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**Theater of Revolution and the Law of Genre – Bertolt Brecht's *The Measures Taken* (*Die Maßnahme*)**

Oliver Simons

**Abstract:** It has been emphasized frequently that Bertolt Brecht's political theater, *Die Maßnahme* in particular, has been influenced by Carl Schmitt's theory of the sovereign and the state of exception. While it is indeed remarkable that his learning play seems to record some of the concepts which in Schmitt belong to the categories of political theory, this essay will return to the role and discourse of the theater in Brecht. The drama of revolution is a political text through and through, but it cannot separate the political from the theater; the drama of revolution is in search of a form, a meta-theater, in which the overcoming of an order is thus first and foremost the attempt to suspend the law of genre. Strikingly, Brecht's learning play brings to the stage all the characteristics which have, since Aristotle, marked tragedy: the pity, the error of a hero, the hero's comprehension of the error, the guilt of an innocent man, the hero's death, the sacrifice, and catharsis. Brecht reproduces the law of the genre he wishes to supersede and entangles his figures in inescapable aporias which have dominated the meta-discourse on drama in revolutionary theater from Büchner's *Danton's Tod* to Heiner Müller's *Mauser*.

**Keywords:** Thomas Hobbes, Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, *Die Maßnahme*, Georg Büchner, *Dantons Tod*, Heiner Müller, *Mauser*, Revolution, Genre

In political philosophy, images for the beginning of a new system of law abound. Among the most prominent is Thomas Hobbes' description of the founding of a state as an act of theater (Vogl 32). In *Leviathan* (1651) he writes that the citizen of the state must learn to transfer his power and his will to a substitute, provided, of course, his fellow citizens do the same: "[...] the multitude is united in one person that is called a commonwealth—in Latin, *civitas*. This is the generation of the great Leviathan, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that mortal god, to which we owe our peace and defense under the immortal God." (Hobbes 116) This scenario is possible only because Hobbes defines person in its Latin sense, namely as *persona*, with a concept hailing from the "stage" which the "tribunals" had also adopted: the "disguise," the "mask" is defined as *persona*, a kind of doubling of natural man, but to which is transferred all his rights and volition, thus simultaneously concealing its mask-like nature (Hobbes 108). Literary studies cite Hobbes mostly because he seems to demonstrate so immediately that literature and law, theater and political philosophy are occasionally inextricable. Like the dramatic *persona*, the juridical *persona* is defined as a substitute.

Carl Schmitt's political theory is no less frequently cited to relate literature and law, even if Schmitt very consciously distanced himself from literary metaphors. In Schmitt's writings, not theater but theology provides the foundation for his theoretical concepts and definitions. The "sovereign," for example, the pivotal figure of his *Political Theology*, first published in 1922, is a successor to the monarch by divine right. His power becomes apparent in the so-called state of exception, in a crisis of state, in which he alone may abrogate applicable law to secure the continuity of the nation and found a new order. Like the foundational theater described by Hobbes, the state of exception stands at the

beginning of a political norm. Both Hobbes and Schmitt concern themselves with describing the preconditions of an order, with the conditions for its possibility. Notwithstanding Schmitt's lack of stage metaphors in his description of this threshold of a system of law, it is noteworthy that one of the most important reactions to Schmitt's notion of sovereignty appears in a text on theater, Walter Benjamin's *The Origin of the German Mourning Play* of 1928 or even, as recent research has emphasized, in the theater pieces of Bertolt Brecht. In the title of *The Measures Taken (Die Maßnahme)*, for example, Brecht's play obviously alludes to Schmitt's state of exception; it even mentions a "Karl Schmitt" from Berlin.<sup>1</sup>

As obvious as the connections between political theory and literature in such passages may be and as adequately as they have been discussed, the methodological challenge to which analyses of this kind must surrender is no less topical: how exactly might the contemporaneity of literature and law be determined? How is it possible that such politically dissimilar intellectuals of the Weimar Republic, that a conservative theory and a revolutionary piece, seemingly employ the same concepts concordantly? Where do literature and law merge, and where do they diverge? Direct allusions in common citations and concepts employed in both are just as insufficient as answers to this catalogue of questions as biographical points of contact. Rather, I submit that Schmitt's political theory and Brecht's theater invoke one another because of structural commonalities; for just as legal philosophy depends upon 'fabricating' and depicting its object, Bertolt Brecht's learning plays likewise involve a kind of foundational theater: a theater that attempts to constitute itself and stage the conditions of its own possibility. Assuring itself of its own origins like legal philosophy, this theater describes the

threshold and transition to a new dramatic form, charting attempts which are for both—law and literature—precarious acts. With the state of exception Schmitt outlines an unlegislated space seemingly necessary for the establishment of a system of law. For Schmitt it is the formal condition of possibility, the establishment of an order not already part of the extant order, a thoroughly paradoxical starting position where one also encounters Brecht's theater. *The Measures Taken* is a theater of revolution in which a political revolution disguises itself as an aesthetic revolution, specifically as a revolution of theater. It, too, is foundational theater. Consequently, this learning play displays a paradoxical structure similar to that in Schmitt's state of exception: a kind of interstice from which a new theater arises and which must yet simultaneously arrange itself as stage space. In other words, in creating a new revolutionary genre with the learning play, even Brecht must stage a theater and resort to traditional forms—and that makes *The Measures Taken* so susceptible to paradoxes; it concerns the boundary of its own genre and the overcoming of it, but within the form of theater.

Both Schmitt's political theory and Brecht's *The Measures Taken* thus deal with variations on reconnoitering thresholds, inquiring as they do after the provenance and origins of an order.<sup>2</sup> As the following demonstrates, the differences between legal philosophy and learning play emerge at this threshold. Whereas Schmitt's investigation of the conditions of possibility makes for a paradoxical figure of thought, Brecht's paradox infects the genre in which he articulates it. The law of legal philosophy in Schmitt's treatment is of a different nature than the law of genre (Derrida) in Brecht, than the rule and order of a dramatic form. In the following, I will unfold this series of thoughts in three steps: after a short exposition of Schmitt's theory of the state of

exception and Benjamin's response to it there follows a close reading of Brecht's learning play in order to test the comparability of structural *aporias* in law and literature. Finally, a historical allusion becomes the focus; which literary history does the law of genre entail? To which dramas does Brecht provide an answer with his *The Measures Taken*, and which counter-reactions does his revolutionary piece provoke? The foundational acts of the theater of revolution, I will conclude, may be found in the theater after 1789, in Georg Büchner's *Danton's Death* in particular.

