesca massively tried to prevent the show and to withdraw its financing. They used the same arguments that censors had used before: anticlericalism, blasphemy, and historical distortion. The struggles went on for weeks and coincided with the local election, in which the center-left council prevailed again. The PTM received twice as much funding for the next season, but the construction of an urgently needed new and larger theater was refused. It would open only twenty-five years later when Grassi and Strehler were already dead.

Bucciantini digs deep, not only into the history of *Life of Galileo* and its revision but also its production history. Equally thorough is his reconstruction of the two postwar decades in Milan and of the impact Brecht's theater had on the discourse of the time (the bibliography consumes one quarter of the total number of pages). The book has a cinematic quality—it is easy to follow also for non-specialists. It is an intriguing and exciting account and provides an excellent starting point for reviewing patterns of (Italian) politics which, in times of populism, everybody should be aware of.

Cinzia Rieveri, Berlin

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Günter Kunert (1929–2019), Sohn einer jüdischen Mutter, deren Familie in deutschen Konzentrationslagern umgebracht wurde, lernte Ende der 1940 Jahre in Ost-Berlin Brecht und Johannes R. Becher kennen. Als einem Mitunterzeichner der Petition gegen die Ausbürgerung Wolf Biermanns wurde Kunert 1977 die SED-Mitgliedschaft entzogen, zwei Jahre später siedelte er in die BRD um. Obwohl Kunerts erster Gedichtband bereits 1950 erschien, war er bis an sein Lebensende schriftstellerisch aktiv: 2018 veröffentlichte er eine Sammlung von Prosaminiaturen unter dem Titel *Ohne Umkehr*. Kunert, der vor allem für seine Prosa, Gedichte und Essays bekannt ist, aber auch viele Hörspiele und Filmdrehbücher verfasst hat, wurde mit vielen Preisen ausgezeichnet, zuletzt mit dem Kunstpreis des Landes Schleswig-Holstein (2014).

Nikolaus Müller-Schöll has been the Chair of Theatre Studies at the Department of Theatre, Film, and Media Studies at Goethe-University Frankfurt since October 2011. He is also the Head of the Master Program in Dramaturgy as well as of the International Master Program in Comparative Dramaturgy and Performance Research. His major research interests include theatre studies as a critical science, theatre as “Ereignis” (event), the question of alterity, theatre and gesture, the fictionalization of the political, theater and the question of evil, theatre and potentiality, representation “after Auschwitz,” post-traumatic theatre, and theatre architecture as built ideology. Furthermore, he continues to work on the subjects of his dissertation and habilitation: Walter Benjamin, Brecht, Heiner Müller, Heinrich von Kleist, “the comical as a paradigm of the experience of modernity” (1700

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This interdisciplinary yearbook focuses on research and cultural reflections on exile, its conditions and manifestations. While the word 'exile' has historically referred to the casting out of the individual, in contemporary scholarship, it designates the mass displacement of populations that has been characteristic of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Forced migration, the human experience thereof and its cultural articulation are the major themes of the research published in the yearbook. While there is a special emphasis on the mass migration and exile that occurred as a result of the Nazi dictatorship, the yearbook welcomes scholars to highlight intersections with other forms of exile, including those in the present day.

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Published for the International Brecht Society, the *Brecht Yearbook* is the central scholarly forum for discussion of Brecht's life and work and of topics of particular interest to him, especially the politics of literature and of theater in a global context. It embraces a wide variety of perspectives and approaches and, like Brecht himself, is committed to the use value of literature, theater, and theory.

Volume 44 features the first publication of Günter Kunert's translation of Edgar Lee Masters's poem "The Hill" with handwritten annotations by Brecht. A special section, "Brecht's Dramatic Fragments," includes essays on the unresolved tension between individual and collectivist resistance in *Fatzer*, the fragmentary aesthetic of *Fleischhacker*, and the first English translation and performance of the *David* fragments. The next section, "Pure Joke: The Comedy of Theater since Brecht," features articles on the poetics of interruption in the epilogue to *The Good Person of Szechwan*, Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* as theater of affirmation, a reassessment of the harlequin and the chorus in post-Brechtian performance, and the performative gestures of quotation in contemporary reality-satire. The volume also includes essays on capitalist guilt and debt in *The Debts of Mister Julius Caesar*, Heiner Müller's "Keuneresque" interview strategies, the 1962 world premiere of *The Threepenny Opera* in Yiddish, and Brecht's reception of Mao Tse-tung in two of his poems. Contributors include Gerrit-Jan Berendse, André Fischer, Phoebe von Held, Nicholas E. Johnson, Christian Kirchmeier, Günter Kunert, Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, Stephan Pabst, Corina L. Petrescu, David Shepherd, Katrin Trüstedt, Uwe Wirth, Burkhardt Wolf, and Xue Song.

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Cover image: Joachim Nimtz as Fatzer and Martin Schneider, Stephan Schäfer, and Felix Tittel as butchers in Manfred Karge's 2014 stage production of Brecht's *Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer* (*Downfall of the Egoist Johann Fatzer*) at the Berliner Ensemble. Photo: Lucie Jansch.

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