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'GESTUS' IN THE THEATERS OF BRECHT AND BECKETT

City University of New York

PH.D.

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GESTUS IN THE THEATERS OF BRECHT AND BECKETT

by

Barry Batorsky

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1987

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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The City University of New York

To Bertha, ein Lebenskünstler,
To Roberta, my wife and comrade, who with
Victor, has seen the truer version,
To Rebecca and Benjamin, my earthangels:
Not a miserablist scribbler, abecedarian,
or "survivor" amongst them.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Part I	
1. Definition of the Gest.....	8
2. Significant Comportments, not Topics.....	32
3. Comportments and Topics: Gestic Revision of <u>Mother Courage</u>	39
4. The Typical.....	52
5. Gest: the Scientific Comportment.....	88
6. Gesamtgestus.....	95
7. Gesamtgestus and Model Books.....	102
8. Gest: Genre and Style.....	111
Part II	
9. Story and the Plays of Samuel Beckett.....	127
10. The Gestus in Beckett.....	132
11. Plays: the Gests of Failure.....	143
12. Directing the Gests of <u>Endgame</u>	168
13. The "Not..., But".....	196
14. <u>Endgame</u> as "Epic Theater".....	200
Works Consulted.....	230

Introduction

This dissertation began as an attempt to contrast the "richness" of action in Brecht's drama to the "poverty" of action in Beckett's. I wanted to show that, more acutely than any other contemporary dramatist, Beckett's vision presented modern man as unable to act without destroying. Brecht's work, on the other hand, was to show how action could create meaning. Beckett's subjective idealism, I felt, had led him to the impasse that was vividly presented in his work and this subjective idealism could only reflect the impasse. Beckett's empiro-critical vision could not get beyond itself and eventually ran down into Worm and the Unnamable. Brecht too had experienced the impasse: the individual's desires came back to him distorted, twisted; his action produced only destruction and dissolution. But Brecht's materialism brought him beyond that impasse. Action created social meaning, and human reality was objectifiable. Brecht's materialist position made drama possible.

This contrast fell apart when I realized that Beckett's dramas were full of action, and not all futile. The action was there, even if only as narrative, and it was frantic and continuous in the face of the failure that

marked the impasse. Failure, I saw, was Beckett's proper topic only because it is necessarily historical and social, while success could be instantaneous and personal, a Humean miracle, a Geulincxian occasion. Beckett's plays do not overwhelm one with the futility of all action in the manner of absurdist drama. But neither do they make one feel that simply by being a better person one could change the plight of his figures. Beckett's plays were not simple to get out of. They were not Maeterlinckian chamber dramas as Nabokov once called them (24). Beckett's figures lost their "character", but the action did not fall into meaningless absurdity.

The question for me became how and why the plays of Brecht and Beckett presented such similarly distinct visions. I thought to define their drama through a treatment of the theme of control. The struggle for meaning seemed only one aspect of the struggle for control. In fact, human control still seems to me to define dramatic genres. Tragedy presents man in control. In the last ditch, the tragic hero recognizes what necessity demands and acts freely to fulfill his destiny. Things as they are, Antigone does not cut a deal. Comedy, on the other hand, presents man out of control. It is full of plots and intrigues. Some succeed; most, the comic ones, fail. Plots and counter-plots go astray until, in most cases, man wins a victory over himself. With this idea, the two great

genres of drama were two visions of human control. The dissertation ceased being a philosophical thesis and became a genre study, which in a way it still is.

Beckett and Brecht, however, wrote in an intermediate form between tragedy and comedy. The concept of control didn't distinguish their plays from other intermediate types which, since the drame sérieux of Beaumarchais, have dominated European theater. Control in these dramas, I felt and still feel, was thematized. Recognizing a role for itself as an entertainment for a certain class of society, theater presented not mankind the poor forked creature, but the bon homme whose ability and right to control was put into question. Control became then a question of educated sensibilities. Dramatic crises occur or rather permanent crisis becomes apparent when bonhomme fails, as it does periodically, but the issue remains one of who controls and how to control, rather than whether. Control, in any case, failed to distinguish or define the theaters of Brecht and Beckett.

My eye then turned toward the thing itself, the content of the plays to try to ascertain what made them different from other dramas and similar to one another. The evidence of my eyes and ears was that Brecht and Beckett shared an aesthetic vision that could not be described in philosophical or political-economic terms. In spite of much criticism that holds that there is no meaningful similarity

between Brecht and Beckett, I became convinced of a common aesthetic sensibility. Their counter-posed visions of the human condition only made their common aesthetic vision more apparent. The final clue was the descriptions and transcriptions, notes and model books, which presented the authors at work directing their plays. The parallels were unmistakable. The aesthetic unit with which both worked and to which both appealed as an authoritative text was what Brecht called the gest (Gestus), historically significant human behavior. My thesis became the assertion that the gest was the benchmark of Brecht's theater, and that it was a basic element of the Beckettian vision.

In presenting this thesis, the problem is two-fold. First, to define the gest, rather than Verfremdung or story as the characteristic Brechtian device. Second, to show its relevance to the Beckettian drama. The two playwrights deal with different material, different themes, and--most important--they write for different audiences and societies. Brecht's material and themes, always gestic after a certain point, varied; Beckett's dramatic vision focussed on failure and survival. Brecht wrote and directed for and among communists, Beckett for and among capitalists. These things influenced what the writers say with gests, and how they say it. Brecht's desire to cultivate an audience, Beckett's despair of an audience, his positive rejection of audiences, resulted at least in

part from writing for a particular audience. Their visions both raised serious, central questions about audience, questions that I chose not to develop in this thesis. More important was to define the gest for Brecht's work and simply try to demonstrate its presence in Beckett's plays. In defining the gest, I hoped to establish its centrality in Brecht's aesthetics. Demonstrating the gest in Beckett's work involves explaining why it would occur, what vision it helped present, and then focussing the discussion on the isolated gests and the over-all gest (or through-gest, to adapt Stanislavskian terminology), the Grundgestus, of Beckett's most important play, Endgame.

Part one of the thesis begins with a chapter dedicated to distinguishing the gestic drama from other forms of drama. The structure of Brecht's drama is distinguished from the traditional scenic structure. The gest is defined as a historically significant social comportment: the gest as a distinct form of dramatic gesture incompatible with traditional dramatic plot structures. Character and attitude become subordinated to the gestic representation of social conflicts. In the second chapter, the drama of significant comportments is shown to loosen the drama's connection to topics: such connections appear in their arbitrariness, as a matter of choice rather than revelation. Mother Courage is not about the horrors of war, but about how a society chooses war. The next chapter is an

examination of the gestic type. Rather than the events of character, the gestic drama presents the "typical": the historically meaningful. This chapter also contains a discussion of the Berlin Ensemble's "refunctioning" of Shakespeare's Coriolanus. Brecht felt the original attraction Shakespeare's plays had for his audience was the stories they told. Brecht felt if he could change the emphasis modern productions place on portraying great Shakespearean characters, then the effect of the stories could be recaptured.

A chapter on the scientific comportment then relates the gestic vision to the vision of an available (verwendbare) world that is implied by the scientific attitude. This attitude, based on a skeptical "readiness", when taken toward society provides a basis for understanding the Gesamtgestus. The next two chapters discuss the idea of the Gesamtgestus, the "sum" of all the individual gests of a play and a production. The Gesamtgestus acts like a scientific principle, handing over, making available, the social matter of the play. A discussion of the Gesamtgestus and Brecht's Model Books demonstrates how the need to discover gestic "principles" in the material directs Brecht's work in the theater.

The final chapter of part one extends the idea of the gest to other genres. Brecht spoke of gestic poetry. This chapter describes what Brecht may have intended with this

description. The chapter takes issue with Klaus Birkenbauer's interpretation of Brecht's "kolonartiges" lyric and argues that the "colon" is in fact, in Brecht's lyric, a form of the gest. The gestic drama is then presented as an incorporation of other genres into the art of drama.

Part two of this study presents what I have found of the gest in the work of Samuel Beckett. It argues that the failure of character to accomodate the mess, "le gachis", produces the gests of survival that comprised Beckett's aesthetic vision. While Brecht used this failure to explore other dramatic possibilities, Beckett mines it to explore gests of survival. A chapter examines these particularly Beckettian gests of failure in his plays and playlets. The final chapter, using Michael Haerdter's book on a Schiller-Theater production of Endgame directed by Beckett, attempts to show how the director's division of the play lends itself to a gestic interpretation of the production.

1. Definition of the Gest

In the early fifties Brecht drew a distinction between what he called the gest [Gestus] and gesture. A gesture, he writes, is a traditional motion which replaces speech: a nod for yes, motions to indicate size or shape, or the "abundance of motions which demonstrate attitudes: disgust, suspense, confusion." The gest, on the other hand is:

...a whole complex of individual gestures of the most varied sort which, together with spoken expressions, derive from an isolable human event...; the gest captures the total compartment (Gesamthaltung) of all participants (the condemnation of one man by another man, a conference, a fight, etc.), or [it captures] merely the basic comportment of a man (such as satisfaction or waiting). A gest shows the relations of men among themselves. For instance, a performance of a work is not a gest if it doesn't include a social relationship like exploitation or cooperation.¹ (my trans. GW 16: 753)

The gest presents behavior that carries historical weight. It is dramatic in the sense that Peter Szondi defines post-Renaissance drama as what takes place fully in the realm of "das Zwischenmenschliche", the inter-human (Szondi, 14), in

the realm of objectivized subjects. The gest derives from "isolable" human events.

Each gest, Brecht wrote, is a play within a play. The story proceeds as a rhythm of comportments--a series of repetitions and denials. The gestic vision, therefore, proves incompatible with the teleology of scenic structures within which the opposites in a dramatic struggle are alternately given their due until there is a final resolution, a balancing or a catastrophe.² The gest replaces the strophe, the scene, and the episode as a precise description of the basic unit of Brecht's plays. Brecht eventually renamed his epic theater dialectic theater, but the gest defines his vision of drama from his first stage productions to his work with the Berlin Ensemble.

Brecht's note distinguishes between the gesture and the gest. The gesture presents a psychological state--like disgust--or a traditional sign--a nod for yes. A gesture forms part of a dramatic action. In fact, physical and spoken gestures together may be said to form the real language, the elemental units, of drama. It is not what is said, alone, but to whom and how a thing is said that creates a dramatic event. The gest on the other hand presents a complete dramatic action. It is isolable, complete and dramatic in itself. A gesture indicating the size of a cucumber, like the word "large" or "small" is not

dramatic, but it may in context become dramatic (GW 16: 753). Hamlet's waiting, or Galileo's abjuration, on the other hand, is not an isolated sign but is conceived as a dramatic "event" (753). The same is true of any gest of cooperation or exploitation. To help define the gest, it might be useful to distinguish it from the more general idea of physical and verbal gesture.

The gestural richness of a play like Der Schwierige by Hugo von Hofmannsthal makes it a useful example by which to distinguish the dramatic role of gesture from gests. The theme of this 1919 play is located in the crisis of language, in particular in the problem of the individual making himself understood to society. The "difficult one" of the title finds that misinterpretations govern his interactions, and he finds society for that reason unbearable. A series of missed signals creates the comic action of the play. The spoken needs and intentions of its characters are almost always at odds with their true motivations. What a character says is almost never what he or she wants or needs. In the play itself, Hofmannsthal takes pains to make clear that the true language of his play is the language of gestures, and not the mannered Viennese German spoken by the characters. The dramatic issues are almost always posed as gestures, often non-verbal gestures. Tom Heine writes, Der Schwierige presents two forms of communication: the one, intentional and

verbal, is highly unreliable; the other, spontaneous and nonverbal, proves capable of expressing innermost feelings" (Heine, 408). The spoken language deceives, while physical gestures reveal. The comic tension is largely between these two forms of presentation.

In the first scene, Heine notes, Hofmannsthal prepares the reader to see through the deception of language to the truth revealed by gestures. The protagonist's manservant, Lukas, is introducing the new valet, Vinzenz, to his duties. Vinzenz is impatient with Lukas' attention to the details of his master's behavior; "Lappalien", he calls them. Vinzenz doesn't care to go through the physical details of his master's habits; he wants to know his secret intentions (Absichten). The fact is that Vinzenz has his own intentions; he wants to make his new job comfortable and permanent. His indifference to the details, the physical gestures, of his master's life proves Vinzenz's undoing, and before the end of the act, Count Hans Karl Bühl has told Lukas to dismiss the new servant. Vinzenz's behavior, as Heine points out, foreshadows the play (409): actions blinded by self-interest to the meanings behind verbalized intentions betray the character into misunderstanding and failure. On the other hand a self-unconscious attention to non-verbal gestures, such as Lukas exhibits in this scene reveals real needs and motives and leads to appropriate, effective action.

Heine makes a good argument for the truth of physical gestures in Hofmannsthal's play. He cites Bühl, the "difficult one's" hatred of the purely non-physical communication made possible by the telephone, and Lukas' ability to understand his master's "yes" to mean "no". Heine draws a parallel between Lukas' unself-conscious attention to his master and Helene's sensitivity to the Count's real desires, desires hidden from the Count himself. Heine concludes that the message of these gestural sensitivities is given by Helene's formula: "Her formula is simple ('Ich denke nicht, dabei etwas wegzutragen, was mir nützen könnte,'...) and yet it is apparent on stage, and indeed in our own lives, how difficult it is to maintain such an attitude" (416).

The end result for Heine is that Hofmannsthal's drama of physical gestures offers an opportunity to enjoy the fruits of detached observation, the vision which enables us to see the gestures which do not lie. The audience, Heine writes, achieves an understanding of the Count by exercising the kind of detached observation modeled for it by Lukas and Helene.

We need not, however, restrict the meaning of the word "gesture", as Heine does, to the physical gestures that are clearly central to this play. The deceptive dialogue in Der Schwierige, in fact, makes it necessary to see the verbal exchanges as gestures. There are numerous examples of

verbal deception in which dialogue signals its meaning not by the denotations of the words spoken, but by the "gesture" that the words make.

The most significant speech-gestures are of course the ones made by Count Bühl. The central dramatic tension which draws Count Bühl against his will into society, his love for Helene, is presented in the first act through language that must be read gesturally. Bühl's sister, the Countess Crescence, is trying to get the Count to express his feelings for Helene. Bühl expresses only surprise that anyone could suspect he had special feelings for Helene. Throughout the dialogue, Bühl seems to be searching, opening and closing the drawers of his desk. This gesture has already been interpreted for us by Lukas in the opening scene (Heine, 410). Lukas explains to Vinzenz: "Wenn er anfängt, alle Laden aufzusperren oder einen verlegten Schlüssel zu suchen, dann ist er sehr schlechter Laune" (1.1, 109). The Count's physical unease is also reflected in his speech. Crescence protests against Bühl's dismissal of the matter, saying Helene is in love with him. The Count is astonished and expresses a desire to attend the soiree at Helene's father's house:

Crescence: Ich nehm Gift darauf, dass sie heute noch
genau so verliebt in dich ist wie vor sechs
Jahren, und dass es nur ein Wort, nur den

Schatten einer Andeutung braucht--

Hans Karl: Die ich dich um Gottes willen nicht zu
machen bitte--

Crescence: Ah so, bitte sehr. Auch gut.

Hans Karl: Meine Liebe, allen Respekt vor deiner
energischen Art, aber so einfach sind doch
gottlob die Menschen nicht.

Crescence: Mein Lieber, die Menschen sind gottlob sehr
einfach, wenn man sie einfach nimmt. Ich seh
also, dass diese Nachricht kein grosser
Schlag für dich ist. Um so besser--du hast
dich von der Helen desinteressiert, ich nehm
das zur Kenntnis.

Hans Karl: aufstehend. Aber ich weiss nicht, wie du nur
auf den Gedanken kommst, dass ich es nötig
gehabt hatt, mich zu desinteressieren. Haben
denn andere Personen auch diese bizarren
Gedanken?

Crescence: Sehr wahrscheinlich.

Hans Karl: Weissst du, dass mir das direkt Lust macht,
hinzugehen? (112)

The gestural meaning of this response--as opposed to its
literal or semantic content--is clear in the context of the
small deception to which Bühl admits. At the opening of the
scene the Count gives Crescence to understand that he has

not yet decided whether to attend the soiree. In fact, he had already telephoned his apologies to Helene's father. The Count's unease, betrayed in his physical gestures, is also reflected in this and other spoken gestures made in conversation with Crescence. It is only Crescence's insensitivity to gestural speech that allows her to take the Count at his word, or more exactly to interpret his words as expressing disinterest.

Crescence makes Bühl aware of another social task he must undertake: to clarify his relationship with Count Hechingen's wife, Antoinette. The rumor of their affair has caused general embarrassment, and now Crescence's son Stani is visiting the woman. Crescence wants her brother to reconcile Antoinette and her husband. This sub-plot produces one of the most humorous gestural confrontations of the play when Bühl tries to win Antoinette back to her husband, Ado.

The Count is something of a lady-killer in spite of himself, according to both Antoinette and Helene. In Acts I and II, they both protest the cruelty of his unintentional seductions. Antoinette blames it on the cruelty of "men" and their irresistible power, Helene on the weakness of women. How, then, does this fatally attractive man break off a liaison? First, he says it was accidental, "zufällig" never intended, a service rendered to save Antoinette from a worse fate. Antoinette, naturally, takes

offense at the word "accidental". The Count becomes philosophical, insisting everything is accident, that eternity lies in every beginning. Then, in an uncharacteristic gesture, the Count ignores the protest of his listener--as the stage directions make clear--and attempts to turn Antoinette from the ruthless accident of their dalliance back to the only thing that raises mankind from the sump of accident: the institution of marriage. "Helpless", Antoinette appeals to the Count's conscience: "Sie wollen nicht sehen, wie hilflos ein Wesen ist, über das Sie hinweggehen--wie preisgegeben, denn das würde vielleicht Ihr Gewissen aufwecken" (135). The Count responds: "I have none" ("Ich habe keins"), but under her gaze-- Antoinette sieht ihn an-- qualifies his ruthlessness, "Nicht in bezug auf uns". He then counsels conjugal fidelity, speaking through Antoinette's objection:

Hans Karl: Alles was geschieht, das macht der Zufall.

Es ist nicht zum Ausdenken, wie zufällig wir alle sind, und wie uns der Zufall zueinanderjagt und auseinanderjagt, und wie jeder mit jedem hausen könnte, wenn der Zufall es wollte.

Antoinette: Ich will nicht--

Hans Karl: spricht weiter, ohne ihren Widerstand zu respektieren. Darin ist aber so ein

Grausen, dass der Mensch etwas hat finden
 müssen, um sich aus diesem Sumpf
 herauszuziehen, bei seinem eigenen Schopf.
 Und so hat er das Institut gefunden, das
 aus dem Zufälligen und Unreinen das
 Notwendige, das Bleibende...macht: die Ehe.
 (135)

Antoinette doesn't buy it; and one must credit her.
 She calls the Count egotistical and cynical; and he is. He
 doesn't intend cruelty, he backs off, and the scene ends
 with a set of verbal and physical gestures which together
 reveal the comic "difficulty" of the Count's situation:

Antoinette: Sag Er mir sehr was Liebes: nur für den
 Moment. Der Moment ist ja alles. Ich kann
 nur im Moment leben. Ich hab so ein
 schlechtes Gedächtnis.

Hans Karl: Ich bin nicht verliebt in Sie, aber ich
 hab Sie lieb.

Antoinette: Und das, was Er Helen sagen wird, ist ein
 Adieu.

Hans Karl: Ein Adieu.

Antoinette: So verhandelt Er mich, so verkauft Er mich!

Hans Karl: Aber Sie war mir doch noch nie so nahe.

Antoinette: Er wird oft zu

mir kommen, mir zureden? Er

Kann mir ja alles einreden. Hans Karl
küsst sie auf die Stirn, fast ohne es zu
wissen.

Antoinette: Dank schön. Läuft weg durch die Mitte.

Hans Karl: steht verwirrt, sammelt sich. Arme,
 kleine Antoinette. (137)

Tom Heine finds this final gesture--the kiss on the forehead--a sign of the Count's "true feelings" for Antoinette: affection without passion (412). Heine remarks on Antoinette's inability "to consider objectively" the Count's gesture. But Heine's argument puts too kind a light on the Count and blunts somewhat the comedy of such scenes. Achieving what Heine calls the position of detached observation takes some of the bite out of the comedy of the Count's "cruelty", a cruelty also noted by Helene: "Die Leibe ist nicht süsslich" (151). The physical gestures on which Heine concentrates, separated from the gestures of the dialogue, may detach one a bit too much from the play's comedy of incongruity.

None of these gestures, verbal or physical, however, functions to create gests. The Hofmannsthal play is a struggle to understand the Count. The first act, for instance, is a series of gestures that alternately reveal and conceal the Count's feelings and motivations. The

question of what the Count wants becomes the dramatic center. Helene and Lukas by watching him learn to respond to his needs. But the question of the social role, the social significance of Bühl's self-deceptions is not dramatized here. In the play, the dramatic tension is between the Count's desire and ability to withdraw from society and his desire for Helene and for the good of his nephew and his friend. The gestures which reveal and conceal are all directed at exploring this question. They comprise the comedy of Der Schwierige. The gestic content of Hofmannsthal's play lies outside the misread gestures.

Der Schwierige contains gestic material, but it is background. The central dramatic tension, the attraction between Bühl and Helene, does contain a gest, an isolable comportment, but it is not made central to the comedy of their coming together. The social inequality of Bühl and Helene make her gestures carry much less social weight. The gestic drama in their relationship is in her social, economic need to win his love and in the social; political and economic weight of his refusal to take part. The dramatic expression of this gestic material is of course not the intent of Hofmannsthal's play.