### **I. States of Exception—Benjamin vs. Schmitt**

Carl Schmitt's political philosophy defines the state of exception as a moment of upheaval: in an emergency the sovereign retains the right to suspend the effective norm, but only to vouchsafe the continuity of the state.<sup>3</sup> While preserving the nation, the state of exception grants an unlegislated space in which the sovereign alone determines which system of law henceforth obtains: "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception." (Schmitt, *Politische Theologie* 13).<sup>4</sup> Decisive in multiple regards, the sovereign is consequently the key figure in Schmitt's theory, his task not merely to identify the extreme case of emergency, but to determine which norm shall hold after overcoming the state of exception. In other words, his decision *is* the overcoming of the state of exception; it *is* the constitution of law, very literally legislative.<sup>5</sup> Systems of law, it follows, depend on decisions and as norms cannot be derived from other norms (Schmitt, *Politische Theologie* 16).

Even this abridged recapitulation of Schmitt's notion of sovereignty suggests why Walter Benjamin was able to formulate his response to this theory in a text about theater. Bound

to an authoritarian determination, the theory of the state of exception practically demands to be supplemented by a theory of the sovereign subject. Only when recognized as sovereign may he act effectually. He must thus be represented in a commensurate way, as he owes his authority not to the content of his decrees but solely to his status. Implicitly at least, Schmitt's political model is an aesthetic one, for although he concerns himself with verifying that norms do not derive from other norms, the precondition for this is an acknowledged sovereign.<sup>6</sup> The outcome of the decisive act is dependant upon whether it is carried out by a sovereign who himself is not subject to the system over which he disposes. Outside the norm, the sovereign is for precisely this reason its guarantor. To a certain extent he embodies the condition for the possibility that the state can exercise its right to self-preservation.

To have recognized this is perhaps the most important point in Walter Benjamin's *The Origin of the German Mourning Play*, a text that confronts Schmitt's notion of sovereignty with the history of representations of the sovereign in theatrical texts.

Benjamin examines the theoretical circumstances as aesthetic ones, intending thereby not to supplement Schmitt's model but to undercut and invalidate it. To Schmitt's theory of action and the decisive act he issues a rejoinder with his analyses of baroque mourning plays wherein sovereigns appear thoroughly certain of their power despite being in no position to make decisions at all. Benjamin relativizes the seemingly ahistorical theory of the sovereign with a view to the history of the mourning play, whose sovereign comes across mostly as ditheringly, dolefully, and ficklely subject to his affects. The sovereign becomes an unfortunate wretch among unfortunate wretches (Benjamin, *Ursprung des Trauerspiels* 265; Agamben 69), and for these very qualities, according to Benjamin, a

“representative” of history. In contradistinction to ancient tragedy, which draws upon myths, the baroque mourning play chronicles its own contemporary history with the figure of the sovereign at its center. Mourning plays thus possess a fundamentally different range of action since history, a product of human agency, is alterable. Indeed, Benjamin’s reading aims at the ‘representation’ of history by a sovereign incapable of bringing himself to arbitrate: “The prince with whom the decision rests regarding the state of exception demonstrates in the very best of situations that a decision for him is almost impossible.” (Benjamin, *Ursprung des Trauerspiels* 250)<sup>7</sup>

The focus in his criticism of Schmitt lies not only in the incapacity of the sovereign to wrangle himself to a decision but also in his reference to the sovereign’s representative capacity of history (Weber). The theory of representation, as alluded to earlier, is of great significance for Schmitt; a sovereign requires representation befitting his rank lest his actions be ineffective. In Benjamin’s tract, however, the concept of representation has a dual meaning; not only does the sovereign mirror his own era (from which he is displaced according to Schmitt), but Benjamin also declares him a representative, that is to say a substitute, which in the theater he very literally is. From the juridical *persona* of the sovereign described by Schmitt develops the *persona* of the actor in Benjamin—a displacement of the sovereign into a cache of images Schmitt attempts to avoid in his political theory. In his model Schmitt did not invoke the theater to insist upon a kind of authenticity seemingly robbed from the representatives of theatrical action of yore. Stage characters represent but are not what they seem as substitutes. Because representation has a different, more immediate meaning in theology than in theater, Schmitt derives his own political concepts from the former:



“All incisive concepts of modern political science are secularized theological concepts. Not only according to their historical development, because they were transferred from theology to political science, for example by the almighty God’s becoming an omnipotent lawmaker, but also in their systematic structure, the knowledge of which is necessary for a sociological examination of these concepts. The state of exception has, for jurisprudence, a meaning analogous to the miracle for theology.” (Schmitt, *Politische Theologie* 43)<sup>8</sup>

Consequently Schmitt’s sovereign is to be understood more as a symbolic figure, one which coheres more tightly in its meaning than was the case in the representation model.

The significance of a symbol derives from its connection of the sign with what is signified by it while in representation the sign is arbitrary and can be replaced by other signs. As the *persona* of the stage adopts its role as a substitute, so too does the sign of representation—with a purely arbitrary link to what is meant by it. Benjamin borrows Schmitt’s theory of sovereignty in a text on the mourning play, thus making it a question of literature.<sup>9</sup> Benjamin’s sovereign is no longer one who acts on his own authority but is rather a figure of the drama, which has its own history and laws. The baroque mourning play not only distinguishes itself from ancient tragedy, but also supersedes classical theater, a symbolic theater, as Benjamin writes, that was always intent on corresponding to an artistic ideal with its form, of creating a unity of form and meaning. The baroque mourning play, however, possesses an allegorical character because its form is broken open, because it no longer embodies an ideal, exposing instead a hitherto unknown void. In the baroque period, Benjamin claims, the world view has separated from its eschatological determination, knowing no predetermined aim, no determination around which it might orient itself. With no hope of eschatological fulfillment, the mourning play also loses its theology. The course of action is no longer inevitable; its end is open

(Benjamin, *Ursprung des Trauerspiels* 259; Deiters 76). Sovereigns face this evacuated worldview, confounded. While Schmitt's sovereign is somewhat displaced from history, Benjamin's is moved by it and consigned to it.

It is not surprising then that years later Schmitt will respond to Benjamin with an essay on tragedy which, against the backdrop of the mourning play, differentiates itself as a timeless form unchanged by history. In Benjamin, Hamlet is one of the examples for the melancholy prince (Benjamin, *Ursprung des Trauerspiels* 334) while in Schmitt's *Hamlet or Hecuba* he is of a very different nature. Although Schmitt maintains that tragedy is shaped by history, he, unlike Benjamin, observes history as a form of reality independent of its discourse and representation. For Benjamin history is not separate from its representation but is rather a construct; Schmitt describes history as an externality, a reality independent from the text of its representation. Hamlet is a "yet still living myth" (Schmitt, *Hamlet* 10) whose tragedy displays itself precisely in its facticity (Twellmann 53). In contrast to history, which is ambiguous and open to interpretation, but which consequently befuddles and saddens its observers, myth and tragedy are determined unequivocally; while Benjamin chooses the open allegory as his textual model to demonstrate the mourning play, Schmitt rails against the "infinitely" many interpretations of Hamlet (Schmitt, *Hamlet* 9). Although Benjamin views representation as an ambiguous form with its own history, Schmitt's myth is immutable; it seems to be just as unambiguous and certain as the symbol whose meaning is substantively incorporated into an unmistakable sign.