The gestic material is not exploited in the play. Such exploitation would have to make Bühl's social obligations, arising from the social forces he represents, more relevant. He is a Count, a twice-wounded veteran, a hero

with estates and a hereditary seat in the House of Lords (Herrenhaus). If this were dramatized, Helene's insightfulness would not make an adequate dramatic opposite; she is only a maiden daughter of a Count. Though high-born and more self-willed than most, her desirable qualities are still grace and attractiveness. Heine at one point likens her behavior to that of Lukas the servant who also reads Bühl's gestural language clearly and serves him well and selflessly. Such a servant, no matter how attractive, is no match for the Count's social position.

Helene's love for the Count--she says she lives through him-- must either wait or engage in the sexual intrigues she abhors:

Helene: Nach einer ganz kurzen Zeit waren sie
 {andere Frauen} dir alle gleichgültig, und
 du hast ein rasendes Mitleid gehabt, aber
 keine grosse Freundschaft für keine:
 das war mein Trost. das war mein Trost.

Hans Karl: Wie du alles weisst!

Helene: Nur darin hab ich existiert. Das allein hab
 ich verstanden.

Hans Karl: Da muss ich mich ja vor dir schämen.

Helene: Schäm ich mich denn vor dir? Ah nein. Die
 Liebe schneidet ins lebendige Fleisch.

Hans Karl: Alles hast du gewusst und ertragen--

Helene: Ich hätt nicht den kleinen Finger gerührt,
 um eine solche Frau von dir wegzubringen.
 Es war mir nicht dafür gestanden. (151)

Helene's insights, though, offer the Count no gestic resistance; they rather raise her above the social fray. She offers him a way "through society to the self" (Alewyn, 167), but she must await the Count.

The gestic dramatic opposite of Bühl would have to be Neuhoff. The gestic tension would have to rest more clearly on the threat that Stani and Crescence outline in act 1. According to Stani, Neuhoff visits the Count in order to clear the field for his own wooing of Helene. Crescence warns that unless something is done, Neuhoff will marry Helene. In the play, Neuhoff's threat fails because his social climbing gestures are transparent to Stani, and even more to Helene. The threat never really comes into direct conflict with the Count's social position. Bühl's concession of Helene to Neuhoff in act 1 during his conversation with Crescence is skeptical, even misogynistic, but it never comes to a gestic conflict. Bühl's cynicism and indifference are mere verbal gestures--Antoinette sees through them.

There is of course real social danger if Bühl actually comported himself in the indifferent, "tolerant" manner he seems to adopt in the confrontation with Neuhoff. But the

real gestic drama which would picture the decay of nobility and its vulnerability to arrivistes and opportunities is not played out in this comedy of misunderstanding and intrigues so artfully revealed in gestures. Hofmannsthal's rich gestural drama is not gestic. The gestures reveal inner states which then create the drama of character and "Sprachskepsis", but not through individual isolable gestic.

The completeness of each gest when contrasted to the gesture makes gestic theater one of rhythm and pacing rather than of thematic sonorities. Character and plot development become subordinate to the "fitting together" of gestic events. In this sense, Brecht said that his theater revives the "theater's great operation", telling a story. In his "Short Organon for the Theatre," Brecht writes:

Splitting...material into one gest after another, the actor masters his character by first mastering the 'story'.... Everything hangs on the 'story'; it is the heart of the theatrical performance....The 'story' is the theatre's great operation, the complete fitting together of all the gestic incidents, embracing the communications and impulses that must now go to make up the audience's entertainment.... Each incident has its basic gest....(Willet, B. on Theatre, 200)

The independence of the gest means telling the story can no

longer be subordinate to creating a subjective or existential "atmosphere": nor can the events of the story be subordinated to the disguise and revelation of the plot. The secret "trajectory" of character or purpose cannot overwhelm the independent significance of each event. The gestic tie the actor to the action. The complexity of what happens demands re-newed emphasis on telling the story. In Brecht's gestic theater, the tables have been turned on our sense of the significance of dramatic action. Behavior no longer derives its pertinence from vague, hidden inner-states; action is social action.³

Brecht's critique of his early works makes clear that he felt the need to define his theater as a theater of action as opposed to a theater of attitude and "atmosphere". In 1954, Brecht writes that his 1919 play, Trommeln in der Nacht, was a reaction against the naive moralizing of the Expressionist drama:

Die Oh-Mensch-Dramatik dieser Zeit mit ihren unrealistischen Scheinlösungen stiess den Studenten der Naturwissenschaften ab. Hier wurde ein höchst unwahrscheinliches und bestimmt uneffektives Kollektive "guter" Menschen konstituiert, das dem Krieg, diesem komplizierten, tief in der Gesellschaftsform verwurzelten Phänomen, hauptsächlich

durch moralische Verfemung ein ewiges Ende bereiten sollte. ("Beim Durchsicht", GW 17: 945)

His own "contrariness", Brecht writes, drove him in this play to the borders of the absurd: "Ich seh es heute, dass mich mein Widerspruchsgeist... dicht an Grenze des Absurden herangeführt hat (1945). The expressionist vision of a "moral proscription" against war was bankrupt, but Brecht had not yet developed an effective counter-drama, one that would enable the audience to see the Spartacists other than as Kragler, the protagonist of Trommeln. sees them. Brecht's undisciplined reaction against expressionist idealism threatened to undermine all coherence because the audience still could only experience the Spartacist uprising through the feelings of the play's "petty bourgeois", "brawling hero": "...es war mir nicht gelungen, den Zuschauer die Revolution anders sehen zu lassen, als der 'Held' Kragler sie sah, und er sah sie als etwas Romantisches" (946). Brecht recalls that his vision of the actions of the ex-soldier in the war at home was originally more complex than the conventions of satire could present. Recalling his feelings at the time, Brecht describes war as "this complex phenomenon, deeply rooted in the form of society" and writes:

Anscheinend reichten meine Erkenntnisse nicht dazu aus,

den vollen Ernst der proletarischen Erhebung des Winters 1918/19, sondern nur dazu, den Unernst der Beteiligung meines randalierenden "Helden" an der Erhebung zu realisieren....Sie waren die tragischen Gestalten; er war die komische. Dies hatte mir, wie die Lektüre des Stücks ergab, durchaus vor Augen gestanden, aber es war mir nicht gelungen, den Zuschauer die Revolution anders sehen zu lassen, als der 'Held' Kragler sie sah, und er sah sie als etwas Romantisches. (947)

Before his eyes, in the material of his earliest plays, lay the possibility of a more comprehensive, relevant perspective on human activity and inactivity than the asocial romantic "Hero's" attitude or the expressionist atmosphere could represent.

Brecht's 1954 remarks on his early plays may be dismissed as hindsight, but his disagreements with the theater work of Erwin Piscator in the late twenties seem to confirm that his work was pushing him beyond Piscator's technical innovation. Brecht praised Piscator's theater for putting new material on stage, but he also criticized it---calling it at one point "anti-revolutionary"--for being content with technological innovations which did not challenge the heart of the bourgeois drama. Piscator's theater, Brecht writes, activated only the "atmosphere",

remaining passive in face of the challenge of the
"bourgeois type":

Politically laudable transmission of the revolutionary spirit through stage effects, which merely create an active atmosphere, cannot revolutionize the theater: it is a makeshift that cannot be extended but can only be replaced by a truly revolutionary art of the theater. This theater is in reality anti-revolutionary, because it is passive and reproductive. It has to rely on pure reproduction of existing, that is prevailing, types, which as we see it means bourgeois types, and will have to wait for the political revolution to get its own archetypes. It is ultimate for the bourgeois naturalistic theatre. (qtd. Volker, Bio. 116)

Brecht's theatre required a new type, one whose pertinence lay much more in what he did than in his experience of his own actions. The petty bourgeois Kragler, even against a background of revolutionary activity, was not it.

In a version published in 1953, Brecht made a few revisions to Trommeln, giving Kragler a sort of "Gegenpart" in the proletariat (GW 17: 946), but a full gestic revision probably would have meant a different play entirely. For Brecht in 1954, the play only had literary historical

interest; the gestic possibilities had not been realized:

Die Initiatoren des Kampfes waren die Proleten; er war der Nutzniesser. Sie benötigten keinen Verlust, um sich zu empören; er könnte entschädigt werden. Sie waren bereit, seine Sache mitzubesorgen; er gab die ihre preis. (947)

The gests were not in the play because, Brecht concludes, the techniques of alienation were not within his power at the time: "Die Technik der Verfremdung stand mir noch nicht zur Verfügung" (GW 17:946). But even in 1953, with the whole panoply of alienation-effects available, only one comportment was available: Kragler's romantic rebellion. "Auch die relative Billigung seiner Haltung musste ihm erhalten bleiben" (947). Even the addition of Kragler's "Gegenpart" in the proletariat could not make up for the lack of revolutionary action in the play. Without the revolution on stage, there was no gestic vision. Rosenbauer writes, the gest is the material of the alienation effect, the alienation-effect without the gest is "nur kunstvolle Spielerei" (70). Brecht's gestic theater is more than a technical innovation, more than a collection of production techniques.

The new gestic material constitutes the new aesthetic vision of Brecht's theater, a vision which precedes the

development of techniques to realize it. In this new way of seeing, the significance of an action lies beyond the individual's conception of self; the self concept is not the most significant factor. In the twenties, Brecht created the play Im Dickicht der Städte in which the gestic vision begins to appear, first as a formal rejection of the theater of the individual. The 1924 Dickicht was the last of Brecht's "early" plays before he began to discover the alienation techniques appropriate to the presentation of the gest. The play was conceived as part of a trilogy on "man's" entry into the big cities" of which the Fatzer and Fleischhaker fragments were to be part (Völker, Biography 75). In its final revision, Dickicht lost most of the autobiographical detail of the earlier versions, as, according to Völker, "The more Brecht worked at his material, the more detached he became from the character of Garga [the play's protagonists]" (79). The title of the play itself changed from Garga to Im Dickicht to Im Dickicht der Städte (79). The "hero" of this play was reduced to the "best man" and his struggle to a sporting contest (GW 17: 949). Dickicht was followed by Brecht's collaborative reworking of Marlowe's Edward II, which produces an almost existential reduction of the individual. It was while working on this production of Edward II that Brecht first began to experiment with "epic" techniques (Marieluise Fleisser, "Augustenstrasse"). This early

experimentation culminates in the rebelliously anti-individualistic Mann ist Mann with its blunt dismantling of the individual.

In gestic theater, a character's behavior must be taken at face value. It is not a mask or pose or counter for a more "real" subjective attitude. This isn't to say a character is equivalent to his actions. The gestic figure is not a medieval allegorical persona, or a commedia dell'arte figure. Walter Hinck draws a parallel between Brecht's figures and the medieval "heternome" persona, but only in order to point out that in contrast to Brecht's figures, the medieval persona is a non-dialectic, non-dialogic representation of a social behavior, "die Personen..zeigen nur religiös zu verantwortende, standes oder situationsgebundene Verhaltensweisen"⁴

(Die Dramaturgie 138). Like the commedia dell'arte and Barock figures, the gestic character's actions are immediately significant, even--or especially--when contradictory. The "mask" of action that a character puts on in gestic theater is important for what it is, not for what it hides. This "mask" is two things: first, it is the range of social choices available to a character; second, it is the particular choice made by a character. A character behaves a certain way, moves a certain way, says a certain thing, because at this time and in this place he makes a choice from among the possible actions he

perceives. It is the action itself, the "mask", that is the comportment, whether the character tries to disguise himself, as do the comrades in Die Massnahme, or reveal himself, as does Shen-Te in Die Kaukasische Kreidekreis. This completely visible gest is the purity, the "elegance", that Brecht's theater tries to capture: "The simple that is hard to make" (GW 2: 852).

Notes

¹ Dann gibt es einzelne Gesten. Solche, die anstelle von Aus-sagen gemacht werden und deren Verständnis durch Tradition gegeben ist, wie (bei uns) das bejahende Kopfnicken. Illustrierende Gesten, wie diejenigen, welche die Grösse einer Gurke oder die Kurve eines Rennwagens beschreiben. Dann die Vielfalt der Gesten, welche seelische Haltungen demonstrieren, die der Verachtung, der Gespanntheit, der Ratlosigkeit und so weiter.

Wir sprechen ferner von einem Gestus. Darunter verstehen wir einen ganzen Komplex einzelner Gesten der verschiedensten Art Zusammen mit Ausserungen, welcher einem absonderbaren Vorgang unter Menschen zugrunde liegt und die Gesamthaltung aller an diesem Vorgang Beteiligten betrifft (Verurteilung eines Menschen durch andere Menschen, eine Beratung, ein Kampf und so weiter) oder einen Komplex von Gesten und Ausserungen, welcher, bei einem einzelnen Menschen auftretend, gewisse Vorgänge auslöst (die zögernde Haltung des Hamlet, das Bekenntum des Galilei und so weiter), oder auch nur eine Grundhaltung eines Menschen (wie Zufriedenheit oder Warten). Ein Gestus zeichnet die Beziehungen von Menschen zueinander. Eine Arbeitsverrichtung zum Beispiel ist kein Gestus, wenn sie nicht eine gesellschaftliche Beziehung enthält wie Ausbeutung oder Kooperation. (GW 16:752-3)

2. Significant Comportments, not Topics

Focussed on the comportments of its characters, gestic theater lets its subject or topic fall into an undramatic self-sufficiency. The subject has significance in gestic theater only through a character's comportment to it. Roland Barthes writes of Brecht's theater: "outside the gest, there is only vagueness, insignificance"⁵(75). The subject of Brecht's Mother Courage, he continues, is not "the Thirty Years War, or even the denunciation of war in general; its gest is not there, but in the blindness of the tradeswoman who believes herself to live off war only in fact to die of it, even more the gest lies in the view that I, spectator, have of this blindness" (76).

Brecht was attracted to the Thirty Years War by the fact that it was considered the first capitalist war (GW 17:1149). The play was written as a warning before the outbreak of the second world war, and was performed as a warning after the war in ruined Berlin. The gests of Mother Courage present comportments toward what Brecht saw as capitalist war-making, and in Mother Courage's comportments we are to see the contradictions which create such wars. The peculiar way in which society seems to collapse into chaos and then attempts to rise out of it--the war and the peace--is given dramatic coherence in the basic comportment, the Grundgestus, of Mother Courage. In

"The Story: Curve of the Dramaturgy", Brecht describes the gest of the first scene of Mother Courage:

This scene emphasizes that things are at the beginning. Courage's canteen business and the new war as new undertakings of a familiar sort. (They begin and they continue; the begin by continuing). Needed: energy, enterprise, the prospect of new times, arrival of the business, together with new dangers. She longs for war and at the same time fears it. She wants to join in, but as a peaceable business woman, not in a warlike way. She wants to maintain her family during the war and by means of it. She wants to serve the army and also to keep out of its clutches. (Mannheim 5:331)

Mother Courage's actions are not here abstracted into a quality of the war, or of her character. Instead, they establish her comportment toward the war. The audience sees war as a type of social activity.

The nature of this gestic vision of the war can perhaps be clarified by contrasting it to a non-gestic dramatic treatment. The difference can be illustrated by contrasting this first scene of Brecht's play to one of its dramatic sources: Schiller's prologue to the Wallenstein trilogy, Wallensteins Lager. Both plays concern the Thirty

Years War, and both contain the motif of an exchange of coins and the theme of cunning. But both the motif and the theme are transformed by the gestic vision. Coins as payment appear twice in Wallensteins Lager. First, to the gathered troops, the Master of the Watch demonstrates the authority and unity that Wallenstein's leadership offers by exhibiting Wallenstein's likeness on the coins with which they are paid:

Wachtmeister. (führt in die Tasche). Wollt ihr mein Wort nicht gelten lassen, Sollt ihrs mit Händen greifen und fassen. (Eine Münze zeigend). Was ist das Bild und Gepräg?

Mrketenderin. Weist her! Ei, das ist ja ein Wallensteiner!

Wachtmeister. Na, da habt ihrs, was wollt ihr mehr? Ist er nicht Fürst so gut als einer? Schlägt er nicht Geld wie der Ferdinand?...

Erster Arkbusier. Das disputiert ihm niemand nicht. Wir aber stehn in des Kaisers Pflicht. Und wer uns bezahlt, das ist der Kaiser.

Trompeter. Das leugn' ich Ihm, sieht Er, ins Angesicht. Wer uns nicht zahlt, das ist der Kaiser. Hat man uns nicht seit vierzig Wochen die Lohnung immer umsonst versprochen? (657)

Next, coins are exchanged between the sutler and her honest soldier clientele. The exchange occurs almost as an aside:

Erster Arkebusier. (ein ledernes Beutelchen ziehend,
zur Marketenderin). Gevatterin, was hab ich
verzehrt?

Marketenderin. Ach, es ist nicht der Rede wert!
(Sie rechnen). (660)

These exchanges are not used gestically. They do not make the exchanges themselves significant, but receive dramatic weight only from their exposition of the topic or subject of the play: war, honesty, individual interest versus national unity. Gestically in fact they could carry quite a different significance. The humor of Schiller's "Sie rechnen" could turn dark, the shadow of Mother Courage falling on Schiller's patriotic sutler.

Cunning in Wallenstein's Lager also appears non-gestically. It takes the form of the peasant who cheats the soldiers at dice in order to obtain food for his family after the soldiers have destroyed his farm. He is caught and, amid general outrage, the call goes up for him to be lynched. He is freed by one of Pappenheim's honorable dragoons, who berates his fellow soldier for disgracing himself by gambling with the peasant:

Erster Kürassier. Wie? Du bist ein Friedlandischer Mann, Kannst dich so wegwerfen und blamieren, mit einem Bauer deinen Glück probieren? Der laufe, was er laufen kann.

(Bauer entwischt, die anderen treten zusammen.)

(653)

Cunning, trickery, is dealt with quickly, resolutely, but kindly. It is a morality of nobility and mercy, a morality that forms the central tension of the drama.

Erster Arkebusier. Der macht kurze Arbeit, ist resolut. Das ist mit solchem Volke gut. Was ists für einer? Es ist kein Böhm.

Marketenderin. 's ist ein Wallon! Respekt vor dem!
Von Pappenheims Kürassieren. (653)

This is the topic: war, personal loyalty and honor versus treason, individual action versus "Staatsaktion". The topics are not shallow or undramatic. The whole Wallenstein trilogy develops them. Selecting these scenes out, of course, emphasizes what may be asides. At the same time, however, such scenes make clear what Brecht meant by the gestic content of the classics.

Coins and cunning in Mother Courage are not

subordinate to the main trajectory of the scene. They enjoy a gestic richness as part of the overall gest of wartime predation. Where Schiller's vision sees past the action into the moral significance, moral weight of character, Brecht sees only the action. The coins become not a necessity, but a choice. Courage's cunning does not outrage. Instead, it is played against the cunning of the Sargent and the Recruiter who trick Courage out of her son, Elif, by distracting her with a half-guilder sale. Mother Courage's cunning is business acumen: not mere acumen, but a gest of acumen. We can see in the half-guilder coin, in this "neutral" medium of exchange, the labor of the mother as she is robbed of her son. The coin and cunning function gestically when the war is presented as the continuation of business by other means, as Siegfried Unseld says (Hecht, Mother Courage 139).

Of course, Wallenstein's Lager can also be played for its gests. The gest of the coins and of cunning is in fact the same in both plays: loyalty to those whose promises pay, a brutal tit for tat, les affaires sont les affaires. Money does change hands gestically in Schiller's play, but Schiller's presentation of the exchange is not gestic. In order to make the gests function dramatically, Schiller's play would require a Brechtian "re-functioning" to make it relevant. Brecht's sutler demands money up-front. Mother Courage relies on human needs, not on character. At this

point in Schiller's play, war is not business by other means. At least, it doesn't have to be among honest men. That is the gestic crux. The attempt to resolve the larger issue of national interest versus self-interest here subordinates--one might say comically with tragic portents--the gest of business. In Brecht's play, this business-gest produces and sustains both character and the warring nations. The tragedies of Mother Courage's children follow the trajectory of her gest like the trailers of an exploding firecracker. Mother Courage would have more children were she not so old. Schiller's prologue sets the atmosphere or background for the play; Brecht dramatizes that background.

3. Comportment and Topics: Gestic Revision of Mother Courage.

Brecht, it seems, wrote Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder in about a month, between October and November of 1939 (Hecht, Mutter Courage 165), instigated by the Nazi invasion of Poland and by the mobilization in Britain and France (Mannheim and Willett, 5: x-xi). But war itself, as Barthes remarked, does not form the dramatic center of Brecht's poetic vision. Mutter Courage is not merely an anti-war play. Brecht knew as well as Schiller that there were good and bad wars, or at least bad and necessary wars. It is comportment, not war or essential nature, that marks the difference between Galy Gay of Mann ist Mann and the French Communards of Die Tage der Kommune, between Eilif Nojocki and Anna Fierling, Mother Courage, between the yes-sayer and the nay-sayer. What Brecht presented in Mutter Courage are not the horrors of wartime, but the gestures that would keep the war alive and well for a long time. In 1949, after the war, Brecht revised the play for an unrealized film version. The intention of the revision, according to Mannheim and Willett, was to "reflect the problems of Occupied Germany after the war" (5:xvii). War, in Mutter Courage, appears as her fate only to Mother Courage herself. To the audience, it seems an ambiguous thing surrounding the fateful gesture of Mother Courage and her children. The Model-book of Mother Courage points out Courage's brief revolt against her source

of income, the war (Hecht, *Materialien* 55), and to the still relevant problem of loyalty (39).