Proceeding from these antithetical conceptions of history, one may imagine to what extent Benjamin contradicts Schmitt's theory of the state of exception. With his model,

the latter attempts to justify the preservation of the state, defining the state of exception as a necessary threshold to stabilize a new order; on the other hand, a different notion of history underlies Benjamin's description of the state of exception. He insists upon the possibility of upheaval and the interruption of historical progression. Although In his essay on the *Concept of History* (*Begriff der Geschichte*) he concedes that the state of exception has become "the rule" and that one must come to an understanding of history that makes allowances for that (Benjamin, *Begriff der Geschichte* 697), his intention is to facilitate an actual state of exception, to interrupt the course of history, to make history cognizable in a different way. Benjamin questions sovereign rule—by his understanding true sovereignty would not lead to a sovereign and authoritarian decision. Rather the real state of exception would serve to annul the right of the sovereign.

## **II. The Law of Genre—Brecht's *Maßnahme***

Schmitt and Benjamin stand for two opposing interpretations of the state of exception: measures for securing the state concern Schmitt while for Benjamin the objective is the toppling of an order. Schmitt strengthens the law, Benjamin the revolution. Common to both is the interstice from which one may even begin to question the given norm and without which the state of exception is unthinkable. Whether a sovereign or revolutionaries occupy this space, it is in any case an exterior that is subject to laws other than those of the ruling order. As the following will show, Brecht's learning play *The Measures Taken* transforms this interstitial space into the site of theatrical action. The play thus is beset by the same ambivalence outlined by Schmitt and Benjamin: is it a

drama in which the laws are only annulled to justify a new order, or is it a theater of revolution in a literal sense, a piece insisting on the moment of upheaval? And how does Brecht relate to the other opposition outlined here? Is his learning play symbolic, the attempt to give form to a political idea, to overcome ambiguity with a decision? Or is it an allegorical piece, open to interpretation, that stages the sovereign decision solely to put it into question? Finally, how does the learning play as a genre distinguish itself from Schmitt's legal philosophy and Benjamin's genre history, and which displacements appear when the theory of the sovereign decision is no longer disputed in a tract or text on theater but in the medium of a stage piece?

The play inspired the most controversy when it was read as evidence of Brecht's political partisanship and his justification of violence in the state of exception. Brecht's *The Measures Taken* deals not only with the "ABC of Communism," (Brecht 107) but also and primarily with the inescapable means of its dissemination. Brecht summarizes the action as follows:

"Four communist agitators stand before a party court played by the chorus. While disseminating communist propaganda in China they had to shoot their youngest comrade. To prove to the court the necessity of this measure taken to shoot a comrade, they now demonstrate how the comrades behaved in various political situations. They show that the young comrade was emotionally a revolutionary, but possessed insufficient discipline and did not allow his intellect to speak often enough, thereby becoming a great danger for the movement without his wanting to." (Brecht 237)<sup>10</sup>

That the political message and its propaganda are not the focal point of the play one can recognize already from the formulaic "ABC of Communism." Rather, the subversion of circumstances in Brecht's piece refers primarily to the law of its own genre, to a revolution of theater. As Schmitt inquires after the conditions for the possibility of a

system of law in his political theory, as Benjamin would like to invoke a state of exception that assists in overcoming the system of law, so too is Brecht's *Measures Taken* a piece that attempts to justify itself. For Brecht it is not simply a drama of revolution with a political intent, but instead foremost a revolution of drama and a state of exception in the law of its own genre, a learning play that stages and negotiates its own lesson as theatrical action and yet also still exacerbates the dichotomy delineated here in the debate between Schmitt and Benjamin. While one may occupy a theoretical position in legal philosophy, from which one might observe an order from without or from a meta-perspective, the staging of a meta-theater in the medium of a theatrical text seems disproportionately more difficult. It is peculiar that with his political actions the central figure of the play, the young comrade, exclusively brings into play concepts that have a long history in theater: his "error," his lack of discipline is more precisely defined as having "a heart for the revolution" and "pity" for the oppressed: "The sight of injustice drove me to the ranks of the fighters. Man must help man." (Brecht 106)<sup>11</sup> Even after the agitators prompt him, he is unsuccessful in overcoming his pity (Brecht 111). Yet it becomes clear that political agitation in Brecht's learning play cannot be differentiated from aesthetic concepts, as "error" and "pity" are two seminal categories of drama according to Aristotle; as "error" or *hamartia* he designated the decisive cause of the dramatic action, misconduct on the part of the hero that sets the plot in motion which ought to elicit fear and pity in the viewer. Brecht's young comrade is himself a viewer of tragic conditions, a spectator, however, who does not want to resign himself to his role and would rather intervene in the action. The consequence of his engagement is of course that he threatens to betray the revolutionary idea. His error is, in other words, becoming

an active agent to interfere in the theatrical action. And now in the center of the action, he obviously fares no differently than a tragic hero, for because of an all too human error—his pity for the oppressed—the agitators must sacrifice him, which is to say accord him an end which is no less essential for the law of genre in which the story occurs. It is precisely here that the ambivalence in Brecht's theater of revolution reveals itself. If the young comrade is sacrificed, his termination corresponds with the model of a tragedy, with a dramatic form, that is, which the learning play tries to depose. In the early versions of the piece, Brecht actually provided the pertinent scene with the Biblical allusion "The Entombment," only replacing it in his revision with "The Measures Taken." (Brecht 131)

A displacement, which could not be more fundamental, seems to accompany the renaming. While the "entombment" recalls the drama of a martyr, a sobering extermination takes place in the later version, on the one hand with the concept of legal philosophy and on the other hand in Brecht's application of this to the play itself. This is the drama of the meta-theater: the measures taken in *Die Maßnahme*, one could say, are most decisively employed where the end of the play is at stake. Since Brecht's learning play brings to the stage an action that has long since occurred—the death of the young comrade precedes the performance—it may be read as an interpretation and analysis of the end, receiving its decisive turn here; if the young comrade is a victim in the traditional sense, then one may interpret Brecht's *The Measures Taken* as a tragedy which finds the law of genre beyond the state of exception. If the young comrade is utterly annihilated, then the play not only ends in a way the law of genre would prescribe it; to a certain extent it would also insist upon the revolutionary moment insofar as it assails the status of the victim itself. The opposition previously described between Schmitt and

Benjamin—between the measures taken to preserve an order and the measures taken to bring about revolution—returns here.

This discrepancy looms even larger if one factors in the last words of the young comrade.

Before the agitators cast him into the lime pit, they first ask him to acquiesce to their measure:

“Yes, I see, I always acted wrongly. [...] I who so very much wanted to be of use caused only harm. [...] He added to this: in the interest of communism / In agreement with the advance of the proletarian masses / Of all nations / Affirming the revolutionizing of the world.” (Brecht 133; Müller-Schöll 507)<sup>12</sup>

The young comrade’s last sentences are noteworthy because they do not simply appear to promulgate a political message. If his actions had always been wrong, or put differently, if it was wrong that he ever took action, then his doings were tragic, an innocent form of making oneself blameworthy. But also his acquiescence is primarily in accordance with tragedy because it is proper to the behavioral scheme of tragic heroes to recognize the culpability of their actions before exiting the stage. In his play, Brecht seems to bring concepts of the Aristotelian drama into play against one another; the comrade errs because he is compassionate. With his acquiescence to his elimination, he ultimately remains up to the bitter end a tragic hero who thereby also resisted *The Measures Taken* as a learning play wanting to overcome traditional theatrical forms.

Brecht embroils his characters in indissoluble paradoxes. His play puts the formal idiosyncrasies of a tragic text on stage on the one hand to overcome them there performatively, and on the other hand to let his characters fall into traditional role schemata. An interstitial space for a state of exception seems impossible on stage except according to laws and classification patterns inherited from the history of the stage. In the

theater of revolution that has the revolution of theater as its aim, a play is still performed<sup>13</sup>; theater shows resistance to its own revolution. One might, with Benjamin Bennett, describe this inconsistency as the conservative essence of genre:

“Genres cannot be invented; they operate as genres, as basic guides or how to read texts, only by *already* being there, prior to the text in question. Genres cannot be overturned or destroyed; if I deliberately flout the rules of a particular genre, then I am still *invoking* precisely that genre as a guide to understanding me. Genres evolve over time, of course, but not in ways we can predict or control. Genre thus has the character of tradition, but only in the sense that we experience that tradition as *confining*; and the more we think about genre, the more we are worried by the prospect of having to admit that literature itself, as a whole, is nothing but tradition in just this sense.” (Bennett 30)

Seen in this way, the violence so central to *The Measures Taken* would be far less coercive and powerful than the violence of the genre that is palpable in the insuperability of its structures. The figures are caught up in a battle against the genre, which dictates their own doings and limits their freedom of action.

One must not conclude from this, however, that Brecht’s *The Measures Taken* may be described as a tragedy or an incomplete learning play. It is also not a matter of a decision between the two aforementioned variants, the state of exception as a means of preserving an order or the state of exception as a figure of upheaval. Brecht’s learning play stages the *aporia* of these two possibilities as well, to probe the boundaries of its own genre. Consequently, the comparison between learning play and legal philosophy confronts the methodological task of not simply leaping over the boundary of the genre. That it is so obvious to rediscover concepts and models of contemporaneous legal philosophy in Brecht’s learning play stems primarily from the conflation in Brecht of the legal model with an aesthetic one. In Schmitt this is not the case. The learning play supplements and undercuts the discourse of legal philosophy by continually representing political concepts



as aesthetic ones, nevertheless making clear that there can be no political action in theater that does not remain beholden to the history of theater. Brecht attempts not to abrogate the law of genre, but rather to exhibit its efficacy. It is about theater revolution in a literal sense, a return of form instead of its overcoming.

The boundary of one's own medium is reflected in different ways in *The Measures Taken*. It is peculiar, for example, that the "movement" is one of the preferred metaphors in the play. Once again the concept has a political meaning, but beyond this, "movement" refers to the drama and its language. At the very beginning the "marching revolution" is mentioned, whereupon ensues the chorus' summoning of the agitators: "step forward!" (Brecht 105) Even after this prelude, the movement remains a theme in various ways. In one of the episodes, for example, the young comrade tries to help laborers drag heavy rice barges; without footwear they continually slip and fall on the slippery ground. While the agitators want no pity and accept the slipping of the laborers to stoke protest among them, the young comrade ultimately lays stones under their feet. This measure is perhaps indicative of the difference between the comrade and the agitators; the latter witness the plight of the laborers with indifference because a short-term ease in their situation could endanger the actual movement of political revolution. The young comrade, conversely, seeks out traction; for him anchoring the revolution, visible progress with concrete means, is the primary concern. While the agitators prefer the abstract movement, the comrade intervenes in the action to demonstrate the movement to himself. To cite another example helpful in expounding upon the difference between the agitators and the comrade: when the agitators cross the country's border with the comrade to propagate the teachings of communism in Mukden (Shenyang), the characters disguise themselves:

“But the work in Mukden was illegal, so we had to erase our faces before crossing the border.” (Brecht 108)<sup>14</sup> “You must not be seen,” it reads further,

“then you will no longer be yourselves: you no longer Karl Schmitt from Berlin, you no longer Anna Kjersk from Kasan, and you no longer Peter Sawitsch from Moskau, but all of you nameless and motherless, blank sheets of paper onto which the revolution will inscribe its instructions. [...] Then you will be, from this moment on, no longer Nobody, but rather from this moment on and probably until your disappearance unknown workers, fighters, Chinese, born of Chinese mothers, with yellow skin, speaking Chinese while sleeping and fevered.” (Brecht 109)<sup>15</sup>

There is a border crossing, consequently, in more than one regard. The agitators exercise their political role as actors, becoming in an actual sense *personae* of the theater.

Moreover, their doubling seems to have a linguistic meaning as well, for beyond the border it becomes entirely clear that the agitators differ from the comrade even in their manner of speaking. That they stand for the general political movement shapes even their expressions—they speak formulaically and in repetitions while the young comrade cannot conceal his intentions, clinging instead to a speech which couples expression and action back onto a subject. “I can’t go any further,” (Brecht 112)<sup>16</sup> says one of the laborers, and the young comrade responds shortly thereafter, “I can’t do this anymore. You have to demand new shoes.” (Brecht 115)<sup>17</sup> His speech, concrete and insistent upon immediate action, is bound to a subject: unlike the agitators who speak of the revolution as a generic movement without placing themselves in the position of the subject. A “speech without speaker,” (Brecht 110) one of the inserted songs reads, is the ideal of the movement (Horn, *Regeln der Ausnahme* 690). They actually make themselves invisible because they also insist upon making themselves anonymous. In vanishing, however, they show the theater its boundary. As invisible characters they withhold themselves

somewhat from the stage, refraining from movement and action, which constitutes drama on a purely etymological level: unlike the young comrade who can do nothing but play along.<sup>18</sup> When he says “I can’t do this anymore,” this also means that the subject “I” surrenders. But the “I” is likewise what insinuates time and again that it will not in fact disappear. What Brecht dramatizes as theatrical action is the difference between a political text and a play, the difference between a text without subject and a genre that always requires a subject of the action. Were *The Measures Taken* to destroy the young comrade in the extreme, it would not only infringe upon the law of its genre; it would no longer resemble a play.