The audience at the premiere production of Mutter Courage in 1941, in Zurich, saw the protagonist as a tragic, Niobe-like figure. But empathy was not what Brecht wanted. After the war, Brecht revised the play for the stage in the hopes of making *Mother Courage* less available for empathic identification. The play was made more gestic. In the 1949 *Model Book*, for example, the play has a new prologue whose purpose is to make the war seem less a timeless, abstract thing and more a matter of business enterprises. The prologue consists of the Song of Business from the original first scene. In the 1941 version, it was played as an upbeat, "schwungvoll und frech", opening song which was to set up a contrast with the desolation of the final scene. At Helene Weigel's suggestion, though, the song in 1949 was presented so as to "picture the long journey to the war" (Mannheim, 341). "Once this was settled," Brecht writes, "it seemed to us that by showing the business woman's long journey to the war zone we would be showing clearly enough that she was an active and voluntary participant in the war" (341). Brecht, however, was never really satisfied with the way his play was received. He finally despaired of ever freeing the gests of Mutter Courage from the fatalism with which his audience faced war,

...many people regarded Mother Courage merely as a representative of the 'little people' who become involved in the war in spite of themselves,' who are helpless victims of the war,' and so on. A deeply engrained habit leads the theater-goer to pick out the more emotional utterances of the characters and overlook everything else. Like descriptions of landscape in novels, references to business are received with boredom. The 'business atmosphere' is simply the air one breathes and as such requires no special mention. And so, regardless of all our efforts to represent the war as an aggregate of business deals, the discussions showed time and time again that people regarded it as a timeless abstraction. (341)

The business comportment of Mother Courage toward the war, her complex gest, required that the old foreground of character recede, and that the old background--the atmosphere--be resolved into the foreground where the pieces of the war were to come apart and clash dramatically.

The purpose of the changes in the later versions of Mutter Courage was also to fix attention on the gests of Mother Courage as she both battens on and suffers from the war. The result is not merely a de-humanized protagonist, or a less "sympathetic" Anna Fierling, as Eric Bentley suggests (Mother Courage 14), but a Mother Courage whose comportment

to the war becomes the concrete relevant aspect of the war. Mannheim and Willet maintain that the revisions were "calculated to bring out Courage's shortsighted concentration on business and alienate the audience's sympathies" (Mannheim and Willet 396). More precisely, the intent was not only the negative alienation of affections, but positive revelation of the gestic significance of Courage's actions.

For example, the 1949 revision of scene one changes the way in which Eilif is "recruited". In the 1941 version, the Recruiter pulls Eilif behind the wagon and then tempts and cajoles him into leaving. Courage meanwhile is distracted by her concern for the Sergeant's superstitious fears. In the 1941 play, Courage answers to the dumb Kattrin's attempts to warn her about the imminent loss of Eilif:

Courage: Just a minute, Kattrin, just a minute. The
 sergeant's not feeling so good, he's
 superstitious. I hadn't thought of that. And
 now we'll be going. Where's Eilif got to?
 (Mannheim & Willet, p. 391)

Revised, the event, and the whole scene, is given greater gestic coherence:

Courage: Just a minute, Kattrin, just a minute. The

sergeant's paying up. (Bites the half guilder)
 I'm a burnt child, sergeant. But your coin is
 good. And now we'll be going. Where's Eilif?
 (143)

Courage's "sympathy" is replaced by the gestic equivalent of Eilif's seduction, bartering for lives as well as for belt buckles.

Courage's merchandising is not frivolous, and is not merely evil or dehumanizing. It feeds the war, but it also feeds her. At the end of scene I, the Sergeant in both versions calls after the sutler who has just lost a son:

Der Feldwebel: (nachblickend) Will vom Krieg leben
 Wird ihm wohl müssen auch was geben. (GW 4: 1360)

This couplet completes a gest. The lines are not just cruel and sarcastic. They are part of the basic gest of the scene: the tit for tat of Courage's gest of enterprise and survival. War to Mother Courage is a fact, and she is not blind to its evil. The "re-functioning" makes her less innocent, as is the audience after the war, not more evil. She never really considers war good: her cynicism, if not the loss of her family is proof against that. It is not her character or morality that creates the dramatic struggle. The agon of the play lies not in what she is, but in what

she does, in her comportment toward war. Her blindness is a gestic blindness.

Without the gest, Mutter Courage becomes more naively pacifistic or more tragically stoic than it really is. Courage's gests are central; her own two sons are products of her gests. Both sons, Eilif and Schweizerkäs (Swiss cheese), are doomed by their enthusiasm and naivety in wartime: Eilif for his naive enthusiasm, Schweizerkas for his naive honesty. By her actions, Mother Courage in fact has taught her sons to be heroes in an ambiguous war. Their enthusiasm (Bentley, M.C. 18) is acquired from Courage's comportment to her trade. Their naivety comes from a more complex but, at the same time, more apparent gest: the one that combines in Anna Fierling both motherhood and the merchandizing of war (Hecht M.C 126).

The naive comportments of both Eilif and Schweizerkäs derive from Mother Courage's canny comportment to war. Her ability and her desire to carry on business by any means makes the war seem to reward the enterprise and bravado of those swept up in its morality. Mother Courage hasn't only the ability to charm a willing theater audience; she charms her sons to their deaths. Her daughter Kattrín, however, does not fall completely under the spell, and Kattrín's death is alienated, gestic only in contrast to the other episodes of the play.

In the final scene, Kattrín is shot in the act of

saving the children of Halle which is about to be sacked by the army to which Courage has attached her wagon. Of all the childrens' deaths, only Kattrín's does not exhibit the separation of act and import--means and ends--that characterizes the deaths of Courage's sons. Kattrín's death is equivalent to the reality of war. From the audience's perspective, her action is ungestically coercive because it presents an adequate answer to Courage's survivalism and to the capitalist war.

Kattrín has been changed by the war into a fitting enemy of the war:

Wenn die stumme Kattrín auf den Scheunendach zu trommeln anfängt, um die Stadt Halle zu wecken, ist schon lange eine grosse Veränderung mit ihr vorgegangen. Die lebhaft freudliche junge Person, die wir im Couragewagon in den Krieg haben fahren sehen, ist eine geschlagene Kreatur geworden, nicht ohne Bosheit. Sie ist ausserlich sehr verändert, nicht so sehr im Gesicht, dessen Kindlichkeit lediglich etwas Infantiles angenommen hat, aber im ganzen Körper, der unförmig und schwer geworden ist. (GW 17: 1139)

In her actions she reveals a heroic comportment:

Die Schauspielerín [Kattrín spielend] hat, eine

heroische Haltung zeigend, die besondere Art gezeigt,
wie sie bei ihrer Figur zustande kommt: durch eine
Tapferkeit, welche die Furcht überwindet. (GW 17: 1141)

Kattrín's action is available to the audience's empathy.
Brecht distinguishes the scene of Kattrín's death from the
gestic structure of the rest of the play:

Zuschauer mögen sich mit der stummen Kattrín in dieser
Szene indentifizieren: sie mögen sich einfühlen in
dieses Wesen and freudig spüren, dass in ihnen selbst
solche Kräfte vorhanden sind--jedoch werden sie sich
nicht durch das ganze Stück eingefühlt haben.... (Hecht
M.C. 68)

Brecht's comments on the gest which surrounds Kattrín's
action illustrate how gestic theater can employ empathy just
as it does other, traditional devices. I quote at length
because Brecht's comments also illustrate that it is when
the gestic content has to struggle against the audience's
habitual modes of reaction that the A-effects seem in
Brecht's theorizing to function almost independently of the
gest. But the "shock" of the A-effect is not the point of
gestic theater. Brecht has said that the A-effect is nothing
new in theater. The presentation of comportments is:

Will man die Szene vor einer wilden Aufregung auf der Bühne bewahren, in der alles Bemerkenswerte untergeht, muss man besonders sorgfältig Verfremdungen vornehmen.

Zum Beispiel ist das Gespräch der Bauersleute über den Unterfall in Gefahr, einfach "miterlebt" zu werden, wenn es in einen allgemeinen Wirbel hineingerissen wird; es kommt nicht heraus, wie sie ihr Nichtstun rechtfertigen und sich die Notwendigkeit dazu gegenseitig bestätigen, so dass nur das Beten als "Aktion" übrigbleibt.

So wurden die Schauspieler bei der Probe angehalten, nach ihren Sätzen hinzuzufügen "sagte der Man" und "sagte die Frau". Derart:

"'Der Wachtposten wirds rechtzeitig entdecken',
sagte die Frau."

"'Den Wachtposten müssen sie hingemacht haben',
sagte der Mann."

"'Wenn wir mehr wären', sagte die Frau."

"'Mit dem Krüppel allein hier oben', sagte der Mann."

"'Wir können nix machen, meinst', sagte die Frau."

"'Nix,' sagte der Mann" und so weiter. (68-69)

The inaction of the peasants forms a gest incommensurate with the particular necessity of this war-- "because under Capitalism war is necessary, namely for Capitalism" (my transl. 92). Kattrín's act, however,

recognizes its necessity. Kattrín's death is "practical" heroism:

Der stummen Kattrín nützt ihre Stummheit nichts, der Krieg hält ihr eine Trommel hin. Sie muss mit der unverkauften Trommel aufs Stalldach klettern, die Kinder der Stadt Halle retten. Es ist notwendig, das Heldenklischee zu vermeiden. Die stumme Kattrín ist erfüllt von zwei Ängsten: der für die Stadt Halle und der für sich. (68)

She heroically risks her life in the context of the children whose lives she saves, and the barrenness of a life dependent on the survival philosophy of Mother Courage and those peasants. The gestically outlined heroism is richer, less personally limited. The topic, then, of Mother Courage: war, its causes, its continuance and its prevention, appears as a fate, a necessity, the consciousness of which--as the Russian Marxist Plekhanov might say (146)--is the basis of Kattrín's free action. The significance of war in the play, however lies not in its necessity but in human comportments to it.

In Mother Courage there is not a 'hopeful' human essence defying fate, as Bentley pictures it: "I tend to think it [the play] is fatalistic as far as the movement of history is concerned, and that the element of hope in it springs only from Brecht's rendering of human character"

(MC 14). The alternative to Courage's behavior is not, as Bentley jokes, the establishment of socialism in seventeenth century Germany, although one might answer to that suggestion, "Why not?" The alternatives are to be found in Courage's own actions, in the gestures revealed in her reactions to the lives and deaths of her children. Character is formed out of the contrary demands of action. Courage chooses to make money off the war. This "necessary" war, her fate, gives the gestic weight to her "character": her endurance, persistence and pragmatic loyalty. The gesture of Courage is seen in the way she makes her world, not in how she suffers her fate.

Notes

²The gest, in fact, enables Brecht to represent man as a "Mitmensch" (see Szondi's analysis) without making him a Machiavellian schemer, or an Aristotlean illusionist (see Boal, Theater of the Oppressed).

³In the passage on page one, I translated the German Haltung into the somewhat obsolete English "comportment". John Willet's the more common translation, "attitude", leaves the term too ambiguous on the level of social significance. "Attitude" connotes too much a psychological disposition. "Comportment" carries the sense of an external, social position-taking. It connotes a program, a social project, while "attitude" has the sense of a personal idiosyncrasy. The programmatic sense is closer to the way Brecht uses the term Haltung when he describes the gest.

The translation of the term Haltung gets one involved in a whole vocabulary of difficult terms, words like Verhalten, Geste, Bewegung (see Steinweg, 134 chart) which, as Brecht uses them, express inner-states as actions, thinking as a physical act. Defining Verfremdung, alienation, in a notebook fragment from 1938, Brecht writes:

das sprechdenken der behavioristen. die sprache als sprechen. messbare gebilde, zustandegebracht mit muskelportionen...und nervenstragen: die worted, der gestus ist sogleich auf eine neue und aufregende art am denken beteiligt, die wendung des kopfes auf die seite, die handbewegung, kinnstellung, ein kleines kauen, das ist nicht nur anlässlich des denkens sondern denken selber.
(Steinweg, B's Modell 170)

The gestic vision changes the way human activity is perceived.

⁴In this connection, we might note that Edith Kern finds *commedia dell'arte lazzi* in Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot but ascribes to them a new metaphysical significance which, she says, Beckett in his later work transfers into linguistic structures, "Mauthnerlike" (262.267). It might be better, instead, to see a more consistent vision in Beckett's work, a gestic vision becomes more complex: from the early broad grotesqueries of Waiting for Godot to the more subtle, "clawing" contradictions of Endgame and the later plays and playlets.

R.G. Davis described the *commedia dell'arte* techniques of his San Francisco Mime Troupe as "Brechtian". The description, given from the viewpoint of the actor, suggests a more direct theatrical significance for the connection of

Brechtian gesticulation than the metaphysical connections of grotesques and existentials that Kern makes:

This commedia was 'Brechtian' in that the stage play was a game. We posited that all action on the platform was fake, masked, indicated, enlarged show biz, while everything offstage was real. On stage we were totally committed to the dialogue, lazzi, pantomimic or mimetic play and could sustain the fakery of the onstage commitment by admitting the reality of offstage. (32)

⁵ In an essay, "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein", Roland Barthes maintains that the gesture does not have a subject of topic, but does have meaning. Barthes quotes Brecht:

In a way...subjects always have a certain naivety, they are somewhat lacking in qualities. Empty, they are in some sort sufficient to themselves. Only the 'social gesture (criticism, strategy, irony, propaganda, etc.) introduces the human element. ("Diderot 75-76)

Barthes follows Brecht's 1938 distinction between a Gestus and a gesellschaftlicher Gestus, but as Rosenbauer notes, "In späteren Schriften wird Gestus nur im Sinne von gesellschaftlicher Gestus gebraucht: 'ein Gestus bezeichnet die Beziehungen von Menschen zueinander. Eine Arbeitsverrichtung zum Beispiel ist kein Gestus, wenn sie nicht eine gesellschaftliche Beziehung enthält wie Ausbeutung oder Kooperation'. So definiert Brecht 1950. 1938 heisst es noch: 'Nicht jeder Gestus ist ein gesellschaftlicher Gestus' (Rosenbauer, 61).

4 The Typical

Although the A-effect can be understood in terms of a crisis of dramatic form as Peter Szondi did,⁶ the gest cannot be. The source of the gestic form is to be found in social realities.⁷ Brecht discovered that the gest was the representation of society in terms of scientific principles.⁸ This merely means that the gestic assumes first that the "laws" of society are laws of development, not of existence, and second that the "laws" of the subject, the trajectory of desire, can be revealed in social action and made available for mastery. The gest is neither sociologistic nor psychologistic.

In avoiding psychologism, gestic theater does not "flatten" the individual, but it does eliminate his dominance as the central mystery, the "atmosphere", of the play. In 1953, Brecht writes that in his drama there is no towering personality to create the drama out of his needs and desires. Instead, Brecht's gestic realism creates a drama of the "typical":

The actual meaning of the word "typical,"...is: historically meaningful. This idea allows us to bring both the apparently petty, exceptional, overlooked events, and unobtrusive, often or seldomly seen figures, into the light of poetic writing, because

they are historically meaningful, important to the progress of mankind.... (my transl. GW 19: 531)

But the focus on the "typical" does not generalize a Galileo into an Everyman, or even a Shen-te into an Everywoman. The historically relevant gesture creates a more, not a less available arena for the individual. In the Small Organon, Brecht writes:

Where is the man himself, the living, unmistakable man, who is not quite identical with those identified with him? It is clear that his stage image must bring him to light, and this will come about if this particular contradiction is created in the image. The image that gives historical definition will retain something of the rough sketching which indicates traces of other movements and features all around the fully-worked-out figure. Or imagine a man standing in a valley and making a speech in which he occasionally changes his views or simply utters sentences which contradict one another, so that the accompanying echo forces them into confrontation. (Willett, Brecht on Theater, 191)

The fragmentation of a character which occurs in the gestic theater results in action which is "zwischenmenschlich". But, the individual, "the man himself", is not absent from

the drama. The self appears as the series of choices, sentences in the valley, that produces a drama which contrasts strongly with the expressionistic drama of the absurd.

In absurdist drama the outer world appears only as a legalistic, arbitrary limit to an infinite but excluded self. Where this absurdist Self meets the dramatic action there is only reification and mechanization: the absurd. For example J.H. Wulbern, in his Brecht and Ionesco, compares Ionesco's Rhinoceros with Die Massnahme, saying the Ionesco play is a unique example of a "committed" drama by this author. But it is precisely in the difference between Ionesco's protagonist, Berenger, and the comrades, that we see the difference between the Typus and what Wulbern calls the "typological" figure of the absurd. The comrades of Die Massnahme are not afraid of stepping into the stream of history, but of getting diverted into a backwash, a dead end. Berenger in Rhinoceros, on the other hand, suffers from a sense of absolute lostness, deracination. This atmosphere characterizes absurdist drama (Esslin, Reflections 184) and sometimes produces the laughter which to Ionesco's dismay often accompanied the action of Rhinoceros (Wulbern 132). A fearful sense of loss in the play arises from a threat to identity, a loss of self. The self is the mysterious source of Berenger's humanness. The play ends with Berenger's cry: "I'm the last

human....I won't capitulate" (127). Berenger's panic clearly has its source in the non-gestic vision of bourgeois society as an external force expunging character, destroying sensitivity, integrity, individuality.

In contrast, Rüllicke (122) writes that in Brecht's drama:

Die Grösse der Figur wird nicht einfach durch die Grösse ihres Verhaltens deutlich, sondern erweist sich in der weltgeschichtlichen Strömung, die von ihr repräsentiert wird und in der sie sich verhält.

The individual figure in the gestic theater never stands as completely outside the action as does the absurd hero. Social activity does not appear as a negation of the individual's character. In Die Massnahme, the comrades' individuality is never divorced from their social role. In fact, the executed comrade's attempts to do so destroy his own ability and threaten his comrades' ability to act freely. The hearing that forms the action of Massnahme recounts the executed comrade's attempts to replace the slow, conscious social action of the comrades with spontaneous individual opportunity. His activity--like the impotence of the anti-hero Berenger--is based entirely on a personal revulsion at the grotesque dehumanization of people by capitalist society. However, the comrade's activity

appears [gestically] as the errors of opportunism and substitutionism. These comportments threaten the freedom of his fellows to act effectively in the inevitable, necessary clash of producers with owners.

Berenger's "absolute" isolation from society makes Ionesco's play less than fully dramatic. The naivety of Berenger's social phobias paint his predicament in rather broad strokes of satire and caricature. Berenger's actions became "typological". On the other hand, the comrades in Die Massnahme must justify an action which snuffs out an individual and apparently, with him, the possibility of free human action. The hearing tests their understanding of the principles underlying the murder of their comrade. The hearing turns them into "typical" figures, the action into "typical" action. The material of the play is these opposed contradictory gests: heroism and wisdom.

Equally, the gestic theater avoids sociologism and economism. The Typus does not reduce human action to the workings of sociological laws. The gest is not compatible with naturalist determinism. As a theater of empathy, with a non-gestic vision of the individual character, the naturalist theater actually left sociological content uncriticized. Brecht in Der Messingkauf writes:

Eure naturalistischen Abbildungen waren schlecht gemacht. Darstellend wählet ihr einen Standpunkt, der

keine echte kritik ermöglicht. In euch fühlte man sich ein, und in die Welt richtete man sich ein. Ihr wart, wie ihr wart, und die Welt blieb, wie sie war (GW 16 520-521).

Action in the naturalist theater was not gestic, not fully analyzable in terms of social forces and it still depended on identification, "Einfühlung", for its dramatic effect.

That, Brecht writes, is the reason for the omniscience of the Raisonneur, the "disguised, naturalized chorus", in the naturalist theater. The naturalist situation, potentially open to social critique, was forced into the straightjacket of identification. Only the Raisonneur could master the situation, "see through" the action, and then only because he stood above and beyond it, almost as a sociologist. Identification with him did allow the audience social insights, but it also made the action less available, less "verwendbar". The audience received the story uncritically, and the action appeared as a given, a photograph. Naturalistic realism was not true realism. Brecht writes:

Dass die Realität auf dem Theater wiedererkannt wird ist nur eine der Aufgaben des echten Realismus. Sie muss aber auch noch durchscaut werden. Es müssen die Gesetze sichtbar werden, welche den Ablauf der Prozesse

des Lebens beherrschen. Diese Gesetze sind aber auch nicht sichtbar, wenn der Zuschauer nur das Auge oder das Herz einer in diese Prozesse verwickelten Person bogt. (520)

"...One who lets a stone fall has not displayed the law of gravity; neither has he who describes the stone's fall even with great accuracy" (my transl. 517). The gest, to the contrary, displays the laws of society as a dramatic conflict which subordinates the laws of character to the creation of the Typus.

In the gestic vision, character appears self-contradictory, "unstet" as Brecht says, or "heteronome" (Hinck, Die Dram. 138). But the heteronome character does not destroy character. The gestic vision demands only freedom from the habits of character. The hypnotic trance of identification must be broken in order to reveal the forces creating character, forces which are habitually ignored:

How much longer are our souls, leaving our "mere" bodies under cover of the darkness, to plunge into those dreamlike figures up on the stage, there to take part in the crescendos and climaxes which "normal" life denies us? What kind of release is it at the end of all

these plays (which is a happy end only for the conventions of the period--suitable measures, the restoration of order--), when we experience the dreamlike executioner's axe which cuts short such crises breaks down for Brecht not because of his theoretical or formal manipulations, but because the true drama of character is not yet possible. Desire is not released, but is cut short by being diverted into overaged conventions. These conventions are left intact, allowed to enforce themselves through the aesthetic appeal to the unconscious. The drama becomes a form of scopophilia for the audience. We "master" the play without risking or losing ourselves breaks down for Brecht not because of his theoretical or formal manipulations, but because the true drama of character is not yet possible. Desire is not released, but is cut short by being diverted into overaged conventions. These conventions are left intact, allowed to enforce themselves through the aesthetic appeal to the unconscious. The drama becomes a form of scopophilia for the audience. We "master" the play without risking or losing ourselves. Brecht wanted a drama which would challenge the "happy end" without becoming mere blasphemy. He wanted character drama to cede to a drama of pertinent conflict.