The paradox of the young comrade, however, is that he desires to act in a play whose rules he clearly does not yet know because they are different than those possible in theater. In this impossibility of his action he is pulverized. He may don the mask, becoming on one hand a stage actor, but in contrast to the agitators he cannot distinguish himself from his role. This constitution casts him ultimately in a tragic role; he fails on his own dichotomy between his *persona* and his naked ego.

How then do the agitators fare when they restage the fate of the young comrade for the control chorus? Previous studies have all concentrated on the embedded narrative, on the occurrence with the comrade, but one must differentiate at least two strata in the play, for *The Measures Taken* performs theater within theater in several regards. In a kind of court proceeding, the agitators reenact the individual episodes, each of them adopting the role of the comrade once. Now their guilt or innocence is at stake. It is noteworthy that while they distance themselves from the compassionate comrade on the level of the embedded narrative, by becoming actors themselves they are no less susceptible to the role

paradigms of traditional theater. The killing of their companion they describe to the control chorus as an act of catharsis on one's own body: "So we decided: to cut off our own body's foot. It is terrible to kill. But not only others: we will even kill ourselves if necessary." (Brecht 132)<sup>19</sup>

The metaphor of the severed foot is striking. The movement's progress seems to be possible only when one forms a communal body that is more than the individual—with the foot, the agitators also seem to separate a part of a natural body from themselves, precisely that part to which the young comrade had directed his attentions in his pity for the barefoot laborers.<sup>20</sup> But if this transformation itself is nothing more than a cathartic cleansing, the agitators act exactly in accordance with theater. Although they only want to eliminate the comrade, not sacrifice him, thereby refusing him a tragic exaltation, they describe their own catharsis as a sacrifice. At first they appear successful at the endeavor which was always beyond the comrade's grasp—they overcome their pity—, but they nevertheless obey the law of genre. Before the spectators in the control chorus, they redeem their catharsis as a scheme that ultimately converts Brecht's learning play back into a dramatic form against which it had wanted to rebel.

The repetition of the murder scene for the control chorus demonstrates yet again that in Brecht's theater the political is not to be separated from the aesthetic.<sup>21</sup> The agitators conjure a body of the collective, which is assembled in a way similar to that of Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan: from the bodies of its members. The catharsis at the end of the play is thus a kind of foundational scene, a theatrical act in which they attempt to liberate themselves from the natural body which the all too sensitive comrade did not want to relinquish: "I cannot be silent because I'm right," he exclaimed before ripping the mask

from his face and showing the agitators “his naked face / human, open, and innocent” (Brecht 129 f.)<sup>22</sup> Brecht’s learning play is the drama of a political founding theater to the extent that it hinders this foundational scenario. A founding theater cannot be reenacted because the evidence providing its condition is lost. By bringing the distinction between bare man and his *persona* onto the stage, Brecht also tears asunder the *persona* of political man and the *persona* of the actor because the figures observe themselves while performing their political actions as theatrical acts. In Hobbes, the stage metaphors are so evident because they manage to conceal their metaphoricity: The political act *is* a theatrical act. In Brecht this is no longer possible as *The Measures Taken* deals only with the ambivalence and fallibility of a foundational act.

One might object that with the metaphor of a collective body Brecht does indeed seize upon a symbolic form insofar as this body composes itself quite substantially from the collective of everyone. And even the catharsis might be interpreted as a moment in which the utopia of a collective shines forth. Simultaneously, however, one must ascertain that this scene likewise tells of an injury, which maims not only the political body but also the symbolic in general. The agitators do not only reenact the death of the comrade; their cathartic cleansing seems to be the mere repetition of a past form, a melancholy act.

Unpalatable because it is too sentimental, the spectacle of the comrade has ultimately infected the agitators who reenact him. Even they have not found another form of theater. Even the control chorus seems in the end to have transformed into an audience against which Brecht’s learning play had actually competed—he still assures the agitators of his “empathy.” (Brecht 132; Rasch 339)<sup>23</sup> By alternating in the representation of the comrade, acceding to the role of an actor who no longer wanted to cooperate but through

this very lack of cooperation became a tragic hero, the agitators demonstrate what distinguishes the stage in the theater per se; in representation, theater has a limit it cannot overcome.

### **III. Theater of Revolution**

As meta-theater, Brecht's *The Measures Taken* deals with the play and reenactment of an occurrence. It is a play within a play that exhibits the *persona* as a substitute. The comrade seems to want to divest himself of his role as an actor, ripping the mask off and representing with his sentimentality the type of actor so widely known in theater history. Diderot himself had railed polemically against all too sentimental actors who do not master their roles with distance and calculation. The agitators scarcely master their roles any better; with their measures taken they may keep clear of pity, but in the frame story, their performance, and the reenactment of the occurrence itself, they are actors and fall prey to the role archetypes of theater. Had they distanced themselves in the embedded narrative, they now slide back into the center of the action before the audience of the control chorus. Brecht's learning play demonstrates that the actors are hardly capable of dissociating themselves from old performance archetypes. They do attempt to play against the theater but cannot completely suppress the law of genre. Even in their play within a play, the agitators do not succeed in taking up a meta-perspective. On the contrary, as actors they adopt roles from which they attempt to distance themselves. While acting they entangle themselves in an insurmountable paradox. In its own theatricality, Brecht's *The Measures Taken* seems to encounter a limit, unable to

overcome the law of its genre. Whenever the figures begin to act, they impede the progress of the political movement.

The “play” had also been a key concept in the previously outlined debate between Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt. In his history of the mourning play, Benjamin retraces a gradual intensification of the concept of play. From the baroque to the Classical to the Romantic periods, play becomes an ever more self-sufficient, reflexive form in drama. But Benjamin already observed playful properties in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (Benjamin, *Ursprung des Trauerspiels* 163), whereas for Schmitt even the famous play within a play in the third act is no artificial doubling of the play itself, no pure stage spectacle, but still an expression of the text’s strong reference to reality; the tragic, Schmitt contends, is not gambled away (Schmitt, *Hamlet* 45 ff.). It is no poetic fantasy or invention. Although Benjamin shares this estimation of the tragic, he does not view mourning plays as tragedies because play occurs in them. The play within a play is significant for the mourning play for the very reason that in it a distance to reality becomes noticeable which, if nothing else, crops up in the sovereigns’ lacking strength of purpose. Their theater is a space of possibility that confounds them because of its openness.