In the new drama, overaged taboos and rules are dramatized: character becomes comportment and the story suddenly becomes more significant. The enjoyment of

strategy and events replaces atmosphere as the mark of seriousness, as the trajectory of desire. This pleasure in events is the beginning of the critical attitude:

The deadweight of old habits is also needed for plays like Ghosts and The Weavers, although there the social structure, in the shape of a 'setting' presents itself as more open to question. The feelings, insights and impulses of the chief characters are forced on us, and so we learn nothing more about society than we can get from the 'setting'....If we ensure that our characters on the stage are moved by social impulses and that these differ according to the period, then we make it harder for our spectator to identify himself with them. He cannot simply feel: that's how I would act, but at the most he can say: if I had lived under those circumstances. And if we play works dealing with our own times as though they were historical, then perhaps the circumstances under which he himself acts will strike him as equally odd, and this is where the critical attitude begins. (189-190)

To praise Brecht's drama for its deep, "full" characters undermines the unique quality of the gestic vision.⁹ If the gests of *Mother Courage*, or *St. Joan of the Stockyards*, or *Galileo* are made reliquaries of human character, they

fail to exist as Typi. Insisting on the fundamental role of character replaces gestic complexities with psychologism. Psychology persists in "character" drama only as a resolution or as the promise of resolution of all the disjunctions in the behavior of the *dramatis personae*. Fuegi, for example, claims Brecht creates great characters and this great hopes "out of confusion and despair" (198).

An equally untenable result of the refusal to subordinate character to gest is that the disjunctive presentation of the world in gestic drama begins to take on a different philosophical significance. The gests begin to look like pictures of the absurd. Characters seem to be thrown willy-nilly into challenges to their integrity. Fuegi sees the cry of Shen Te at the end of Der gute Mensch von Sezuan as a cry of metaphysical confusion: "Die Schlussezene...kann ebenfalls als Heraufbeschwörung der tiefsten metaphysischen Wirrnis wenn nicht gar Verzweiflung, verstanden werden (198)." It is the cry of Oedipus, he writes, a cry which echoes down the ages and will continue so long as unrestricted goodness is threatened: "Ihr Schrei wird uns in den Ohren klingen, so lange das Überleben uneingeschränkter Güte nicht gestattet ist" (199). But here, as elsewhere in this essay, Fuegi does not perceive the gestic nature of the cry.

Shen Te cries out not against the world, but against the on-lookers, the gods. Her "Wirrnis" is that no gest she is capable of satisfies her. It is not a cry to the gods. Perhaps it is Oedipal on the deepest psychological level. The gest after all does not deny psychology; rather, the gest offers more or different. But, the gest also transforms the story of the deceived woman, the prostitute with the heart of gold, from a sociological or psychological problem, from a picture of the limits of human activity, to one of how those limits are set. Shen Te does not bewail the limits of her joy, but against how those limits are set. Oedipus learns that he can't be happy and in control; Shen Te learns to preserve her joy, her child, but it is not enough. The confusion at the end of Der gute Mensch is the gods'. When Shen-Te reveals to the "three gods" that she is also the evil Schui Ta, they retreat from confusion into their metaphysical peace of mind:

Der Zweite Gott: Aber hast du nicht gehört, was sie sagt?

Der Erste Gott heftig: Verwirrtes, sehr Verwirrtes! Unglaubliches, sehr Unglaubliches! Sollen wir eingestehen, dass unsere Gebote tödlich sind? Sollen wir verzichten auf unsere Gebote? Verbissen: Niemals! Soll die Welt geändert werden? Nein es ist alles in Ordnung!...

Und nun-

Lasst uns zurückkehren. Diese kleine Welt
 Hat uns sehr gefesselt. Ihr Freud und Leid
 Hat uns erquickt und uns geschmerzt. Jedoch
 Gedenken, wir dort über Gestirnen
 Deiner, Shen Te, des guten Menschen, gern
 Die du von unserm Geist heir unten zeugst
 In kalter Finsternis die kleine Lampe trägst.
 Leb wohl, mach's gut! (GW 4, 1605)

Insisting on the deeply human quality of Brecht's characters in the context of a gestic scenic structure, then, seems to have the odd effect of turning the theatrical vision toward the absurd. Because of gestic disjunctions, "contradictions," the protagonists appear to face a world of Pirandellian masks. The events seem to occur in a world of absurd relativist despair.¹⁰

In a note presumed to date from 1920, Brecht writes:

Es gilt also nicht, grosse ideele Prinzipiendramen zu schaffen, die das Getriebe der Welt und die Gewohnheiten des Schicksals darstellen, sondern einfache, Menschen, die die Gewinne der Stücke sein sollen. Beispiel: Dass Burschen von einer gewissen eigentümlichen Struktur die Schaufel aufs Genick kriegen, ist nicht das, was

das Stuck zeigen soll. Sondern: Wie sie sich dabei benehmen, was sie dazu sagen und was für ein Gesicht sie dabei machen. (GW 15, 50)

Even at this early date Brecht intends to focus not on character as a structuring principle, even a relativistic one as Otto Best believes, but rather on a new "Was": the event as a comportment. Here, Brecht is discussing Hebbel's diaries, and what he is reacting against is "die Grossartigkeit der Geste, mit der das Schicksal den grossen Menschen zerschmettert..."(15, 50).

The greatness of the gesture of Hebbel's "scholastic dialectic" is what Brecht finds irrelevant:

[Hebbel] kommt vermittels einer scholastischen Dialektik fast immer bis zur äussersten Formulierung der beiderseitigen Rechte und Pflichten. Aber es ist dann noch ein ungeheurer Schritt zu jener eis-kühlen und unbewegten Umluft höchster Geistigkeit--wo Recht und Pflicht aufhören und das Individuum einsam wird und die Welt ausfüllt und Beziehungen unmöglich und unnötig werden. Immer mehr scheint mir jener Weg, den Hebbel einschlug, eine Sackgasse. Nicht die Grossartigkeit der Geste, mit der das Schicksal den grossen Menschen zerschmettert, ergreift uns,

sondern allein der Mensch, dessen Schicksal ihn nur zeigt. Sein Schicksal ist seine Chance. (15, 50)

Again, it is the freedom that is the conscious expression of necessity, fate, that concerns Brecht. What Brecht is interested in, even here when gestic theater practice is hardly begun, is not the "how" rather than the "what" but the "how" and the "what" of a man's life in society. Brecht wants to dramatize the dialectics of social comportments.

When comportments change, it is not a plot development regulated by the hidden needs or laws of character. Instead, comportments vary as the artist's eye moves over the new, social material, rather than into the secret recesses of his characters' motivations. As Brecht wrote, it is not that Hitler chose a mask that is telling, but that he chose a particular one: "Im Messingkauf' betont Brecht..., dass nicht die Absicht Hitlers, sich nach fremden Mustern zu verbessern lächerlich gewesen sei, sondern das von ihm gewählte Muster (der Hofschauspieler Basil in München, T 16, 561)" (Steinweg, Das Lehr, 133, emphasis deleted). Hitler adopts a mask not simply because it hides or expresses his own true nature, but also because his new role demands new comportments.

By subordinating character, the gestic vision allows greater flexibility in the way character appears on stage.

Character becomes one forum among others for social conflicts. In the context of "typical" comportments, dramatic conflicts can arise either between a force "within" character and a force outside, or between social forces which then are reflected in character. Character can be seen determining the course of events, or being created by events.

For example, in scene four of Mutter Courage, The Song of Capitulation," Courage's capitulation could be played two ways. In the Song, Courage instructs a young soldier on the dangers of untimely or too vigorous pursuit of justice. It is possible to use the song to express a character trait; a cynical pragmatism which determines Courage's comportment toward the young soldier. Or, the song could show Courage searching for a comportment, creating her character. Brecht preferred the latter:

In den ersten Proben eröffnete die Weigel diese Szene in einer Haltung der Niederschlagenheit. Dies war nicht richtig. Die Courage lernt, indem sie lehrt. Sie lehrt und lernt die Kapitulation. Die Szene verlangt Erbitterung zu Beginn und Niederschlagenheit am Ende.

(Materialien zu MC 44)

The Brechtian version is gestic. The struggle, the "agon," takes place between Courage and the soldier, not within

Courage. It is a brute capacity to anticipate, not a cynical nature, that precipitates her song.¹¹

Jan Knopf calls Mother Courage a "negative" hero.¹¹ Negative heroes are ones whose humanity is sensed as negative, alienated (verfremdet). But Knopf also cites Theodor Adorno to the effect that this alienation is essentially human: "die Fähigkeit im Zuschauen sich zu distanzieren und zu erheben...ist eben das Humane..." (see note 11). In fact, any event involving human beings as observers is alienated; every dramatic character constitutes for the audience some sort of "negative" which is the object of aesthetic identification. It is not because they are alienated that Brecht's characters become "negative", but because their particular alienation reveals negative gestures. Brecht's "fat" Hamlet, for example, is not Brechtian because he is alienated, exercising a critique, but because Brecht recovers and refunctions the story and a particular gesture of Shakespeare's play. Hamlet's contemplation of murder and his sense of honor remain, in Brecht's re-telling, existential problems against which the political events must be played. The passage of Fortinbras', army is not generalized into an opportunity to question the efficacy of any action; rather, it is--as Brecht proposes-- dramatically focussed on the particular course of action:

The slain king's brothers, now themselves kings, avert war by arranging that the Norwegian troops shall cross Danish soil to launch a predatory war against Poland. But at this point the young Hamlet is summoned by his warrior father's ghost to avenge the crime committed against him. After at first being reluctant to answer one bloody deed by another, and even preparing to go into exile, he meets young Fortinbras at the coast as he is marching with his troops to Poland. Overcome by this warrior-like example, he turns back and in a place of barbaric butchery slaughters his uncle, his mother and himself, leaving Denmark to the Norwegian. These events show the young man, already somewhat stout, making the most ineffective use of the new approach to Reason which he has picked up the university of Wittenberg. (Willet, Brecht on. 202)

Whether Brecht's reading is an interpretation or precise is not relevant. Brecht replaces the romantic Hamlet, contemplating "bestial oblivion" with one contemplating the use of "discourse" and "godlike Reason." It is a question of the nature of action. Alienation does not provide a distinction between the traditional Hamlet and the fat rationalist Brecht describes in his "Small Organon" section 68, a Hamlet, Brecht argues, that is closer to the original sense of the story; nor can alienation distinguish between

Mother Courage as Niobe-figure and as Brecht wanted her in the fifties. The particular alienation of Hamlet's activity is the essence of Brecht's re-functioning. The way we are brought to see it is not the same as the thing itself.

The same can be said of Brecht's other great "negative" hero, Galileo. His essentially human negativity does not provide a dramatic opposite to the Church's sense of social responsibility. The dramatic struggle takes place between science and the Church for the leadership of society. Galileo's "negative" critical capacity proves in the event to be a powerful tool, but without moral weight. That is one of the lessons Galileo delivers to Andreas at their final meeting:

Galileo: Ich halte dafür, dass das einzige Ziel der Wissenschaft darin besteht, die Mühseligkeit der menschlichen Existenz zu erleichtern. Wenn Wissenschaftler, eingeschüchtert durch selbstsüchtige Machthaber, sich damit begnügen, Wissen um des Wissens willen aufzuhaufen, kann die Wissenschaft zum Krüppel gemacht werden, und eure neuen Maschinen mögen nur neue Drangsale bedeuten....Hätte ich widerstanden, hätten die Wissenschaftler etwas wie den hippokratischen Eid der Ärzte entwickeln können, das Gelöbnis, ihr

Wissen einzig zum Wohle der Menschheit
 anzuwenden! Wie es nun steht, ist das Höchste,
 was man erhoffen kann, ein Geschlecht
 erfinderischer Zwerge, die für alles gemietet
 werden können. (GW 155)

What can make the negative critical capacity inhuman is the question in Galileo. It is not mere humanness and the critique is not exclusively anti-bourgeois. Mother Courage is not the kind of anti-war play where ideologies destroy a defiant, critical character. Rather, it is a study of a social conformation which allows for certain comportments and trains character like an ornamental shrub. The dramatic effect is created by the position the shrub has in the garden, not in the ambiguous success of the shrub.

The gestic drama is not new because the central figures are "negative heroes" with contradictory characters, nor because their characters and actions are contradictory or "open" (see, for example, Williams MT 198-199, or Jendreich on W. Hinck and V. Klotz Veränderung 81-82, 363,373).¹² The gestic drama takes place in the action, not "beyond" it in the audience, or closer to the real world. Gestic drama is new because, for example, Courage and Galileo seek a moral position and in the process define rather than reveal their characters. They both begin naively, carelessly indifferent to the subtle but iron necessities of social life. Courage

is naively enthusiastic about the opportunities offered her family by war; Galileo gulls the councillors of Venice. This naivety then learns only to adapt and finally hardens into habit: the rituals of selling and of researching. As far as character is concerned it is the story of the creation of "false consciousness," not its revelation.

It is in this sense that Brecht says hardship alone is not a good teacher:

Das Unglück allein ist ein schlechter Lehrer. Seine Schüler lernen Hunger and Durst, aber nicht eben häufig Wahrheitshunger and Wissensdurst. Die Leiden machen den Kranken nicht zum Heilkundigen. Weder der Blick aus der Ferne noch der aus der Nahe machen den Augenzeugen schon zum Experten. (Hecht, Materialien zu MC 91)

There is no guarantee that Mother Courage, about whom Brecht wrote this, is not being tempered into a twisted form by her hardships, or that the next campaign won't bring an economic recovery. Her survival seems assured, and that is the horror and the pity of the play.¹³ The hope--if we must seek one--in the play does not derive from Courage's character, except in the most trivial way from what Courage might have been. The hope derives from the possibility of a recognition of necessity--fate--, and the appropriate action to control one's life. Courage's comportments to

this war create only further hardships and a degenerated character. But Courage's good instincts are the dramatic issue here only indirectly, because the hope lies in doing good, not in being or feeling good.

The dramatic issue Mother Courage raises is the act which in accord with necessity works to create a better society. Necessity doesn't mean Mother Courage had no alternatives, no more, clearly, than does the oracle's pronouncements to Oedipus. The issue is not whether Courage instinctively wants good for her children, but how her actions decide the outcome, and why she cannot perceive it. It is basically a question of controlling history. This point, Brecht, feared was lost even on the post-war survivors in Berlin:

Die grosse Menge ist nicht für Krieg. Aber es gibt so viele Mühsale. Könnten sie nicht durch einen Krieg beseitigt werden? Hat man nicht doch ganz gut verdient im letzten, jedenfalls bis knapp vor dem Ende? Gibt es nicht doch auch glückliche Kriege?

Ich möchte gern wissen, wieviele der Zuschauer von 'Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder' die Warnung des Stücks heute verstehen. (Hecht, Materialien zu MC 92)

Only once does Courage curse the war. At the end of scene six; after her daughter has been disfigured in a struggle to

defend her mother's wares, Courage rails.

To me it's a historic moment when they hit my daughter over her eye. She's a wreck, she'll never get a husband now, and she's so crazy about children. It's the war that made her dumb too, a soldier stuffed something in her mouth when she was little. I'll never see Swiss Cheese again and where Eilif is, God knows. God damn the war. (Brecht Collected Plays 184)

But in the Model Book to Mother Courage Brecht notes:

Contradiction. Courage has cursed the war while gathering the supplies in defence of which her daughter has been disfigured.

Resuming the inventory begun at the start of the scene, she now counts the new articles. (369)

The cry begins as a cry of despair and defiance, but resolves into a pragmatic gest that inevitably runs to ruin. Mother Courage is a Typus, an everywoman, but of a certain group at a certain phase of the business cycle. As a character, she is merely a survivor--anti-dramatic--, but her actions are dramatic, historically meaningful, gestic.

Not unlike Courage, Galileo tries to pit his "apolitical" activity against the socially motivated actions

of the Church and finds to his final despair that he has sired a deformed science, a progeny of "inventive dwarfs." Galileo is then imprisoned by his own child, who in an interesting reversal of the Courage/children relationship learned not from his science, but from his gestures. Galileo has defined his character as limited and unfree; his gestures, like Courage's, refuse to engage the laws of social development. His final insight is that what he lacked was not courage, but a sense of the social implications of his activity. The struggle was between the gesture of science and the gesture of authority: personal safety was not the question, power was:

Galileo: Furthermore, I have come to the conclusion, Sarti, that I was never in any real danger. For a few years I was as strong as the authorities. And yet I handed the powerful my knowledge to use, or not to use, or to misuse as served their purposes.
(95)

The dramatic issue in this gestic play is the one won by the Church, not the one won by Galileo's survival. Galileo's character, like Courage's, proves to be pragmatic, anti-dramatic, and it survives in his publications, but his comportments ultimately enslave him and give the dramatic victory to the Church.

Brecht's re-functioning of the opening crowd scene in Shakespeare's Coriolanus demonstrates how the gestic vision can reveal the eloquence and subtlety of social actions. The work on this scene also shows the care and insight which even the smallest detail of gestic theater requires and the reverberations these details produce throughout the whole classical vision. Here the individual character, Agrippa, loses his mysterious power as a rhetorician as the scene becomes gestically more complex. Gestic action sacrifices the hypnotic power of Agrippa's speech to the exposition of the story, and Brecht's alienation techniques replace identification to reveal the drama of the story.

The dialogue, "Studium des ersten Auftritts in Shakespeares Coriolan," of 1953, records the Berlin Ensemble's analysis of the crowd scene which opens Coriolanus. The Ensemble was seeking means to represent a complex gest in which the threat of a plebeian uprising against the Roman Senate is defused and deflected. Bourgeois theater, it is remarked, presents the uprising as comic: an ignorant mob swayed by Agrippa's rhetoric:

P. ...[D]ie Plebejer machen sich damit lächerlich, insbesondere weil sie unzulängliche Waffen haben Knüppel, Stecken, Sie fallen ja dann auch gleich um, lediglich auf eine schöne Rede des Patriziers Agrippa hin.

B. (Brecht) Nicht beim Shakespeare.

P. Aber auf dem bürgerlichen Theater.

Käthe Rüllicke then expresses the difficulty of showing the plebian indecision without making them appear comic:

R. Dann glauben Sie dennoch, dass sie sich von der Demagogik des Patriziers nicht einseifen lassen. Damit sie auch da nicht komisch werden?

B. Liessen sie sich einseifen, würden sie für mich nicht komisch werden, sondern tragisch. Es wäre eine mögliche Szene. Ich glaube, Sie verkennen die Schwierigkeiten einer Einigung der Unterdrückten.

(GW 16:870)

(According to Willet, B.on T., 251, P. is Peter Palitzsch, R. Käthe Rüllicke, W. Manfred Wekwerth.) Plebeian unity, here, is a complex social relationship containing unresolved contradictions. Brecht: "Nur müssen wir die Gegensätze uns und dem Publikum nicht verbergen...." The gest of the first scene now appears as the legitimation of a social contradiction:

B. Die Römer, ihre Stadt in Gefahr sehend, legalisieren ihre Gegensätze, indem sie plebejische Kommissäre (Volkstribunen) ernennen. Die Plebejer

haben das Volkstribunat erobert, aber das
Volksfeind Marcius wird, als Spezialist, Führer im
Krieg. (876)

For this conclusion to be dramatic, not simply
tendentious or dogmatic, depends on a gestic vision in which
the individual's acts are seen as responses to laws of
society, as well as to laws of character. Agrippa's
rhetorical prowess must become a more complex social
phenomenon. Brecht now suggests an alienation of Agrippa's
speech:

Ich habe über eine Möglichkeit nachgedacht und
schlage vor, den Marcius mit seinen Bewaffneten
schon etwas früher auftreten zu lassen...

Die Plebejer sahen dann die Bewaffneten hinter dem
Redner auftauchen und könnten ohne weiteres
Zeichen von Unschlüssigkeit zeigen, Agrippas
plötzliche Agressivität würde ebenfalls verstehbar,
wenn er selbst den Marcius und seine Bewaffneten
erblickt. (878)

What is alienated is Agrippa's hypnotic rhetoric, but what
is revealed is the gest of his speech.

Because Brecht's plebeian mob is also better armed than
in previous productions, the unifying effect of the invasion

of Rome by a foreign power becomes more significant, more "typical." It is the gest of a society based on coercion and faced with an external threat: a social gest that becomes historically meaningful because it echoes into the present.

- B. Die Augenblicke ihres Zauderns während der Schlussfolgerungen der Rede kommen jetzt von der Veränderung der Situation, die durch das Auftreten von Bewaffneten hinter dem Redner entstanden ist. Und während dieser Augenblicke sehen wir, dass die Ideologie des Agrippa sich auf Gewalt stützt, auf Waffengewalt, und zwar die von Römern.
- W. Aber nun ist Aufruhr, und die Einigung braucht mehr, braucht den Kriegsausbruch....
- R. Wie nehmen die Plebejer die Nachricht vom Kriegsausbruch auf?
- P. Wir haben das selbst zu entscheiden, der Text sagt uns nichts darüber.
- B. Und bei der Beurteilung dieser Frage ist unsere Generation unglücklicherweise vielen anderen überlegen. Wir haben nur die Wahl, die Nachricht einschlagen zu lassen wie den Blitz, der alle Scherungen durchschlägt, oder etwas daraus zu machen, dass sie wenig Bewegung auslöst. Ein Drittes, dass sie wenig Bewegung auslöst und wir dies nicht eigens

und vielleicht als schrecklich hervorheben,
gibt es nicht. (878-881)

Brecht re-functions the drama of identification and character into a pertinent drama of social forces and history. The gest captures history in the "typical" action.¹⁴ The action is typical because, though it is replayed again and again it is not eternal. It repeats because that is "how it is", but not how it must be.

The gestic vision "historicizes" the unchanged rituals the habits, of human interaction.¹⁵ They are revealed as choices made and re-made over centuries. History, thus appears as "typical," repeated.¹⁶

Notes

⁶Peter Szondi in his influential book Theorie des modernen Dramas maintains that Brecht's theater was created in response to the same problem which underlies the Naturalist, Expressionist and Symbolist drama: the problem of subject versus object. By defining drama in terms of a subject versus object antithesis, however, Szondi's analysis misses the point of the gest. Szondi claims that a crisis in modern drama arose when confidence in the ability of the human subject to objectify itself in society wavered and was lost. According to Szondi, drama is the genre of "das Zwischenmenschliche", what happens between people. Drama occurs in the social world of human dialogue. Thus, when in the nineteenth century European drama dialogue became an unreliable carrier of inter-subjective meaning, drama lost its identity as a distinct genre. Society was no longer a given, an arena for the objectification of the human subject. Naturalism, Symbolism, Expressionism, political and epic drama were then formal attempts to resolve this "crisis" in drama (14-21)

Szondi's analysis of Brecht describes the alienation-effect (A-effect) as the defining characteristic of the "epic" theater:

Das Drama zeigt Hegel zufolge nur, was sich in der Tat des Helden aus dessen Subjektivität objektiviert und aus der Objektivität subjektiviert. Im Epischen Theater wird dagegen...aus den gesellschaftlichen 'Unterbau' der Taten in dessen dinglicher Entfremdung reflektiert.

Diese Theorie des Epischen Theaters setzt Brecht als Autor und Regisseur mit einem schier grenzenlosen Reichtum an dramaturgischen und szenischen Einfällen in die Praxis um. Die Einfälle...müssen zugleich die überlieferten und dem Publikum vertrauten Elemente des Dramas und seiner Inszenierung aus der absoluten Gesamtbewegung, die das Drama kennzeichnet, zu szenenepischen...vereinzeln und verfremden. Daher nennt sie Brecht "Verfremdungseffekte". (118)

Szondi's definition of drama is based on the notion of a subject/object antithesis. This antithesis comprises the formal principle of all drama because it makes possible, it is, social interaction. The form of epic drama, in contrast, is a series of narrative brainstorm (Einfälle) which point to the social basis of action in its "concrete alienation", making absolute dramatic development ("absolution Gesamtbewegung") impossible. That is, Brecht's A-effects define epic theater by revealing concretely the

subject/object alienation in social reality.

This analysis ultimately precludes consideration of the gestic when it further characterizes the content of the epic drama in terms of this subject/object "dialectic":

Durch diese Verfremdungen erhält der Subjekt-Objekt-Gegensatz, der am Ursprung des Epischen Theaters steht: die Selbstentfremdung des Menschen, dem das eigene gesellschaftliche Sein gegenständlich geworden ist, in allen Schichten des Werks seinen formalen Neider-schlag und wird so zu dessen allgemeinem Formprinzip. Die dramatische Form beruht auf dem zwischenmenschliche Bezug; die Thematik des Dramas bilden die Konflikte, die dieser entstehen lässt. Hier dagegen wird der zwischenmenschliche Bezug als Ganzes thematisch, aus der Unfragwürdigkeit der Form gleichsam in die Fragwürdigkeit des Inhalts versetzt. Und das neue Formprinzip besteht im hinzeigenden Abstand des Menschen von diesem Fraglichen; das epische Subjekt-Objekt-Gegenüber tritt so in Brechts Epischem Theater in der Modalität des Wissenschaftlich-Pädagogischen auf (120-122) Man's

social "Being" appears as alien to him. Inter-human relations become questionable, and his society appears as an object of science and pedagogy. All this excludes an "absolute" dramatic, zwischenmenschliche, form.

"Completing" Szondi's idea, Helmut Jendreich (Bertolt Brecht Drama der Veränderung) actually makes clear why this subject/object antithesis cannot account for gestic content:

Hier muss freilich ergänzt werden, dass Brecht keineswegs, wie etwa das Drama des Naturalismus, bei der Reflexion stehen bleibt, sondern gerade auch den gesellschaftlichen Unterbau als Objektivation des Menschen, als Werk gesellschaftlicher Interessen und damit als objektiv machbar und veränderlich begreift....(360)

The "making" of the world is precisely the basis of the "Zwischenmenschliche" in the gestic drama. It comprises the "Akt des Sich-Entschliessens", which is how Szondi defines the "location" of drama (14). Szondi's characterization of Epic theater as having "thematized" inter-human relations precludes Jendreich's emendation and the gestic vision it describes.

According to Szondi, drama since the Renaissance had developed as a genre of the "inter-human". Until the modern crisis western drama has assumed that dialogue mirrored the facts (15). The Epic theater was the result of the loss of confidence in the ability of social relations to

objectify the subject. The very nature of the "inter-human" became the only possible theme.

⁷ Szondi claims that the subjectivism in Symbolist and Expressionist drama presented the world psychologically, and the objectivism of Naturalist theater presented the world sociologically.

⁸ Gestic theater is dramatic in the sense that Szondi uses the word: it is cut off from both the purely "Inner-menschliches" and from--to use Szondi's idealistic phrase--"dem Subjekt bereits entfremdete Idee" (14). Gestic drama, however, clearly diverges from Szondi's representation of the Renaissance tradition. The assumptions that gestic theater makes about social action--about "das Zwischenmenschliche"--are scientific. Society is more than an expression of personal will.

⁹ Hans Mayer and John Fuegi, in fact, both have maintained the incompatibility of Brechtian and Beckett's theaters on the basis that Brecht creates--almost in spite of his technical innovations--classically "deep", "full" characters. (see Mayer; Fuegi)

¹⁰ Fuegi notes that Hans Mayer, David Grossvogel, Ruby Cohn and Marianne Kesting have all written about the themes that Brecht's early plays share, avant la lettre, with the drama of the absurd. Fuegi takes it one step further and asks "...ob der Brecht der frühen Stücken mit ihren allegemein als 'absurdistisch avant la lettre' erkannten Elementen nicht auch in seinen späteren Stücken noch unübersehbar gegenwärtig ist (192)". Fuegi finds Brecht's plays derive from a program of pragmatic relativism not unlike Club of Rome's or Buckminster Fuller's for the "spaceship earth" (201). Brecht's four "great plays", Mutter Courage, Leben des Galilei, Der gute Mensch, and Der kaukasische Kreidekreis, Fuegi says, create great characters and great hopes out of confusion and despair (197-200).

The picture of Brecht as a despairing pragmatist is repeated in Otto Best's Bertolt Brecht: Überleben und Weisheit. Best discusses a triad of Brechtian ideas: Not-Handlung-Haltung. Referring to Brecht of the Keuner stories and the Fatzer fragment, Best says Brecht held that in our dark times actions are determined by needs, not by principles, and that it is these actions-out-of-need that determine our various comportments. After need is conquered, after the revolution, then comportments will be based on principles (Best, 42). This cynical pragmatism--fundamentally unmarxian--will not serve as a characterization of Brecht's position because, ultimately,

it subordinates comportments to "character". If Brechtian comportments are unprincipled, or merely pragmatic adjustments to overwhelming needs, then the moral coherence of Brecht's theater must be found elsewhere. For Best, character provides a "regulative" principle in Brecht's plays. Character determines the significant--or significance of--chances that occur in a figure's behavior (41-42). The gest--the face value of social acts--is thus undermined by a subjective relativism. Best says: "Der Brechtsche Haltungsbegriff ist relativ und variiert (41-42)." Best's claims should be seen in the light of his own citation from Brecht's notebooks:

Es gilt also nicht, grosse ideelle Prinzipiendramen zu schaffen, die das Getriebe der Welt und die Gewohnheiten des Schicksals von Menschen schildern, Menschen, die die Gewinne der Stücke sein sollen. Beispiel: Dass Burschen von einer gewissen eigentümlichen Struktur die Schaufel aufs Genick kriegen, ist nicht das, was das Stück zeigen soll. Sondern: Wie sie sich dabei benehmen, was sie dazu sagen und was für ein Gesicht sie dabei machen. (GW15, 50)

Otto Best concludes from this passage that it is not the what but the how that interested Brecht: "Nicht auf das 'Was', das heisst, die Handlung des Schlagens kommt es an sondern auf das 'Wie' des Verhaltens des Geschlagenen (Best, 41)." This is not what the quote says. Brecht here in fact is merely calling for a more concrete, particular "Was".

¹¹This diminishing of character in gestic drama has led Jan Knopf to characterize certain of Brecht's plays as "negative". Following the lead of Adorno and Hans Mayer, Jan Knopf finds in Brecht's work a "negative dialectic":

Die Gleichung Mayers zwischen Adorno und Brecht ist kaum, wie [R] Grimm es tut, in den Ästhetischen Theorien beider zu suchen....Die Übereinstimmung gilt nicht den Ästhetischen Theorien, sondern Adorno's Kritik der positiven Negation.... (Forschung. 57)

The result of Adorno's critique is to reject a conception of dialectic negation which produces a positive, affirmative wholeness, an aesthetic closedness, and to posit instead a negation of the particular, of "opaque immediacy," which remains open to the dialectic of alienation (Verfremdung), here conceived as an eternal back and forth of the particular and the whole. Knopf quotes Adorno:

Ist das Ganze der Bann, das Negative, so bleibt die

Negation der Partikularitäten, die ihren In- begriff an jedem Ganzen hat, negative. Ihr Positives wäre allein die bestimmte Negation, kein umspringendes Resultat, das Affirmation glücklich in den Händen hielte. (Forschung 58)

The end result for Knopf, despite the rejection by Adorno of metaphysics "run Amok", is a negation which is the essentially "human". Knopf quotes Adorno: "das Unmenschliche darin, die Fähigkeit im Zuschauen sich zu distanzieren und zu erheben, ist am Ende eben das Humane, dessen Ideologen dagegen sich sträuben" (60). The specifically human ability to alienate--to distance and rise above--the particular produces, according to Knopf, the negative dialectic of Brecht's drama.

But, having said that "distancing"--Knopf means here Verfremdung (see 52-57)--is the essentially human capacity, his conception of Brecht's theater as a theater of alienation won't usefully distinguish it from any other truly "human" drama. More important, attention is drawn away from the peculiar action of gestic theater, and toward a "beyond", toward a human condition that is unfree, trapped in an eternal dialectic of the particular and the whole. In fact, Knopf's conception of at least a portion of Brecht's work does not fundamentally distinguish it from traditional character dramas.

Brecht's "negative" dramas--and Knopf includes Galileo, Mutter Courage, and Pantula (Handbuch, 404)--become a subclass of character drama, a not really dialectic negation of it. Knopf writes: "Während die bürgerliche Literatur konsequent dem Individuellen zum Ausdruck verholfen hat--mit dem Ziel, es als allgemein verbindlich bzw, als allgemein menschlich zu erweisen, ergeben sich für Brecht zwei Möglichkeiten der Darstellung, die er beide genutzt hat..." (Handbuch, 404). The first possibility is the "critical anti-bourgeois" presentation: "...die Kritik an der bürgerlichen Darstellung, indem das, was in ihr im ("kausalen") Zusammenhang und in Abhängigkeit gezeigt wird, nun als sich im Widerspruch befindlich erweisen wird" (404). This form of presentation cannot really distinguish Brecht's "negative heroes" from those of traditional character drama since both seem based on an eternal particular-general confrontation. Whether that confrontation is presented as unresolvable in the given social context, i.e. as critical anti-bourgeois, or, presumably, resolved in a chain of cause and effect doesn't seem to change the dialectic.

¹²Jendrek (372-373) remarks that the two concepts--Klotz's "Offene Form" and Hinck's "Offene Dramaturgie"--refer to two different aspects of drama and are not in "competition." Klotz's open form refers to the open form

given the play in order to engage the audience as a "dramatic-dialectic" collaborator. Hinck's open dramaturgy refers to an immanent law of structure of epic theater ("ein immanentes Strukturgesetz des Epischen Theaters") and as such includes Klotz's open form as one of the V-effekten", all of which are aspects of open dramaturgy. The particular effects of open form to which Jendreich restricts Klotz's idea in Brecht are didactic:

Der Begriff der "Offenen Form" meint in Bezug auf Brecht die Offenheit des Stückes zum Zuschauer hin, über die Grenzen des Stückvorgangs hinaus, mit dem Zweck, die Zuschauer zu dramatisch-dialektischer Mitarbeit zu gewinnen....(373)

Knopf criticizes both Klotz's and Hinck's concepts for being formalist and systematic and, as a result, not useful in describing the uniqueness of Brecht's theater (172). Knopf's alternative, however, is simply to posit an idealistic "dialectic" system which places meaning in the beyond of an eternal art-reality dialectic. This seems irrelevant to the stated objective of open dramaturgy to involve the play in the real world in a unique way. It seems, at best, that Jendreich's limiting of "openness" to a kind of didactic purpose is correct. To apply it as a defining term to gestic theater fails, particularly in that it seems to see openness--going back to O. Walzel (see Jendreich)--as a rejection of the closed "satisfaction" of the old theater. This rejection is certainly not unique to gestic theater and, as Hinck himself notes, is a property--an "Akzentsetzung"--in older forms of drama. Openness seems really a question of techniques--the "V-effekten"--and the attempt to define gestic drama by openness doesn't treat the new content--the gest--as the prior element.

¹³ Eric Bently is right, *Mother Courage* is governed by necessity--fatalism, Bently calls it-- but, as I have said, his remark about building socialism in the seventeenth century is both facetious and irrelevant:

Like many other playwrights, Brecht wanted to show a kind of inevitability combined with a degree of free will, and if it doesn't matter whether *Courage* is less good or more, because she is trapped by circumstances, then the play is fatalistic. I tend to think it is fatalistic as far as the movement of history is concerned, and that the element of hope in it springs only from Brecht's rendering of human character. Brecht himself is not satisfied with this and made changes in the hope of suggesting that things might have been different had *Mother Courage* acted otherwise. (What

would she have done? Established Socialism in
seventeenth-century Germany? One must not ask.)
(Bentley, "Who." 14)

Mannheim and Willet in the introduction to their
Brecht Collected Plays, volume five, say about the changes
Brecht made to the play:

These alterations have been much discussed by Brecht
interpreters, as evidence that he was unable to make
his characters as inhuman as his ideology required them
to be, but they seem slight by comparison with his
wholesale rewriting of his earlier plays, and more like
safeguards against any mis-understanding by actors and
director than revisions of the original conception.
(xvii)

¹⁴ Raymond Williams remarks that the mature works of
Brecht recovered history for tragic theater:

The sense of history becomes active through the
discovery of methods of dramatic movement, so the
action is not single in space and time and certainly
not "permanent and timeless."...

In most modern drama, the best conclusion is: yes,
this is how it was. Only an occasional play goes
further, with the specific recognition: yes, this is
how it is. Brecht, at his best, reaches out to and
touches the necessary next stage: yes, this is how it
is, for these reasons, but the action is continually
being replayed, and it could be otherwise. (Williams,
Modern Tragedy 202)

¹⁵ In his existentialist attempt to rehabilitate Brecht
as a marxist, Ralph Ley, in Brecht as Thinker, explains how
even the most apparently ahistorical, timeless rituals
reveal the most profoundly gestic historical knots:

to a degree from one age to the next, despite the
uniqueness of historical epochs writes:

But whatever form they may have taken, one fact
is common to all past ages, viz., the exploitation
of one part of society by another. No wonder, then,
that the social consciousness of past ages despite
all the multiplicity and variety it displays,
moves within certain common forms, or general
ideas, which cannot completely vanish except
with the total disappearance of class antagonisms. (Ley

¹⁶ Raymond Williams describes the "continual action" of
Mother Courage, "who picked up her cart but to go on to the

war" (Williams 202). Brecht would have called this continual action typical.

5. Gest: The Scientific Comportment

In an addendum to Der Messingkauf, Brecht writes that after three hundred years of technological and organizational progress, society is ready to put itself on stage, to look critically at social activity.

Der Shakespearische Mensch ist seinem Schicksal, das heisst seinen Leidenschaften, hilflos ausgeliefert. Die Gesellschaft bietet ihm keine Hand. Innerhalb eines durchaus fixierten Bezirks wirkt sich Grossartigkeit und Vitalität eines Types dann aus.

...[Im neuen Theater] [d]er einzelne Typus und seine Handlungsweise wird so blossgelegt, dass die sozialen Motoren sichtbar werden, denn nur ihre Beherrschung liefert ihm den Zugriff aus. Das Individuum bleibt Individuum, wird aber ein gesellschaftliches Phänomen, seine Leidenschaften etwa werden gesellschaftliche Angelegenheiten und auch seine Schicksale. Die Stellung des Individuums in der Gesellschaft verliert ihre 'Naturgegebenheit' und kommt in den Brennpunkt des Interesses. (GW 16, 654-655)

Brecht elsewhere concludes:

...der Zuschauer erhält die Gelegenheit zu Kritik

menschlichen Verhaltens vom gesellschaftlichen Standpunkt aus, und die Szene wird als historischen Szene gespielt. (GW 15, 475)

In the gestic theater, social struggles are not fought out or resolved as a character struggle within man. Neither are society and its organizations background for the dynamic of the individual. In gestic theater, fate has a social component that makes the field of struggle the individual in society.

The possibility of a gestic drama, Brecht holds, first arose when society came under the scrutiny of science. It became a necessity after science had produced machines and institutions that qualified the "givenness" of both nature and society. Science was freeing man to control nature and held out the same possibilities for life in society. The gestic drama frees itself from the "confines" of the passions.

In the gestic theater, as in science, there are no eternal properties, no "Naturgegebenheit," which determine the significance of all activities. In the gestic drama, social rituals appear as human invention and adaptation, accommodations to necessity.¹⁷ Like scientific work, the gestic drama is not about anything. It is not about man, or god, or the Unified Field Theory. The scientist's work is characterized by the comportment of doubt, of finding the

limits of what we know. In this way, Brecht's plays are not about anything.

This comportment is sometimes described as skeptical. John Willet says, "The essence of all science, for Brecht, was scepticism: a refusal to take anything for granted: an active, burrowing doubt" (The Theatre 79), and provides the following from the prologue to the audience of the "teaching play" The Exception and the Rule:

Closely observe the behaviour of these people:
 Consider it strange, although familiar,
 Hard to explain, although the custom.
 Hard to accept, though no exception.
 Even the slightest action, apparently simple
 Observe with mistrust. Check whether it is needed
 Especially if usual.... (Willet, The Theatre 79)

But it is not scepticism that characterizes science--except when faced with non- or anti-scientific comportments--, and it is not scepticism that the gest adopts from science. It is readiness.

The typical scientist, for Brecht, is not a sceptic, as Willet suggests "with the nosy, sardonic, dissatisfied... intellect" (80). Rather, for Brecht the scientific intellect engages the world as it is. The scientists attitude enables action, even if the individual--like

Brecht's Galileo--proves unequal. Willet cites a passage from a late thirties anti-facist poem. "In Praise of Doubt":

examined

For physical fitness by bearded doctors, inspected
By shining beings with golden badges, cautioned
by ceremonious priests who hurl at him a book

written by God in person

Taught

By irritable schoolmasters, the poor man stands and
hears

That this world is the best of all worlds and that the
leak

In his attic roof was put there by God himself.

Really, it is difficult for him

To query this world. (80)

The poem, however, ends with these lines:

Freilich wenn ihr den Zweifel lobt

So lobt nicht

Das Zweifeln, das ein Verzweifeln ist!

Was hilft zweifeln können dem

Der nicht sich entschliessen kann!

Falsch mag handeln

Der sich mit zu wenigen Gründen begnügt

Aber untätig bleibt in der Gefahr

Der zu viele braucht. (GW 9, 628)

One model of the scientist for Brecht was of course Francis Bacon, "the great pioneer of practical thinking" (in Willet 67). whose Novum Organum served as a model for the aphoristic structure of Brecht's "Small Organon for the Theatre". Bacon writes:

There is much ground for hoping that there are still laid up in the womb of nature many secrets of excellent use, having no affinity or parallelism with anything that is now known, but lying entirely out of the beat of the imagination, which have not yet been found out. They too no doubt will some time or other, in the course and revolution of many eyes, come to light of themselves, just as the others did; only by the method of which we are now treating they can be speedily and suddenly and simultaneously presented and anticipated. (Bacon 102)

The world is available directly to the scientist, and be must be ready for it.¹⁸

Notes

¹⁷The on-going struggle to free aesthetic speculation from special restraints, of course, characterizes almost all of Brecht's work. His early work, Baal, Drums in the Night, Edward II, attack conventions. His "great" plays, Mother Courage, Galileo, establish the right and need of drama to engage the social context of the individual. The Lehrstücke assume the right to demand a certain comportment from actor and audience alike.