Schmitt disagrees. More clearly than in *Hamlet or Hecuba*, where he mentions Benjamin (Schmitt, *Hamlet* 64), he distinguishes himself in his *Political Romanticism* from the purely playful as the epitome of an epoch that has lost the ability to think any form of causality.<sup>24</sup> Here, too, is a question of a previously marked semiotic boundary. As a doubling, the play within a play is a performance of representation. It shows the substitutes as substitutes, the actors in their roles. The play is emblematic substitute action that has relinquished contact with reality.

The relationship of Brecht's *The Measures Taken* and Schmitt's model of sovereignty and decision can be completely measured only when one takes into account the whole dramaturgy of the play within a play. A signal that an actor, having broken character, reveals himself to the audience as an actor is the tearing of the mask on stage. In *The Measures Taken* the young comrade sets into a motion a play within a play at the moment when he reveals his bare face, showing himself as an actor who no longer wishes to play along. To reenact this figure is the task of the agitators. In their paradoxical starting position of playing out an actor who himself gave up acting, they only find their way out of this infinite regress of mutual doublings—and one might interpret this as a gesture in the sense of Carl Schmitt—by freeing themselves from his parasitic role and returning to a theater of catharsis. As varied as the agitators and comrade may be, Brecht's learning play leads them into a hall of mirrors in which one thing above all others becomes visible: that the figures define themselves not by their political ideology but by their disposition towards the *persona*.

The dramatic nature of this play within a play exhibits itself thus not only in the comparison between Brecht's learning play and contemporaneous political philosophy. Since the founding fiction of the state in the theatrical act, the play within a play has had a literary history that, especially in revolutionary pieces, has experienced newer inflections—inflections, of course, that only bring to bear an accentuation in the sense of the described doubling, an increasing reflection of the mirror scenes. For the beginnings of a literary history of the play within a play, one would have to cite with Jean-Jacques Rousseau writings that anticipate and attempt to avert the regress of a model of representation; by the same token there are those attempts to found a new nation in the



theater: the history of national theater (Vogl 32). “If we were to experience a national stage, we would also become one nation,” as Schiller wrote in 1784 about the playhouse (Schiller 5: 830).<sup>25</sup> With the French Revolution whose events were often perceived by contemporary observers as theatrical occurrences (Vogel 57 ff.), one would have to mark an incision whose ramifications are still felt today in Brecht.<sup>26</sup> The execution in 1793 of Louis XVI as Louis Capet was a caesura in the history of political metaphor—not only was the king disempowered, but his beheading under a bourgeois name made clear that the metaphor of the king’s two bodies had lost its obviousness: the disempowerment of the symbolic body was followed by the beheading of the natural one (Schneider 132). Like perhaps no other text of German literary history, Georg Büchner’s *Danton’s Death* translated this primordial scene of the French Revolution drastically and immediately into its own poetics. In this drama of revolution after the revolution, the rift between the symbolic and the concrete, the ideal and the body, is present in nearly every scene—as a rift after which there are only signs that, as representative entities, have the functions of substitutes. In the programmatic prelude to the play, the first scene reads that the new form of the nation must be like a “transparent gown that clings closely to the body of the people. Every pulsing vein, flexing muscle, twitching sinew must leave its inprint. Its appearance may be beautiful or ugly—it has the right to be as it is. We don’t have the right to cut a dress for it as we see fit.” (Büchner, *Danton’s Death* 61)<sup>27</sup> Here, too, foundational theater is the focus, a substitute for the corporeal metaphors of the Leviathan as Thomas Hobbes had described it, namely as the body of an artificial god which forms the members of his nation into a higher entity. Büchner’s metaphor of the garment is not coincidentally related to the theater. The challenge of his characters is to perform a play

so that it appears evident although they have long since seen through the theatricality and artificiality of the act. *Danton's Death* is, from the beginning, a play within a play in which the characters view one another like the spectators of a play. "Look at the pretty lady—how neatly she plays her cards. She knows how, all right—they say she always gives her husband a heart and others a diamond. You women could even make us fall in love with a lie." (Büchner, *Danton's Death* 59)<sup>28</sup> Foundational acts are only obvious when one is capable of devoting oneself so entirely to the play that one forgets one's metaphoricity, when the *persona* in the legal sense can no longer be separated from the *persona* in the dramatic sense. The continual beheadings in the play recall that this unity is lost, separating heads from bodies, the ideal from the body, the imagination from the action and thereby justifying a logic of signs according to which there is no longer an anchoring of meaning in the bearer of the symbol. After the guillotine, signs are only exchangeable signifiers and signifieds whose connections are arbitrary and purely coincidental. Büchner's revolutionary drama is thus also a revolutionizing of drama, a meta-theater that attempts to stage its own legality but must, however, become ensnared in indissoluble paradoxes.

One must consider this theater history when in *The Measures Taken* Brecht puts into play the relationship between action and ideology, between political action and its artistic representation. His revolutionary characters are no less paradoxical than Büchner's. At the end of the play, the moment of political utopia admittedly appears, the ideal of the theater as a reformatory, when the agitators experience their catharsis. And yet for a symbolic and unifying act, this gesture seems insufficient because it employs a form it

was to obviate. Perhaps, however, catharsis was the only possibility to curb the infinite regress of doublings for a moment.

Brecht's *The Measures Taken* is of course not a terminal point in the history of the drama of revolution. A detailed historical reconstruction of this genre would at least have to progress up to Heiner Müller and his 1970 play *Mauser*, a kind of dramatic commentary on *The Measures Taken* (Steinmayr, *Souveränitätstheater; Bilder der Gewalt*). This play deals with the revolution of drama, copying the court scene from Brecht and condemning a revolutionary to death. The figure A was to have killed enemies of the revolution on behalf of the party, among others his predecessor B who, like Brecht's young comrade, succumbed to his compassion and began to doubt the meaning of killing. B's mistake was seeing humans, not enemies, and his successor A fares no differently. "Not humans are you ordered to kill, but / Enemies. For the human is unknown."<sup>29</sup> (Müller 138 f.)—neither A nor B is capable of following this differentiation of the chorus.

Unlike Brecht's young comrade, neither A nor B agree to their deaths. They do not expire with the acquiescence to the party, insisting to the very end on their humanity. They do not give up the play within the play, referring instead to their distance from their allotted roles. Without acquiescence in their own deaths, Müller's revolutionaries defend themselves against their own revolution but also thereby become tragic victims. In Müller, there can no longer be a catharsis for the party and its collective body. While Brecht cannot entirely dissociate himself from the law of genre in his learning play, while the law appears to be an aporia, blocking the movement again and again, in Müller the reverse occurs; the law becomes the right of the characters to which they cling to the very end. Müller responds to Brecht, one could conclude, with a tragedy.