¹⁸In 1931 in some notes to The Threepenny Opera, Brecht defines his "epic" approach to theater. He is still defining it at this point in opposition to the great classical "idealistically-oriented" drama of the individual, but in particular to the "well-made" play which he considered an epigone form. Aligning his practice with the "experimental" technique and vulgar materialism of Bacon, Brecht offers a practical lesson from his Opera, claiming that his "epic" drama frees the "flesh and blood" individual once again for the stage. The subject of one note is the double arrest of Macheath. The first arrest, Brecht says, does not fit the view of the drama as "a single inevitable chain of events".

It is a diversion if...one gives priority to the idea and makes the spectator desire an increasingly definite objective--in this case the hero's death; if one as it were creates a growing demand for the supply and, purely to allow the spectator's strong emotional participation (for emotions will only venture on to to completely secure ground, and cannot survive disappointment of any sort), needs a single inevitable chain of events. (Willet, B. on Theatre 45)

The first arrest appears as merely a diversion from the "well-made" plot required to make identification with the diminished nineteenth century individual possible. The heroic individual of Elizabethan drama, Brecht writes, had been "put in his place" and the "dynamics of representation" had replaced the dynamics of what was to be represented. In contrast, the chain of events in the "epic" theater has "curves" and "leaps", producing a "comprehensive picture of the world." In its great classical form, the drama of idealism was more "radical". The individual there is "penetrated" by "outside relationships...that 'don't take place'; a far wider cross-section is taken....Something of Baconian materialism still

survives..." (46). Epic drama advances this classical figure into the modern world:

Today, when the human being has to be seen as 'the sum of all social circumstances' the epic form is the only one that can embrace those processes which serve the drama as matter for a comprehensive picture of the world. Similarly man, flesh and blood man, can only be embraced through those processes by which and in course of which he exists. (46)

The epigones of "German pseudo-classicism" have confused the "dynamics of representation" with the dynamics of the story:

dynamics of representation have changed into an ingenious and empirically-based arrangement of a jumble of effects, while the individual, now in a state of complete dissolution, still goes on being developed within his own limits, but only as parts for actors. (45)

6. Gesamtgestus

Scientific "readiness" demands the production of testable hypotheses based on tested laws and principles. Parallel to the scientific hypothesis, Brecht offers the idea of the Gesamtgestus. The Gesamtgestus is the "sum" of all the individual gests of the play--the basic gest (Grundgestus) of each scene, together with the final gest of "handing over" produced by actors in the performance of the play":

[T]he delivery to the audience of what has been built up in the rehearsals. Here it is essential that the actual playing should be infused with the gest of handing over a finished article....[T]he finished representations have to be delivered with the eyes fully open, so that they may be received with the eyes open too....

That is to say, our representatives must take second place to what is represented, men's life together in society; and the pleasure felt in their perfection must be converted into the higher pleasure felt when the rules emerging from this life in society are treated as imperfect and provisional. In this way the theatre leaves its spectators productively disposed even after the spectacle is over. (Willet,

B, On Theatre 204-205)

Der Gesamtgestus eines Stückes ist nur in vager Weise bestimmbar, und man kann nicht die Fragen angeben, die gestellt werden müssen, ihn zu be-stimmen....Und es kommt darauf an, dass der Fra-gende keine Furcht vor einander widersprechenden Antworten hat, denn ein Stück wird lebendig durch seine Widersprüche. Zugleich aber muss er diese Widersprüche klarstellen und darf nicht etwa dumpf und vage verfahren in dem bequemen Gefühl, die Rechnung gehe doch nicht auf. (GW 16, 753-754)

The Gesamtgestus of a Brechtian production is a working hypothesis, a production principle or protocol for an aesthetic experiment. Every Gesamtgestus appears as the result of tests, disprovable and limited so as not to limit speculation:

Nemo enim rei alicuius naturam in ipsa re recte aut feliciter perscrutatur; verum post laboriosam experimentorum variationem non acquiescit, sed invenit quod ulterius quaerat. (Bacon, quoted in Brüggemann, 252)

The Gesamtgestus requires something more and less than an interpretation or adaptation. Pertinent questions are

outlined; truth is not put to rest.

Francis Bacon described the aphoristic style of his New Organon as a style suited to the inductive principle which governed his work:

Da endlich die Aphorismen nur einige Theile und gleichsam abgebrochene Stücke der Wissenschaften darlegen, so reizen sie an, dass auch andere etwas beyfügen und herlegen; die methodische Überlieferung aber, indem sie mit der ganzen Wissenschaft prahlt, macht die Menschen alsbald sicher, als wenn sie nun gleichsam das Ziel erreicht hatten. (Brüggemann, 255)

M. Wekwerth describes Brecht's own application of the aphoristic style--together with its dangers:

Brecht likes to pronounce maxims.... Wisacres therefore try to reconstruct a model of Brecht's mode of thinking or his thought-production by assembling such maxmins. They point to his example when accused of the lavish use of maxims. In fact intimidation by means of a hail of maxims is spread-ing here like the Great Plague once spread in London. Whole plays are packed with them.... It is, however, much harder to describe something than to judge it. Brecht used his maxims for a very practical purpose: he packed into

them a lot of concrete material which would then be a handy at all times. When he pronounced a maxim then a whole heap of experiences, events, jokes, stories and contradictions fell apart.... His maxims did not produce a standstill but speedier movement: they were not full stops but colons. (Witt, 145-146)

The Gesamtgestus presents this kind of available sentence, a sentence of gestic colons, a gestic spread-sheet. The production of a Gesamtgestus is the mark of the gestic theater's scientific comportment to the individual as a social creature.

Like a scientific explanation, based on scientific principles, the gestic presentation of a play, based on the Gesamtgestus, is always in an important way undetermined, "unbestinmbar". A Gesamtgestus does not offer any message of ultimate coherence.

Bei der Anwendung von Principien sollte man sich vor Durchbrechungen nicht scheuen. Man muss sich immer ins Gedächtnis rufen, dass man bei der Errichtung derselben zwar hinreichend viel Gründe besass, aber dies doch nur hiess, dass die Gründe die Gegen-gründe überwogen. Durch Durchbrechungen lässt man diese zu Geltung kommen. (GW 20, 178)

The Gesamtgestus is also scientific in the way that it is "handed over" rather than merely illustrated or apothesized.

Dem Urtheile der Menschen thue ich keine Gewalt an;
ich hintergehe sie nicht, sondern führe sie zu den
Dingen selbst und zu dem, was diese verbindet; damit
sie selbst sehen, was sie haben, und sehen, was sie
beweisen, was sie hinzufügen, und was sie zu dem
Gemeinsamen beitragen können. (Bacon in Brüggemann
254)

The combination of openness and rigor in Brecht's work with the Berlin Ensemble has been described (Weber in Munk; Hurwitz, Wekwerth in Witt). Brecht's long rehearsal time demanded both understanding and argument (Einverständnis), discipline and adaptation. The purpose of his rehearsals was to make clear to the performers both what principles were at stake and how they were to be handed over to a audience. The goal was to deliver a Gesamtgestus which was coherent in its contradictions, and which exposed social coercion the way Euripides revealed the coercion of the gods. But, whereas in the theater the laws of god conjure a sense of immanence and acquiescence, the gest exhibits social consequences and creates a sense of immediacy and pertinence. The gestic "principles" do not make the gestic

theater more activist than the tribal theater of Euripides or the national theater of Shakespeare. The difference is one of motivation and program. It is in this sense that Brecht could call for the restoration of the "materialism" and social activism of the classics, and at the same time draw a sharp distinction between his theater and the formalism of what European drama had become.

A play of comportments renounces topics as organizing principles--the mimetic principle gives way to the gestic principle:

Das epische Theater ist hauptsächlich interessiert an dem Verhalten der Menschen zueinander, wo es sozialhistorisch bedeutend (typisch) ist. Es arbeitet Szenen heraus, in denen Menschen sich so verhalten, dass die sozialen Gesetze, unter denen sie stehen, sichtbar werden....Es handelt sich für die Kunst um eine Kultivierung des Gestus. (Selbstverständlich handelt es sich um gesellschaftlich bedeutsame Gestik, nicht um illustrierende und expressive Gestik.) Das mimische Prinzip wird sozusagen vom gestischen Prinzip abgelöst. (GW 15, 475)

The Gesamtgestus adds up comportments. What they add up to is a play which shows society as changeable, shaking the

audience out of its "billiard ball" existence:

In einem Zeitalter, dessen Wissenschaft die Natur derart zu verändern weiss, dass die Welt schon nahezu bewohnbar erscheint, kann der Mensch dem Menschen nicht mehr lange als Opfer beschrieben werden, als Objekt einer unbekannten, aber fixierten Umwelt. Vom Standpunkt eines Spielballs aus sind die Bewegungsgesetze kaum konzipierbar. (GW 15, 930)

The Gesamtgestus acts like a scientific principle and hands over the social matter of the play. The discovery of the gestic principles in the material directs both Brecht's rehearsal techniques and the construction of his model books. We can see in Brecht's practice not the "dictatorial" application of Verfremdungseffekten (Fuegi, 93) but the uncovering and handing over of gests.

7. Gesamtgestus and Model Books

Brecht's model books reveal how the Gesamtgestus functions as a kind of scientific principle in his plays. The model books are collections of photographs, notes and blocking directions which document some of the productions directed by Brecht or one of his collaborators. Brecht's purpose in producing the model books was not to offer a definitive interpretation of his work. They were not written to replace artistic creation, but to "induce" it. Studying the solutions contained in the model books would make clear the problems that had to be faced. The model books were to be something to build on or with (Hecht, Materialien M.C. 11-12). Brecht himself, it is reported, used the model books to study the gests and to review previous solutions to the problems of movement, blocking:

...wenn es gut war, wurde es sofort aufgenommen.

Sofort gab Brecht jede alte Lösung auf, wenn er eine neue von dem Schauspielern geliefert bekam, die den Sinn der Sache, den Gestus, den Inhalt wiedergab und die Chronik weitererzählte. (Hecht, Material. M.C. 105)

The model books thus share the scientific attitude in being at once thoroughly rational (durchrationalisiert is Brecht's word: Hecht, Mat. Antigone 68), and tentative. It is in this sense that Brecht calls his theater experimental. It has little to do with brilliant theatrical "Einfälle" as Szondi claims (above, note 6), and everything to do with building on a body of knowledge and observations. To Brecht, "experimental" meant not merely innovating, but overturning and advancing means of representing reality.

The model book of Brecht's 1948 production of Hölderlin's translation of Sophokles' Antigone and the one of his 1949 production of Mother Courage in Berlin both have the structure of laboratory reports: objectives, protocol, observations.

First, the problems of principles--Gesamtgestus--and the gest of handing-over are addressed. The Gesamtgestus of the Antigone production was the picture of the way force is used during the collapse of the top of the state: "die Rolle der Gewaltanwendung bei dem Zerfall der Staatspitze" (Hecht, Mat. Antigone 69). The gest of handing over is a complex one directed at the "progressive" element of the post-war Berlin audience which, facing the legacy of Naziism, fears the return of the old in the building of the new. The theater's response to this Verwirrung must be to move itself, with its audience, from a position of waiting

to be processed, to action: "aus dem Zustand des Wartens auf Behandlung zum Handlung" (67). The "epic" elements in the original, Brecht writes, makes it possible to hand over the actions of state objectively, revealing "experimentally" how to get results from observing the operations of a society in collapse.

The model book of Antigone makes clear one of the major problems which arises for this gestic production of the play. Antigone is the great figure of resistance to state oppression--Anouilh's 1942 Antigone, for example--but identification with this Antigone obscures the Gesamtgestus Brecht seeks. It is not only resistance to state oppression that is presented in that gest, but also the social laws of that oppression and the means of opposition available to Antigone, a member of the ruling families. The play does not present the role of the German resistance fighters, although their story, Brecht writes, is worthy and must be told (68-69). The Gesamtgestus of this post-war production is complex, to a degree "unbestimmbar," but it is also clear--the application of force by a desperate ruler--and pertinent to the audience.

The Gesamtgestus of Mother Courage is described in the first pages of the Mother Courage model:

Dass die grossen Geschäfte in den Kriegen nicht von den kleinen Leuten gemacht werden. Dass der Krieg, der

ein Fortführung der Geschäfte mit anderen Mitteln ist, die menschlichen Tugenden tödlich macht, auch für ihre Besitzer. Dass für die Bekämpfung des Krieges kein Opfer zu gross ist. (Hecht, Mat.MC 17)

The bluntness and apparent tendentiousness of this Gesamtgestus is the gest of handing-over chosen for this particular production. In 1955, Brecht still wonders how many of the audience understood the warning of the 1949 model book production (92).

The gests of handing-over in the post-war productions of both Antigone and Mother Courage are combinations of warning and encouragement, humility and pride: the suffering of the war has purified, educated no one; not enough has yet been done, much is left to do. Survival is deceptive.

The model books were intended for use by theater people. As a result, the body of texts--the protocol--is given over, especially in the Antigonemodell, to describing the technical solutions, the alienation-effects, worked out in preparing the production. But it is apparent that it is the gestic content, and the Gesamtgestus, not these effects, which are prior, and new.

After establishing the Gesamtgestus and gests of handing-over, the model books proceed with a "Durchrationalisierung" of the play which reveals the

gestic content of the original story (Fabel). Then, the blocking and other stage "effects" are worked out or "discovered" in the material. One reason Brecht gives for returning to produce certain plays of the "classical" repertoire is that they often contain rich gestic possibilities. What Brecht looked for in Shakespeare and Goethe was not effects, but gestic content. As Rilla remarks, in the case of the Antigone, the result was a production which did not merely update antiquity, but made the present aware of the pertinence of its antiquity:

Das Unternehmen hat nichts zu tun mit jenem Aktualisierungsversuchen, wie sie sich an klassische Dichtungen heranschmarotzen, um als ein plumpes Missverständnis zurückzubleiben, ein Missverständnis sowohl der historischen Form wie ihrer gesellschaftlichen Funktion. Die Brechtische Antigone hat ihr Recht aus einer Haltung, an der nichts so erstaunlich ist wie die echte Suggestion der Antike und nichts so bewundernswert wie die gesellschaftlich-rationale Aufschliessung der antiken Fabel. (Rilla in Hecht, Mat, Antigone 110)

The "protocol" section of the Antigonemodell consists of blocking directions interspersed with notes and questions and answers. After the description of the

blocking of the first group of verses, the question arises whether all the details just presented could be placed in the stream of the play; "Setzen sich diese Einzelheiten denn im Fluss der Darstellung wirklich ab?" The answer is that the stream of the narrative should not carry away the theatrical ideas: "Es ist Aufgabe der Schauspieler, den Fluss der Darstellung nicht allzu glatt und zwangsweise werden zu lassen. Sie sollen theatralische Gedanken leise isolieren" (80). The individual pieces, the blocking sections of the first verses, are clearly gestic units. The intention is that each gest be independently developed then placed into the "stream" of the play.

For example, in the first confrontation between Antigone and Ismene, Antigone does not remain untouched by her sister's determination to accomodate Creon's power. Ismene speaks of survival

....Die Schärfe des Beiles Endet süß' Leben, doch dem
Gebliebenen Öffnet sie des Schmerzes Ader. Nicht
rasten darf er Im Jammerschreien. Und doch, selbst
schreiend, hört er Über sich dann der Vögel Geschwirr,
und wieder Stellen sich ihm durch Tränenschleier die
alten Heimischen Ulmen and Dächer vor. (18)

Weigel, playing Antigone, "shrinks noticeably before the sister's determination to accomodate" (my transl. 80).

Antigone, reaches her full stature in gestic stages: "Die Antigone ist so anzulegen und aufzubauen, dass ihre Entwicklung vom Publikum in Form von Änderungen verfolgt werden kann" (82).

The rest of the Antigonemodell proceeds similarly. In another section, the answer to a question about whether the play's immense theme did not demand a weighty treatment produces a description of the play's unity as a thin line: "Bei aller Bestimmtheit der Einzelheiten sollte sie im Ganzen etwas Fliegendes haben....Gerade die Trennung der Teile kann bewirken, dass die Handlung immer fortgeht. Die grosse Linie sei eine dünne Linie" (91). This thin line is the line of the Gesamtgestus to which each piece of gestic material, complete in itself, clings. Replacing the plot-line, the Gesamtgestus moves the production closer to the story by focusing the playing on the gestic content.

The performance of Weigel in the scene being discussed above makes the action "exemplarisch," enabling the action and its presentation to receive the greatest attention: "Um den Vorgang und seine Abbildung der höchsten Aufmerksamkeit zu empfehlen, stellte sie, was sie machte, als exemplarisch zu Schau" (92). The heavy line drawn by the plot in non-gestic drama turns certain scenes into mere devices which advance the action but which cannot bear close observation. The "thin line" of the gestic performance allows a careful inspection of the story, creates a "scientific" comportment

to the material. Paul Rilla writes about the production: "neugierige Unruhe, die auf Befriedigung drängt, soll sein zwischen der gesellschaftlichen Aufmerksamkeit des Zuschauers und den gesellschaftlichen Aufschlüssen des Bühnenvorgangs" (Rilla in Hecht 107). Such a production works not on the audiences will to disbelieve, but on their willingness to question.

One mark of the "scientizing" of the theater is that each part of the play, each gest, bears the full weight of the Gesamtgestus. The "principle" is revealed in each step of the gestic content and not merely to the alienation--here called "epic"--effects of the production. An example should suffice to illustrate how the Gesamtgestus weighs on the presentation of the individual gests of the play.

In the play, there is a scene in which Haimon tries to dissuade Creon, his father, from murdering Antigone. Haimon attacks Creon's unreasonable exercise of power, and attempts to reason with him. The chorus of "Alten" adds its plea for reasonableness. Creon rebuffs Haimon as a traitor and a coward.

The question first asked in the notes is whether the chorus or Haimon represents the people. The answer is neither. Then, the question is asked as to what position the audience should be allowed to take. The answer is, "That of a people watching dissension among their masters" (my transl. 88). The scene becomes not only an attack on

tyranny, or even an argument for reasonableness, the golden mean. Instead, it is played to reveal the comportment to the use of force that determines the social relations in the house of the master.

Haimon, the popular leader of the army, resists unreason, not tyranny and not the war of exploitation against Argos. Creon is unable to reveal to his son that he has been deceiving the rulers of Thebes about the precarious state of his forces, that they both must rid the city of the enemy within in order to renew the war effort. Creon vilifies his son, here not only out of personal character flaws, but for reasons of state, of war. The "Zerwürfnis" of the rulers plunges the whole city into destruction. The Gesamtgestus--the role of force in the actions of a disunited ruling class--demands that the agon of Haimon and Creon include, but be more than, the good soldier-son against the overproud king father.

8. Gest: Genre and Style

Gestic theater has a unique position vis-a-vis traditional genres and styles. It recognizes them as gestic, social comportments, and as such they become distinct, independent elements in the gestic work of art.

Augusto Boal, the Bolivian founder of the Theater of the Oppressed, describes the new function of genre and style in his theater. He writes: "It was necessary to synthesize: on one hand, the singular; on the other, the universal. We had to find the typical particular" (Boal 172). Boal's solution was the "Joker" drama with its mix of genres and styles:

With the "Joker" we propose a permanent system of theater...which will contain all the instruments of all styles or genres. Each scene must be conceived, esthetically, according to the problems it presents.

Every unity of style entails an inevitable impoverishment of the procedures that can be utilized. Usually instruments of a single style are selected, the one that appears to be ideal for the main scenes of the play; then the same instruments are utilized in dealing with all other scenes, even though they prove to be inadequate. Therefore, we decided to resolve the problems of each independently.

Thus realism, surrealism, the pastoral, the tragicomedy, and any other genre or style are available to director or author, without his being obliged for this reason to utilize them during the whole of the work or performance. (176)

An anarchy of effects is obviated because the "Joker" drama is a drama of judgement and trial: "we are speaking here of writing plays that are fundamentally judgements, trials" (176). The result is a unity of "perspective;" Brecht might say, mutatis mutandis, Gesamtgestus; "...each chapter or episode can be treated in the manner that fits it best, without damage to the unity of the whole, which will be provided not by the limiting permanence of a form, but by the stylistic variety existing in reference to a single perspective" (177). The "Joker" drama advances beyond epate le bourgeois to scientific experimentation:

Thus the principal theme of modern theatrical technique has come to be the coordination of all its conquests, in such a way that each new creation may enrich its heritage and not destroy it....And this must be done within a structure that is absolutely flexible, so that it can absorb the new discoveries and remain at the same time unchanged and identical to itself.

The creation of new rules and conventions in theater, within a structure remaining unaltered, allows the spectators to know at every performance, the possibilities of the game. Soccer has pre-established rules, rigid structure of penalties and off-sides, which does not hinder the improvisation and surprise of each play. The game would lose all interest if each match were played in accordance to rules made up for that match alone, if the fans had to learn during the match the rules governing it. Previous knowledge is indispensable to full enjoyment. (177)

Although Boal goes on to distinguish his theater from Brecht's his description of the "Joker" drama is as well a description of how styles and genres are incorporated in the epic-dramatic Gesamtgestus of the gestic theater.

In a 1938 essay "Über reimlose Lyrik mit unregelmässigen Rhythmen" Brecht defines his lyric practice in terms of gestic comportments. He writes that the source of the gestic rhythm of his poetry was a "naive" awareness of dramatic "disharmonies" in society:

[When composing the verses of
Leben Edwards des Zweiten von
England] [i]ch hielt es nicht für meine

Aufgabe, all die Disharmonien und Interferenzen.
 die ich stark empfand, formal zu neutralisieren.
 Ich fing sie mehr oder weniger naiv in die Vorgänge
 meiner Dramen und die Verse meiner Gedichte ein....
 Es handelte sich...um den Versuch, die Vorgänge
 zwischen den Menschen als widersprüchsvolle,
 kampfdurchtobte, gewalttätige zu zeigen....

In der Folge schrieb ich...mehr und mehr Gedichte
 ohne Reim und mit unregelmäßigem Rhythmus....

(I)ch dachte immer an das Sprechen. Und ich hatte
 mir für das Sprechen (sei es der prosa oder des
 Verses) eine ganz bestimmte Technik erarbeitet.
 Ich nannte sie gestisch.

Das bedeutete: die Sprache sollte ganz dem Gestus
 der sprechenden Person folgen. (Brecht, Über Lyrik 80-81)

The poetry is created out of the lyric rhythms of the gests.

By way of illustration, Brecht contrasts the gestic
 "richness" of a passage from Lucretius with the gestic
 "poverty" of a passage from Schiller. The Schiller is from
 "Der Philosophische Egoist":

Hast du den Säugling gesehen, der, unbewusst noch
 der Liebe.

Die ihn wärmet und wiegt, schlafend von Arme zu Arm
 Wandert, bis bei der Leidenschaft Ruf der Jüngling

erwacht

Und des Bewusstseins Blitz dämmernd die Welt ihm
erhellte? (81)

The Lucretius is from Knebel's German of De rerum natura:

Dass aus nichts nichts wird, selbst nicht durch
den Willen

der Götter.

Denn so enge beschränket die Furcht die Sterblichen alle;
Da sie so viel der Erscheinungen sehn, am Himmel,
auf Erden,

Deren wirkenden Grund sie nicht zu erfassen vermögen.
Dass sie glauben, durch göttliche Macht sey dies alles
entstanden.

Haben wir aber erkannt, dass aus nichts nichts könne
hervorgerhen,

Werden wir richtiger sehn, wonach wir forschen;
woraus denn,

Und wie alles entsteh, auch ohne die Hilfe der Götter.

(82)

Klaus Birkenhauer, in Die eigenrhythmische Lyrik Bertolt
Brechts, attempts to locate the gestic "richness", which
Brecht's essay leaves unexplained. Birkenhauer's analysis
succeeds in identifying the gests of Lucretius, but finally

loses its way when it attempts to too closely determine a formal structure which is "dialectically" independent of the content (Inhalt) of the poetry. Birkenhauer's formal dialectic eventually loses sight of the gestic content of the poetry, but before it does it makes clear that the gest constitutes not only a change in the form of poetry, but in its content as well. In this same essay on irregular poetry, Brecht implicitly warns against a formal approach when he writes that though a perception of social "dissonances" was necessary to the "new gestic rhythmization," a "fully rational" explanation is neither necessary nor possible (Brecht, Über 82).

Birkenhauer begins by breaking down the Schiller and Lucretius passages into semantic/grammatical structures. The Schiller passage offers a subtle semantic unity which is actually revealed in a complex structure of grammatical subordination. Birkenhauer offers the following diagram; the various type faces indicate semantic connections, while the levels of indentation indicate parallel subordinations:

1 HAST DU den Säugling GESEHN,

der

unbewusst noch der Liebe,

2 Die ihn wärmet und wiegt,

schlafend

VON ARME ZU ARM

- 3 Wandert,
 biss bey der Leidenschaft Ruf
 der Jüngling erwachet,
- 4 Und des Bewusstseyns BLITZ
 DAMMERND
 DIE WELT ihm ERHELLT?
- (56)

The diagram, Birkenhauer writes, indicates the grammatical/semantic dependence of the whole passage on the object of the main clause, Säugling: a complex subordination held together by a subtle unity of meaning.

In contrast, the verses from De rerum natura reveal a direct concurrence of grammatical function and semantic structure. This type of analysis, Birkenhauer observes, offers little evidence of poetic "richness":

- 148 Dass aus Nichts
 nichts wird,
 selbst nicht durch den Willen der Götter.
- 149 Denn SO ENGE
 beschränket die Furcht
 DIE STERBLICHEN ALLE;
- 150 Da SIE so viel der ERSCH EINUNGEN SEHN
 AM HIMMEL

151 AUF ERDEN,
DEREN WIRKENDEN GRUND
SIE NICHT ZU ERFASSEN VERMÖGEN

152 Dass SIE GLAUBEN
durch göttliche Macht
sey dieses entstanden.

153 HABEN WIR aber ERKANNT,
dass aus Nichts
nichts könne bevorgehn

154 WERDEN WIR
richtiger SEHN,
wonach WIR FORSCHEN;
woraus denn,

155 Und wie, alles entsteh',
auch ohne die Hülfe der Götter. (58-59)

The Lucretius presents none of the rich unity-in-diversity of the Schiller. Only at line 151 is there a modification which semantically "echoes" a part--"ein Begriff"--rather than the whole of the preceding clause (59).

The unity of Schiller's verse characterizes a particular aesthetic program: "...die Sprachgestalt...wendet sich, ganz im ursprünglichen Wortsinne von versus, immer wieder auf sich selbst, auf die vorangegangenen sprachlichen Gestaltqualitäten zurück und konstituiert damit eine in sich geschlossene, künstliche und

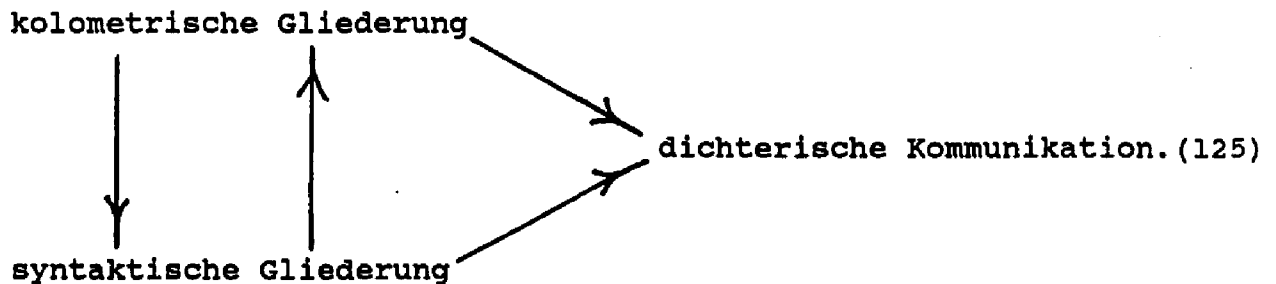
konstituiert damit eine in sich geschlossene, künstliche und künstlerische Welt, die dem alltäglichen Nutzen und Gebrauch der Sprache entrückt, also ganz eindeutig Poesie ist" (58). Schiller's verses, which Brecht calls gestically "poor" (Über 82), are clearly richer in the subtle, affective--the "poetic"--use of syntax.

Seeking the gestic "richness" which Brecht found in Lucretius, Birkenhauer eventually offers this definition of the gestic lyric: "uns geht es vor allem darum, dass Brecht hier...ganz programmatisch die 'Weiterentwicklung der Formen' auf die 'Weiterentwicklung des sozialen Inhalts' bezieht und von ihr abhängig macht.... In welcher Weise gesellschaftliche 'Inhalte' für die Form seiner Dichtungen bedeutsam wurden, zeigt Brecht in seinem Aufsatz.... Er bezeichnet als grundlegende...Voraussetzung: ein allgemeines Bewusstsein von gesellschaftlichen Spannungen" (92). Eighteenth century Germany gave Schiller's poetry its form and function (not of course its uniqueness). The sense of unity toward which Schiller's vision drove dramatic tensions gave his lyric and dramatic poetry its genre characteristics. Brecht, looking at his own Germany found aesthetic "richness" in disharmony, in a permanent clash of resolutions, genres and styles: in gestic poetry.

Birkenhauer, however, goes on to formulate a "COLOMETRIC" (kolometrisch) theory of Brecht's lyric that attempts perhaps to resolve too much. In the final

formulation his theory of Brecht's "communicative-speech style" (kommunikative Sprachstil), content disappears in a syntax/colometric ordering dialectic, becoming merely a part of a formal "dialectic" of form/content.

Birkenhauer offers the following schemas for the "dialectic" of the "communicative-speech style":



For Birkenhauer the colon of Brecht's verse is the gest, and he defines poetic speech as the combination of gestic units and syntactic units. Gestic poetry then creates a poetic "communication" out of the tension between meaning units (cola) and syntactic units. The problem then becomes to explain how Brecht could maintain that gestic poetry with regular meter was possible (Birkenhauer 125). Jan Knopf, reviewing Birkenhauer's work writes: "Birkenhauer löst sie [die Schwierigkeiten] damit, dass er die Teile des durch die Versgrenze gebrochenen Kolons aufgrund der starken Zäsur sich verselbständigen lässt und ihnen kolonartiges Eigengewicht gibt" (Knopf, Forschung 143-144). Plausible, Knopf remarks, but Birkenhauer takes on too much when he

attempts to use his analysis to define poetic speech itself:

Wie ist zu entscheiden wann ein solches
Eigengewicht vorliegt und wann nicht? Birkenhauer
zaubert, indem er solche Brüche..."knicke" gegen
die Grammatik-Regeln verstossen lässt, obwohl "sie
als 'Abweichungen' vor ihr, auf engste an sie
gebunden bleiben", aus diesen Brüchen ein
'dialektisches Schema', dass als Überraschende
Synthese nichts weiter bestimmen soll als
poetische Kommunikation überhaupt.... (Knopf 144)

The problem seems to lie in the attempt to make a formal
analysis do too much. The gestic vision is more than a
metrical method.

Schiller's metrical regularities do not create his
vision, and his poetry is not exhausted even in the
"richness" exposed by Birkenhauer's semantic/grammatic
analysis. Schiller's sensibilities produce his verse forms,
not vice-versa. The same is true of gestic art. The methods
of regularity in composing poetry are in fact absorbed into
gestic poetry as gests. Schiller's choices of meter are
themselves gestic. Klopstock's "ancient" method presents,
for Brecht, rich gestic opportunities:

Diese Versart der englischen und deutschen

Klassiker wird gemeinhin in halbe Prosa aufgelöst oder geleiert (es gibt sehr feierliche Formen des Leierns). Sie benötigt aber für ihren Takt den Gegendruck, Vorgang und Stimmung müssen sich innerhalb des gegebenen Gefüges und gegen dasselbe durchsetzen. Im Falle des Klopstockgedichts ergab die zarte atemlose Leidenschaft des Mädchens, das stockend und beschwingt rezitierte, bezaubernde Synkopen. (Brecht, Über. 124-125)

The gest here is not in the violation of the Klopstockian meter, but in the vision of the young girl's passion caught up in its toils.

Birkenhauer's analysis seems to lose the gestic content by locating the "richness" of the gest in complex linguistic "speech act" relations in the lyric. The structure of Brecht's irregular and rhymless verse, as well as his regular verse, is rather to be sought in a description of the material, the content, of Brecht's lyric. That material is comportments.

The confusion which dissociates the lyric form from its gestic content arises because the content of any lyric is personal in the sense that its concern is solely with rendering the personal comportment of the artist. Being most personal, lyric has a certain independence from traditional forms. If the lyricist senses the inadequacy of any lyric

form, he must produce a new form to capture his new comportment. He adapts old forms or develops new forms. Brecht writes that he can imagine a gestic poetry that is not irregular and unrhymed. The soul of the lyricist must comport itself with a daring abandon apparently independent of the demands of "content".

But when comportment itself becomes the content of the lyric, as it does in the gestic lyric, then--as it did for Brecht (Lerg-Kill 143)--the study of traditional forms takes on added significance. The various forms of lyric then have a special availability. Brecht can't imagine an irregular, rhymless poetry that isn't gestic; gestic poetry includes various comportments as its content.

Thus, the gest demands not a particular form, genre or sub-genre, of lyric, but commands them all. There is, of course, a problem with using Brecht's definition of gestic lyric to illustrate how the gestic vision allows the exploitation of various styles and genres in the same work. The problem is that in gestic, irregular, and unrhymed lyric, the smallest aesthetic unit is the gest--i.e. semantic and linguistic and social--but all the gests comprise only a personal (lyrical) comportment of the poet. But we can now understand Brecht's point about Lucretius' gestic richness.

The full gestic richness of the Lucretius passage can be clear only if we study its comportments within its context, if we examine the social-historical content of the

material, or if at some point its lyric comportment becomes pertinent to us--verwendbar. Brecht felt that lyric poetry is used to arrange our own personal lives. At any particular time, it is both pertinent and irrelevant. Poetry educates our sensibility to those immediately around us (Über 121). We like lyric if we can adopt its comportment. Its historical significance expressly does not come into view; its effects are atemporal, timeless. This means that in the lyric, the poet is "limited" to--i.e. concerned with--his personal comportment. The gest in the lyric is limited, in the same way, by the immediacy of its relevance. Brecht said of his own fragmentary versification of the Communist Manifesto: "das manifest ist als pamphlet selbst ein kunstwerk; jedoch scheint es mir möglich, die propagandistische wirkung heute, hundert jahre später, und mit neuer, bewaffneter autorität versehen, durch ein aufheben des pamphletischen charakters, zu erneuern" (Arbeitsjournal 726). The lyricizing, Brecht maintains, is relevant now because of a new immediacy of the goal, the "bewaffnete autorität" of the revolutionary comportment in 1945 when this note was written.

In the lyric the gest cannot create the Typus. A lyric is only "historically significant" by accident. There could be a time again when a poet will versify a manifesto, and Lucretius will be read as Brecht read him. The situation of the gestic lyric reminds one of Brecht's description of the

K-type, or carousel type, drama which magically transforms the audience into a "king, lover, class-warrior". The complete, unproblematic, identification of audience with the scene in this type of drama has its use, Brecht says, if "the goal is near and clear": "Ist das Ziel nah und gut sichtbar, der Weg glatt, die Kraft ausreichend, dann kann der K-Typus gute Dienste leisten" (GW 16, 544). This kind of identification is the soul of the lyric.

The availability of styles and genres to the gestic lyric is limited by the necessary immediacy of the lyric "goal". But in the gestic theater, the view is of more distant and complex goals, and the gest captures not just immediate, personal comportments, but historically significant comportments. The gest is most complete in the drama because in the genre of the "Zwischenmenschliche" the comportments are "typical", historically significant. In the broader social view of the drama, the gest enables the exploitation of other genres: epic, lyric as well as dramatic. The fullest exploitation of genres and styles as gests--significant social comportments--is characteristic of gestic drama.

Gestus in the Theaters of Brecht and Beckett

Part II: Beckett

by Barry Batorsky

9. Story and the Plays of Samuel Beckett

Walter Benjamin observed that because Brecht's theater eschews the sensations ("stoffliche Sensation") of the stage, it becomes a theater of story (Benjamin, Versuche 23). The aesthetics of the Gesamtgestus is that of the storyteller who maintains the pleasure of "what next?" by continuously engaging the audience's ability to follow what is happening. The audience must continuously piece together the puzzle of what is happening while the gestic break up the action into autonomous episodes. The story doesn't reduce to a plot, to serve which each scene must put off the end by leaving something out, placing the mystery irrevocably, like a religious mystery, beyond the audience. Each gestic puts off the end by exhibiting endless ramifications each of which the audience must feel is significant if the story is to "add up". Poor productions of gestic theater often either get lost in a sea of special effects, or they create islands of interest in a sea of transitions: dramatic scenes such as Azdak's court in a play of minor effects. A good story impresses by its complexity and its reverberations, a good plot by its inevitability.

However, gestic plays are not "open" in the sense that they somehow violate the idea of dramatic closure, or that they leave the final resolution somehow "displaced" beyond the drama. The gestic drama is full of resolutions. Each

gest seals a fate. In the story which unites these gests we see the limits of human activity: not free-will, but the parameters of significant action. Gestic plays are in fact "closed" by the limits, the necessity that governs social life. The historical determinism implied by the gest is what dramatizes the gestic story. The audience is the deus ex machina which negates the results of the gest. The manner in which the audience attends to the story "closes" both the appeals and quandries of Brecht's "epic" dramas and the final tableaux of Beckett's plays and playlets.

V. Nabokov (24) and Peter Szondi (Theorie) both have likened the theater of Samuel Beckett to the "chamber dramas" of the French Symbolist, Maeterlinck. It is an unjustified comparison. The difference between the gestic drama of Beckett and the symbolist drama of Maeterlinck is marked by nothing so well as by the role of story in their plays. Maeterlinck's dramas, Les Aveugles or Intérieurs, for example, have the remarkable quality that in each play one thing happens. The whole play develops the symbolic value of the one event. All dialogue is directed at the consequences or significance of that one action.

Beckett's dramas on the other hand are full of action, action which may seem futile "stage business", but which is always in fact part of a "one-thing-after-another" principle. Brecht describes the "stage-business" in the Zurich premiere (1948) of his Puntilla:

...Kisten (pieces of business) are essential components of narrative theater. (Puntila walks dry-shod across the aguavit (1); Puntila hires a forestry worker because he likes his eyes (4); the women of Kurgela see butter, meat and beer entering their fiance's house (7), and so on.) Such things were of course played for all they were worth. This was greatly helped by the "one thing after another" principle, which any dramaturgy founded on exposition, climax, and thickening of the plot is always having to disregard. (Collected Plays 6, 407)

There is no equivalence between the "atmosphere " of Les Aveugles--the blind, waiting, tormented by their blindness to death--and the maddening clowning of Vladimir and Estragon, insisting on awaiting the end while the story rages and decays, overripe, around them. The question is how the surrealist Beckett--and not Symbolist or existentialist (see Szondi)--produces plays which are gestic stories. The following chapters explore some of Beckett's stories and how he presents them.

Notes

¹⁹The demands this "new aesthetic category" makes on telling a story is described by Manfred Wekwerth. Wekwerth and others try to summarize for Brecht the story of his play Die Tage der Kommune. They talk of the corrupt bourgeois. Brecht interrupts and demands to hear the story of Mme. Cabot and her son, "something about cockades". Wekwerth writes: "It was not easy to satisfy the demands of our listener, they were at too low a level" (Wekwerth in Witt 141). He wanted to be entertained by the telling. Wekwerth and the others finally get the story to the point where the proletariat, betrayed by the government, "turn their weapons the other way." Brecht interrupts--he doesn't follow--how does the change occur? But, by "how" Brecht means where, who, doing what?

'I don't understand. Who does the converting? The proletariat are armed in the National Guard, and follow the national slogans of the bourgeoisie. When the bourgeoisie sabotage the defence, the proletarians demonstrate, and rub these slogans, national slogans, under the noses of the bourgeoisie. How does the change-over to social struggle take place? You must have omitted something.' (Witt, 143)

It is decided that the turn-around occurs in scene Three. "Brecht: 'What actually happens in the third scene?'" Wekwerth is finally able to tell the particular event--the story of the turn-around--, concretely revealing the gist of the citizens and the Gesamtgestus of corruption, betrayal, and unprepared leadership. "In the fourth scene the revolution--unexpectedly for the revolutionaries--has arrived." The revolt begins in scene three, which now has its full gestic weight in the story:

In this scene a queue of women are standing at five in the morning in front of a bakery. They mistrust the sudden ration of white bread announced by the government. With the bread already in their arms they discover the regular soldiers stealing their cannon. There is nearly a duel between François of the National Guard and his brother Philippe, a regular soldier. Madame Cabot's intervention prevents it, and the women seduce the soldiers into fraternisation. The canon is saved. Together the National Guard, the women and the regular soldiers march on the town hall:

the revolution has arrived. The fourth scene shows the Central Committee at its constituent session. (Witt 144)

10 The Gestus in Beckett.

Citing observations by Hans Mayer, Jan Knopf draws a connection between Bert Brecht's plays and T.W. Adorno's concept of negative dialectics. According to Knopf, the dialectic distancing created in Brecht's theater brings the world before the audience with a new immediacy by presenting things in their alienation, in their self-contradiction. The whole--das Ganze--appears only "negatively" as the contradictoriness of the particular (Knopf, Forschung 58-59). The negative dialectic of Brechtian alienation does not create a new unity--"more arithmetico"--by negating the negativity of the particular. Quoting Adorno, Knopf writes: "Ist das Ganze der Bann, das Negative, so bleibt die Negation der Partikularitäten, die ihren Inbegriff an jedem Ganzen hat, negativ. Ihr Positives wäre allein die bestimmte Negation, kein umspringendes Resultat, das Affirmation glücklich in den Händen Hielte" (58).

Brecht's negative dialectics, Knopf argues, produces an aesthetic prohibition against false images of positive, integrated heroes:

Brecht verschmähte es, zwischen sich und dem was er dachte, Bilder zu schieben, Bilder, die die Widersprüche hinwegschieben, als gäbe es sie nicht mehr. Adornos Satz...gilt auch für Brecht:

Die materialistische Sehnsucht, die Sache zu begreifen, will das Gegenteil: nur bilderlos wäre das volle Objekt zu denken. Solche Bilderlosigkeit konvergiert mit dem theologischen Bilderverbot. Der Materialismus säkularisierte es, indem er nicht gestattete, die Utopie positiv auszumalen; das ist der Gehalt seiner Negativität. (58)

This prohibition is not a commandment, Knopf adds, but a "consequence of the dialectic thinking" of a negatively comported materialist:

Da Dialektik als reale Dialektik nicht zwischen Denken und Sache ein Bild der Sache schieben kann, ohne sich von der Sache selbst zu lösen, ist das Bilderverbot kein Gebot, sondern eine Konsequenz dialektischen Denkens. (59)

Brecht's negativity is then--again Knopf quoting Adorno--the "inhumanity" of being human: "Das Unmenschliche daran, die Fähigkeit im Zuschauen sich zu distanzieren und zu erheben, ist am Ende eben das Humane, dessen Ideologen dagegen sich sträuben" (60).