Even Heiner Müller's revolutionaries are in a starting position, which is rendered not only in political but also in aesthetic concepts. Their abbreviation to the variables A and B (with the chorus, Müller's variant of an ABC) already makes this clear. In Müller, the characters are robbed of their subjectivity; their drama plays out in precisely that abyss that opens between natural man and his *persona*. B's formulation "I withdraw my hand from the order" (Müller 128 f.)<sup>30</sup> is only a variation of this paradoxical initial position. This doubling inscribes itself onto the characters to such a degree that they are simultaneously subjects and objects. Pointedly formulated, *Mauser* is about the shooting of its own manpower and thereby attacks its own conditions. And even A rejects his own action as in a theatrical piece. As executioner on behalf of the party, he was so intoxicated by killing that he was driven by the violence into a bloody frenzy—the chorus:

"I take under my boot what I have killed / I dance on my dead with stamping dance rhythms / For me it is not enough to kill what has to die / so that the revolution triumphs and the killing ceases / But it shall be here no longer and not at all / And disappear from the face of the earth / A clean slate for those to come." (Müller 140 f.)<sup>31</sup>

Out of the revolutionary tribunal there develops a Dionysian fest, a moment of inebriation with whose description the play recalls the originals of ancient tragedy. In *Mauser*, too, the focus is the search for a new dramatic model; the play repeats a discourse about drama that Brecht had conducted: the question of guilt and innocence, of *hamartia* as the flaw of the hero, of acquiescence, the victim, and the tragic. The "I" has severed itself from the characters—"I between hand and revolver, finger and trigger / I gap in my consciousness, at our front." (Müller 136 f.)<sup>32</sup>—it stands unavoidably as a third party between the action and the revolution, etymologically related to the revolver, in the

center of the action. When A confesses before the chorus that he has made an error, the chorus replies: “You are the mistake. / A: I am human [...] I don’t want to die.” (Müller 124 f.)<sup>33</sup> A is the error, which is to say, the *hamartia* that sets the drama in motion, the flaw to be overcome.

After completing his *Mauser*, Müller writes that he cannot come up with another learning play; its times has elapsed, the Christian “Endzeit” of *The Measures Taken* has expired: “and I won’t twiddle my thumbs until another revolutionary situation comes by.” (Müller, *Mauser* 85).<sup>34</sup> In 1977, he continues, political theater has no audience anymore: more than ever it is thus written solely for the theater—“What’s left: lonely texts, waiting for history.” But as the preceding considerations have suggested, revolutionary theater never fared any differently. After its foundational acts on the political stage of 1789, after Büchner’s *Danton*, political theater always refers to the theatrical itself. Precisely this is the drama of revolution: that it cannot separate the political from the theater, that its law of genre takes its actors captive and hinders their escape from the stage. But if the political *persona* cannot distinguish itself from the theatrical, one may conclude, then the theatrical performance, the play within the play, stages political acts even if they are acts of failure.

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<sup>1</sup> On the discussion of reference see Lauermann (48). Recent research has emphasized the similarities of political theory and Brecht (Pan, *Sacrifice as Political Representation*; Horn, *Regel der Ausnahme*; Horn, *„Sterbt, aber lernt“*).

<sup>2</sup> On the imagery of Schmitt's political theory see Balke.

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<sup>3</sup> In his insightful introduction to Schmitt Kalyvas compares Schmitt's theory of the sovereign and the state of exception with Max Weber and Hannah Arendt (Kalyvas). Most convincing is also Silke-Maria Weineck's approach; she reads Schmitt's analogy of the sovereign and God as a counternarrative to another foundational narrative: the descriptions of fatherhood from Locke to Freud (Weineck).

<sup>4</sup> "Souverän ist, wer über den Ausnahmezustand entscheidet."

<sup>5</sup> On Schmitt's theory of the decision and its recent discussion see Pan, *Schmitt on Culture and Violence*.

<sup>6</sup> In his depiction of Schmitt's notion of representation, Adam reads Schmitt's *Verfassungslehre* from 1928 as "aesthetic theory." Schmitt's model of representation, he claims, is a necessary supplement to his theory of decision; according to Schmitt, representations are not limited to the reproduction of something already existing, they also fabricate and create what they present; representations thus have a foundational function (Adam 85 ff.).

<sup>7</sup> "Der Fürst, bei dem die Entscheidung über den Ausnahmezustand ruht, erweist in der erstbesten Situation, daß ein Entschluß ihm fast unmöglich ist."

<sup>8</sup> "Alle prägnanten Begriffe der modernen Staatslehre sind säkularisierte theologische Begriffe. Nicht nur ihrer historischen Entwicklung nach, weil sie aus der Theologie auf die Staatslehre übertragen wurden, indem zum Beispiel der allmächtige Gott zum omnipotenten Gesetzgeber wurde, sondern auch in ihrer systematischen Struktur, deren Erkenntnis notwendig ist für eine soziologische Betrachtung dieser Begriffe. Der Ausnahmezustand hat für die Jurisprudenz eine analoge Bedeutung wie das Wunder für die Theologie."

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<sup>9</sup> Giorgio Agamben suggested that the dialogue between Benjamin and Schmitt began much earlier: according to him, Schmitt's notion of the sovereign is already a response to Benjamin's earlier essay *Zur Kritik der Gewalt* (Agamben 64-67). On Benjamin and Schmitt see also Pan, *Schmitt on Culture and Violence*.

<sup>10</sup> "Vier kommunistische Agitatoren stehen vor einem Parteigericht, dargestellt durch den Maßchor. Sie haben in China kommunistische Propaganda getrieben und dabei ihren jüngsten Genossen erschießen müssen. Um nun dem Gericht die Notwendigkeit dieser Maßnahme der Erschießung eines Genossen zu beweisen, zeigen sie, wie sich der junge Genosse in den verschiedenen politischen Situationen verhalten hat. Sie zeigen, daß der junge Genosse gefühlsmäßig ein Revolutionär war, aber nicht genügend Disziplin hielt und zu wenig seinen Verstand sprechen ließ, so daß er ohne es zu wollen zu einer schweren Gefahr für die Bewegung wurde."

<sup>11</sup> "Der Anblick des Unrechts trieb mich in die Reihen der Kämpfer. Der Mensch muß dem Menschen helfen."

<sup>12</sup> "Ja, ich sehe, ich habe immer falsch gehandelt. [...] Ich, der ich so sehr nützen wollte, habe nur geschadet. [...] Er sagte noch: im Interesse des Kommunismus Einverstanden mit dem Vormarsch der proletarischen Massen Aller Länder Ja sagend zur Revolutionierung der Welt." On the concept of "Einverständnis", see Müller-Schöll.

<sup>13</sup> On the aporetic structure of the play see Lehmann and Lethen; Horn, '*Sterbt, aber lernt*'; and Müller-Schöll.

<sup>14</sup> "Aber die Arbeit in Mukden war illegal, darum mußten wir, vor wir die Grenze überschritten, unsere Gesichter auslöschen."

<sup>15</sup> "Ihr dürft nicht gesehen werden. Dann seid ihr nicht mehr ihr selber, du nicht mehr

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Karl Schmitt aus Berlin, du nicht mehr Anna Kjersk aus Kasan und du nicht mehr Peter Sawitsch aus Moskau, sondern allesamt ohne Namen und Mutter, leere Blätter, auf welche die Revolution ihre Anweisungen schreibt. [...] Dann seid ihr von dieser Stunde an nicht mehr Niemand, sondern von dieser Stunde an und wahrscheinlich bis zu eurem Verschwinden unbekannte Arbeiter, Kämpfer, Chinesen, geboren von chinesischen Müttern, gelber Haut, sprechend in Schlaf und Fieber chinesisch

<sup>16</sup> “Ich kann nicht weiter.”

<sup>17</sup> “Ich kann nicht mehr. Ihr müßt andere Schuhe fordern.”

<sup>18</sup> According to Horn, the young comrade is not a good actor (Horn, *‘Sterbt, aber lernt’* 334).

<sup>19</sup> “Also beschlossen wir: jetzt abzuschneiden den eigenen Fuß zum Körper. Furchtbar ist es, zu töten. Aber nicht andere nur, auch uns töten wir, wenn es nottut.”

<sup>20</sup> The distinction of the bare life and the political is also at the center of Horn’s attention (Horn, *Die Regel der Ausnahme*; Horn, *‘Sterbt, aber lernt’*)

<sup>21</sup> According to Benjamin, repetition is one of the characteristics of the mourning play—and one of the reasons of their melancholy. (Deiters, 34)

<sup>22</sup> “Ich kann nicht schweigen, weil ich recht habe.” “sein nacktes Gesicht / menschlich, offen und arglos.”

<sup>23</sup> Rasch underlines the transition of the chorus from the party court to its disappearance; at the end, it no longer plays a juridical role (Rasch 339 ff.).

<sup>24</sup> For a recent and more detailed analysis of Schmitt’s notion of the play within the play as a non-mimetic reflection of reality see Türk: “the tragic is a zone where the situation of an existential conflict insists in the aesthetic play itself in the form of an manifest

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absence. The playfulness contains and excludes its opposite, the serious situation. This mutual inclusion of excluded opposites—the interregnum insists in the play, and the play as a play has an effect on the interregnum it avoids—is the origin of myth.” (Türk 83). For a detailed analysis of Schmitt’s *Political Romanticism*, the history of the play and the contingent see Schnyder.

<sup>25</sup> “[...] wenn wir es erlebten, eine Nationalbühne zu haben, würden wir auch eine Nation.”

<sup>26</sup> A more thorough and extensive discussion of depictions of revolutions as theater would have to respond to Marx’ preference for stage metaphors, his famous opening of *The eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*—“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.” (Marx 8: 115)—as well as Lenin’s writing. In his letters, Lenin refers to the “stage” of the revolution and their “stage managers”: “This eight-day revolution [of 1917] was ‘performed’, if we may use a metaphorical expression, as though after a dozen major and minor rehearsals; the ‘actors’ knew each other, their parts, their places and their setting in every detail, through and through, down to every more or less important shade of political trend and mode of action.” (Lenin 17). I would like to thank Julia Hell for this reference.

<sup>27</sup> “Die Staatsform muß ein durchsichtiges Gewand sein, das sich dicht an den Leib des Volkes schmiegt. Jedes Schwellen der Adern, jedes Spannen der Muskeln, jedes Zucken der Sehnen muß sich darin abdrücken. Die Gestalt mag nun schön oder häßlich sein, sie hat einmal das Recht zu sein wie sie ist, wir sind nicht berechtigt ihr ein Röcklein nach Belieben zuzuschneiden.” (Büchner, *Dantons Tod* 15)

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<sup>28</sup> “Sieh die hübsche Dame, wie artig sie die Karten dreht! a wahrhaftig sie versteht's, man sagt sie halte ihrem Manne immer das coeur und andern Leuten das carreau hin. Ihr könntet einen noch in die Lüge verliebt machen.” (Büchner, *Dantons Tod* 13)

<sup>29</sup> “Nicht Menschen zu töten ist dein Auftrag, sondern Feinde. Nämlich der Mensch ist unbekannt”

<sup>30</sup> “Ich nehme meine Hand aus dem Auftrag”

<sup>31</sup> “Ich nehme unter den Stiefel was ich getötet habe / Ich tanze auf meinem Toten mit stampfendem Tanzschritt / Mir nicht genügt es zu töten, was sterben muß / Damit die Revolution siegt und aufhört das Töten / Sondern es soll nicht mehr da sein und ganz nichts / Und verschwunden Vom Gesicht der Erde /Für die Kommenden ein reiner Tisch.”

<sup>32</sup> “Ich zwischen Hand und Revolver, Finger und Abzug / Ich Lücke in meinem Bewusstsein, an unsrer Front.”

<sup>33</sup> “Du bist der Fehler. / A: Ich bin ein Mensch [...] Ich will nicht sterben.”

<sup>34</sup> “[...] mir fällt zum LEHRSTÜCK nichts mehr ein. Eine Brechtadeptin sagte 1957 gegen KORREKTUR: Die Erzählungen sind nicht adressiert. Was nicht adressiert ist, kann man nicht inszenieren. Die kümmerliche Meinung über Kunst, das vorindustrielle Bild von Gesellschaft beiseite: ich kenne 1977 meine Adressaten weniger als damals; Stücke werden, heute mehr als 1957, für das Theater geschrieben statt für ein Publikum. Ich werde nicht die Daumen drehen, bis eine (revolutionäre) Situation vorbeikommt. Aber Theorie ohne Basis ist nicht mein Metier, ich bin kein Philosoph, der zum Denken keinen Grund braucht, ein Archäologe bin ich auch nicht, und ich denke, daß wir uns vom LEHRSTÜCK bis zum nächsten Erdbeben verabschieden müssen. Die christliche

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Endzeit der MASSNAHME ist abgelaufen, die Geschichte hat den Prozeß auf die Straße vertagt, auch die gelernten Chöre singen nicht mehr, der Humanismus kommt nur noch als Terrorismus vor, der MolotowCocktail ist das letzte bürgerliche Bildungserlebnis. Was bleibt: einsame Texte, die auf Geschichte warten.” (Müller 85).