Avoiding the complexities of Adorno's critique of ideology, we may perhaps generalize his concept of ideological constraint into any kind of necessity, any

lack of freedom which limits the human observer's ability to see a negative "wholeness", to negate what is observed. We may then translate Knopf's interpretation of Adorno's negative dialectics into the terms of gestic theater, and draw a useful parallel between the theaters of Brecht and Beckett. The gestic Typus replaces the character under the gaze of the "inhuman" observer. The dramatic figures in Brecht's plays are presented as gestically free, free in history, to struggle and suffer under the weight of historical and social necessity. Necessity determines their actions, and at the same time is the test of their capacity for free action. They act not as free individuals manifesting their subjectivity, but as historically free. They are free in the face of history: a Typus, a series of historically meaningful comportments, rather than a character, an icon of impenetrable integrity. The Typi create a sense of distance and heightened relevance, immediacy. This immediacy is the result of the lack of integrating, mediating "images" and can be understood as the quality of significance or relevance by which Brecht himself defined the gest (see above chap. 2). For Brecht, Hamlet seeks historical, not metaphysical, freedom. Events appear in the form of gestic contradictions, in the form of the "not...,but". The event is revealed just as--in Brecht's image--the auto is when it appears as a series of controlled combustions.

In his 1961 essay "Versuch das 'Endspiel' zu verstehen" Adorno sees the end of the individual and the immediacy of the drama as the central qualities of the Beckett play. For Adorno, Endgame created an uncompromised picture of the end of the individual: humanity wintering over the aftermath of historical catastrophe.

Becketts Figuren benehmen sich so primitiv-behavioristisch, wie es den Umständen nach der Katastrophe entspräche, und diese hat sie derart verstummelt, dass sie anders gar nicht reagieren können; Fliegen, die zucken, nachdem die Klatsche sie schon halb zerquetscht hat. Das Ästhetische principium stilisationis macht dasselbe aus den Menschen.... Um Geschichte zu unterbieten und dadurch vielleicht zu überwinden, besetzt das Endspiel den Nadir dessen, was auf dem Zenith der Philosophie die Konstruktion des Subjekt-Objekt im Stand vollendeter Entfremdung. (Adorno, Versuch 180-181)

The result of the complete alienation of the subject is a new "situation" in which the historical collapse of the subject is accompanied by a "coming forth" of the non-self:

Sobald aber das Subjekt nicht mehr zweifelsfrei mit sich identische, kein in sich geschlossener Sinnzusam-

menhang mehr ist, verfließt auch seine Grenze gegen das Auswendige, und die Situationen der Innerlichkeit werden zu solchen der Physis zugleich.... Nicht Identität ist beides, der geschichtliche Zerfall der Einheit des Subjekts und das Hervortreten dessen, was nicht selbst Subjekt ist. Das verändert, was mit Situation gemeint sein kann. (182)

The new situation is not physical or psychological, but both. Adorno borrows the concept of situation from existential philosophy, but finally isolates Beckett from all existential ontologies:

Von Jaspers wird [die Situation] definiert als 'eine Wirklichkeit für ein an ihr als Dasein interessiertes Subjekt'. Er ordnet den Situationsbegriff ebenso dem als fest und identisch vorgestellten Subjekt unter, wie er unterstellt, der Situation wachse aus der Beziehung auf die Subjekt Sinn zu; unmittelbar danach nennt er sie denn auch 'eine nicht nur naturgesetzliche, vielmehr eine Sinnbezogene Wirklichkeit', die übrigens, merkwürdig genug, bereits bei ihm 'weder psychisch noch physisch, sondern beides zugleich' sein soll. Indem jedoch der Anschauung Becketts (sic) die Situation tatsächlich beides wird, verliert sie ihre existentialontologischen Konstituentien: personale

Identität und Sinn. (182)

As Barthes said of Brecht's plays, Beckett's also replace topic and character (as a Sinnbezogene Wirklichkeit) with the gest: a comportment (negative "Gehalt") of a Typus.

For Adorno, in Beckett's play character takes on a special kind of typicality, being merely the deformations of social form constituted only of the alienated particularity of the subject trapped in a false life:

Geschichtlichen sind Becketts Urbilder auch darin, dass er als menschlich Typisches einzig die Deformationen vorzeigt, die den Menschen von der Form ihrer Gesellschaft angetan werden. Kein Raum bleibt für anderes. Die Unarten und Ticks des normalen Charakters, die das Endspiel unausdenkbar steigert, sind jene längst alle Klassen und Individuen prägende Allgemeinheit eines Ganzen, dass bloss durch die schlechte Partikularität, die antagonistischen Interessen der Subjekt hindurch sich reproduziert. Weil aber kein anderes Leben war als das falsche, wird der Katalog seiner Defekte zum Widerspiel der Ontologie. (188)

And, the necessary failure of the individual is communicated by the immediacy of his appearance:

Die Aufspaltung in Unverbundenes und Unidentisches ist jedoch an Identität gekettet in einem Theaterstück, das aufs traditionelle Personenverzeichnis nicht verzichtet. Nur gegen Identität, in ihren Begriff fallend, ist Dissoziation überhaupt möglich; sonst wäre sie die pure, unpolemische, unschuldige Vielfalt. Die geschichtliche Krisis des Individuums hat einstweilen ihre Grenze an dem biologischen Einzelwesen, ihrem Schauplatz. So endet der ohne Widerstand der Individuen hingleitende Wechsel der Situation bei Beckett an den hartnäckigen Körpern, auf welche sie regredieren. (188)

As far as the end of character and the immediacy of the plays, Adorno's discussion describes effectively the qualities of Beckett's gestic theater and its "historisch bedeutsam" Typus. However, Adorno's image of "permanent Catatrophe" (echoing Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution" and Sarte's 1949 attack on the Surrealists' Trotskyism with his epithet "permanent violence", (What is Lit. 186), Adorno's use of the terms Gestus and gestisch to indicate the silencing (175) or drying up of the dramatic (203), and finally the cancelling of history that Adorno sees--albeit dialectically--in Beckettian repetition (203) can themselves all be seen as aspects of the particular, characteristically Beckettian gest of

Endgame. Knopf's negative dialectics and Adorno's interpretations of Endgame say finally that the historical appearance of a subject-object alienation and the problematic intersubjectivity that results form the background of Brecht's dramas and the foreground of Beckett's. This claim is not thematic, but aesthetic. It is a claim about the authorial gest, about the author's comportment to the stories he tells. Brecht and Beckett share a comportment to their respective societies. This common comportment, mutatis mutandis, forms part of the Gesamtegestus of their theater work. Brecht confidently "re-functions" his material. Character becomes subordinate to the telling of stories. Character fails to account for what happens. Beckett chooses that "failure" as the "occasion" of his art. The inability of the artisan to express the "mess" that presents itself to the artist's vision together with the need to express is the only aesthetics that Beckett has ever avowed (transition 49 103). That failure produces the gests that are peculiarly Beckettian. Beckett mines failure to explore gests of survival, while Brecht used it as an opportunity to explore possibilities.

After Waiting for Godot, Beckett became less concerned with the critique of traditional audience responses. Instead, he concentrated his attention on adapting the theater to tell his stories. Similarly, the concern after

Endgame is less to scratch, claw and startle the audience out of its gullibility and more to delineate the self as it constructs and deconstructs itself in the world. The play Not I, which premiered in New York on December 7, 1972 is ten pages long; That Time and Footfalls, which premeired in London in spring, 1976, are respectively nine and seven pages long in the Grove Press collection Odds and Ends.

The common experience in these playlets is insight into how the self fails to make itself socially meaningful; they are representations of gestic failure. In Not I it is words working on the world. One April morning, an old women, near seventy, unloved, abandoned as a child and silent since then except "once or twice a year" when she babbled incoherently, is struck insensate. Then,

...sudden flash...even more awful if possible...that feeling was coming back...imagine!...feeling coming back!

...starting at the top...then working down the whole machine...but no...spared that...the mouth alone...so far...ha!...so far...then thinking...oh long after...sudden flash...it can't go on...all this...all that ...steady stream...straining to hear...making something of it...and her own thoughts...make something of them...all--...what?...the buzzing?...yes all the time the buzzing...so-called...all that together...imagine!...

whole body gone...just the mouth...lips...cheeks...
 jaws...never---...what?...tongue?...never still a second
 practically in her ear...not catching the half...
 not the quarter...no idea of what she's saying!...and
 can't stop...no stopping it...she who but a moment
 before...but a moment!...could not make a sound...
 no sound of any kind...now can't stop...imagine!...
 can't stop the stream... (Odds and Ends 19-20)

Besides the helpless compassion of a standing figure, the
 "Auditor", all we see on stage is a pair of red lips, and
 all we hear are words making pictures, "dragging up the
 past", searching things, all the while trying to avoid
 significance, trying to avoid betraying the self.
 Alienated as "she", Mouth appears nevertheless in her
 relevance as the narrator of her life:

...now this...this...quicker and quicker...the words
 ...the brain...flickering away like mad...quick grab
 on...nothing there...on somewhere else...try somewhere
 else all the time something begging...something in
 her begging...or unheard...too faint...so on...keep on...
 trying...not knowing what...what she was trying...what
 to try...whole body like gone...just the mouth...
 like maddened...so on...keep---...what?...the buzzing?
 ...yes...all the time the buzzing...dull roar like

falls...in the skull... and the beam...poking around...
 painless...so far...ha!...so far...all that...
 keep on...not knowing what...what she was--...what?
 ...who?...no!...she!...SHE!...(pause)...what was she
 trying...what to try...no matter keep on...(curtain
 starts down)...hit new every morning...back in the field
 ...April morning...face in the grass...nothing but
 larks...pick it up---- (22-23)

Human language searching the world and re-making the world
 with words; the end product is her life in the world, and
 another Beckettian, gestic failure.

The gestic drama in these plays has been focussed to
 explore failure, not just a personal failure, but Adorno's
 negative "Gehalt" as a historical necessity. Mouth's
 "flashes"; the ability of the voices of the "Old White
 Face" to deconstruct That Time, to reveal the void of the
 not made-up; May, in Footfalls, revolving it all in her
 mind until it all and she disappear: all are passionate
 visions of the self as it perceives and makes itself in a
 failing world. The Gesamtgestus of Beckett's plays always
 includes this gestic failure of integrating images: a child
 in a field on an April morning.

11 Plays: the Gests of Failure.

Beckett's only real popular success, Waiting for Godot, composed after Malone Dies and before The Unnamable, is in fact a special case among Beckett's plays. It is longer, more diffuse, full of repartee and variety of action conspicuously absent from the rest of the Beckett oeuvre. According to reports (Bair, 463), it seems similar in its diffuseness to the first, longer version of Endgame. It is Endgame (Fin de partie) in its final shortened form that is the first of the later, concentrated, post-"impasse" dramas. Godot differs also in the absence of a clearly commanding, central "story-teller" such as Hamm, Winnie, Krapp, or even the spotlight in Play, or Mouth in Not I. There is also in the setting of Waiting for Godot a neutrality ("A country road, a tree. Evening.") which is comforting when compared to the irksome and aggressive settings of the later plays, for example, the ash-cans of Endgame, or the devouring earth of Happy Days. Beckett has said of Endgame that its effect depended on the ability of the text "to claw". Waiting for Godot is Beckett's most comforting drama, and his most widely played. The reason is that in it the stage still serves as a refuge from the betrayals, the cruelty and futility of the world off-stage.

In 1948, Beckett wrote a poem which ends with the lines

"...when I may cease from treading these long shifting thresholds/ and live the space of a door that opens and shuts". Waiting for Godot moves through its two acts like the door which opens and shuts, revealing on one side the patient, on-stage endurance of Didi and Gogo, and exposing on the other the off-stage world of beatings, ditches, degeneration and betrayal. Vladimir and Estragon, like the patient in the dentist's office, live in the relative safety and comfort of the exposition and denouement of a cancelled appointment. The absence of climax, of change, here, is a comfort, the ache better than the cure. Life on the other side of the door is revealed, at the center of each of the play's two acts, in the meaningless posing and cruelty of Pozzo and Lucky, who appear in the middle of the of the first act, leave and re-appear in the second much the worse for wear. Their suffering and decay take place off-stage; they "rest" in the pauses of their on-stage performances. Vladimir and Estragon return to the stage for the second act after a night spent in the "ditches" and days of gratuitous joys and beatings, to pass the "evening" waiting in vain for Godot. The single, bare tree of the first act "miraculously" sprouts five leaves overnight or overday. As vain as their waiting is, Vladimir and Estragon can look out with some comfort at the "bog" of audience and at the decline of Pozzo and Lucky as they race desperately through the off-stage world.

Didi and Gogo are comic in their stand-off with the outer world; their verbal gymnastics, their paradoxes and their forgetfulness mediate the confrontation of self and society. Uncharacteristically, their failure is not foregone. Waiting is not a failure like the survival of Hamm and Clov in Endgame. The stripping of "Bilder"--utopian images--which is to be found in this play, too, still allows for an identification with the protagonists against the physical "reductions" which mark the peculiar gestic failure--the survivalism--of Beckett's other protagonists. It is not Didi and Gogo, but Pozzo and Lucky who decline toward the later Beckett protagonists. Didi and Gogo simply await the end of the "evening", the cessation of "long shifing thresholds," the opening and shutting of a door. The positive response of convicts to Waiting for Godot (Esslin, Absurd 14; Duckworth, Angels 20) takes on a new perspective when the comforts of the play are considered. Incarceration, for the self at war with society, provides a respite; the world whirls by as the soul awaits its salvation. The experience of "imprisonment within the boundless walls of the universe, from which there is no escape" (Duckworth 21) becomes an escape, a respite from the real and particular horrors of the prisoner's life. This mediation, this respite, is unavailable to the audience of Endgame.

In Endgame written in 1954, six years after

Waiting for Godot, the figures are again isolated on-stage from an off-stage world. But the off-stage world is now a product of the actions of the protagonists, Hamm and Clov; it is a world they made. The play takes place entirely within a single room with the two high windows and two doors. Hamm and Clov inhabit this room, closed off from the "dead", "zero" world off-stage, a world of Hamm's making. The "shelter" is not a respite but the last circle of the "hell" Hamm has created (26). Intersubjectivity succeeds horribly here.

Hamm is crippled, confined to a wheelchair, and blind. He is an actor, a "ham" (Kenner SB 156), with only a voice, without vision or movement. But Hamm finds comforts in the play, in the meaningless conventions of the game. He repeatedly "conventionalizes" his motivations, content only within maximally empty forms. He tortures Clov with "asides" and imprisons him in the "dialogue":

Clov: I'll leave you.

Hamm: No!

Clov: What is to keep me here?

Hamm: The dialogue. (58)

Hamm opens the chess game of this play with its endgame rules and strategies:

Hamm: Me---

(He yawns

--to play. (2)

Once begun, in Hamm's game there is no end to blood and tears. There is only the comportment of the sportsman, the rules of the game, and--in the end--only the lifeless pieces in their legal places to staunch the flow of suffering: here, to survive is to fail,

Hamm: (He takes out the handkerchief.)

Since that's the way we're playing it...

(he unfolds the handkerchief)

...let's play it that way...

(he unfolds)

...and speak no more about it...

(he finishes unfolding)

...speak no more.

(He holds handkerchief out before him.)

Old stancher!

(Pause.)

You...remain. (84)

Hamm desires only to end suffering, by ending life, to control and end all in the rules of the game, conventionally. Hating the world, a bad player at life,

Hamm has, it seems, killed off or exhausted all life and all resources, except his companion and servant, Clov. Hamm tells his own "story" of cruelty and misanthropy until in it and in his world all caring, all compassion has been reduced to zero. His "story" ends as the play ends with a tableau of abandonment and betrayal:

Hamm: If he could have his child with him....

(pause)

It was the moment I was waiting for.

(Pause.)

You don't want to abandon him? You want him to bloom while you are withering? Be there to solace your last million moments?

(Pause.)

He doesn't realize, all he knows is hunger, and cold, and death to crown it all. But you!

You ought to know what the earth is like, nowadays.

Oh I put him before his responsibilities!

Hamm no longer sits in the security of his paradoxes as do Vladimir and Estragon, but annihilates his world in his story. Hamm uses up the world and its people in a vain attempt to complete his story. The development from Waiting for Godot to Endgame is the development from a

bored, despairing attempt to find "salvation" to a desperate, "clawing" struggle to end the self in a "corpsed" world. Hamm fails more horribly and desperately than Didi and Gogo. He succeeds in completing his story, in expressing his self by reducing both it, and the world, to zero.

In Endgame, necessity becomes merely an opportunity for the self to assert a barren freedom from contradiction. The Typus of Hamm is the survivor for whom history is a necessity that allows only the story of survival: "Hamm: the end is in the beginning and yet you go on" (69), and the barrenness of things. The exposition reveals only cruelty and destruction as the connection of the scene to the world, and the denouncement--as the characters themselves remark--is only convention. The middle, the absent climax, is the immediacy of survival as a way of life, of survivalism, which adds, but only zeros.

In Krapp's Last Tape, first staged in 1958, the protagonist, Krapp, is like Hamm, in a room. According to the stage directions, the action of this short one-actor is set in "a late evening in the future," even though there is nothing in either setting or dialogue to indicate that events are not "current". The *dramatis personae* are reduced to one, Krapp. Krapp sits at a small table front center and listens to tapes on which he has over the years recorded a

sort of oral diary. Dialogue has been reduced to a monologue of selves. Krapp is a "wearish old man": "White face. Purple nose. Disordered grey hair. Unshaven." The audience learns his name from the first tape he plays:

Tape: (strong voice, rather pompous, clearly Krapp's at a much earlier time.)...Thirty-nine today, sound as a bell, apart from my old weakness, and intellectually I have now every reason to suspect at the ...(hesitates.)...crest of the wave--or thereabouts. Celebrated the awful occasion, as in recent years, quietly at the Winehouse. Not a soul. Sat before the fire with closed eyes, separating the grain from the husks. Jotted down a few notes, on the back of an envelope. Good to be back in my den, in my old rags. Have just eaten I regret to say three bananas and only with difficulty refrained from a fourth. Fatal things for a man in my condition. (Vehemently.) Cut 'em out! (Pause) The new light above my table is a great improvement. With all this darkness round me I feel less alone. (Pause.) In a way. (Pause.) I love to get up and move about in it, then back here to...(hesitates.)...me. (Pause.) Krapp. (Krapp 14-15)

Not only names, but present and future--time itself--appear as part of an exposition which is the story of the desolate

figure on stage. The expository function of the opening tape creates a play which rises with the immediacy of a surreal collage out of the dark places of this figure.

The younger Krapp of the tape, associated, for the reader at any rate, with a "present" Krapp, not the "future" Krapp on stage--is trying to express his situation and his state of mind, trying to capture his "present" condition. The old man Krapp rejects the naive expressiveness of the younger man. Old Krapp records his rejection, "Just listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago" (24). Mutatis mutandis the younger Krapp also rejects his predecessor's efforts:

Tape:-gooseberries, she said. I said again I thought it was hopeless and no good going on, and she agreed, without opening her eyes. (Pause.) I asked her to look at me and after a few moments--(pause)--after a few moments she did, but the eyes just slits, because of the glare. I bent over her to get them in the shadow and they opened. (Pause. Low.) Let me in. (Pause.) I lay across her with my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving. But under us all moved, and moved us, gently, up and down, and from side to side. (27)

But love, too, is unavailable. Even love can be annihilated,

and its continuance a destructive illusion that only has power as a paradise lost, consumed in the immediacy of the next Krapp:

Tape: Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No, I wouldn't want them back. Krapp motionless staring before him.
The tape runs on in silence. (28)

These taped words, ending the play, incinerate the one image to which the old Krapp clings, returning to it three times in the course of the evening, trying to find a center, a "crest", around which his life may rise and fall:

Krapp: Sat shivering in the park, drowned in dreams and burning to be gone Not a soul. (Pause.) Last fancies. (Vehemently) Keep 'em under! (Pause.) Scalded the eyes out of me reading Effie again, a page a day, with tears again, Effie...(Pause.) Could have been happy with her, up there on the Baltic, and the pines, and the dunes. (Pause.) Could I? (Pause.) And she? (Pause.) Pah! (25)

No reminiscence can provide a useful, relevant starting point for future tapes. The bitter gest of this survivor

annihilates the effort to create a non-trivial story of the self.

In his essay "The Role of the Individual in History", George Plekhanov argues that history does not reveal the progress of the spirit, merely its opportunities. Krapp's attempt to capture and comprehend his own story on tape, in museum snatches, devoid of responsibility or consequence, constitutes Krapp's unique gest. The shock and superiority his later selves feel toward his earlier selves on tape, Krapp's final soundless murmur before the memory of copulation "among the flags", all this action tending to "zero" is the result of the discontinuities that his gests create. The Gesamtgestus of the script denies that history is opportunity, and like Hamm, Krapp acts in the absolute freedom of history reduced to "iron stool" and meaningless words:

Krapp: What's a year now? The sour cud and the iron stool. (Pause.) Revelled in the word spool.

(With relish.) Spoooool! Happiest moment of the past half million. (25)

But Krapp's gest reveals that history is not indifferent to missed opportunities, freedom not grasped as an historical necessity leads to the running down of history, its reduction to taped discontinuities, its burning out. It is

not Krapp as a character, but as a Typus at stake in this playlet. In rejecting interpretations, Krapp's method demonstrates that life, once "integrated" into a personality, a self, is merely opened up anew for a renewed struggle whose outcome is not guaranteed by any theory or method. In Krapp's Last Tape, we don't listen for personality on tape, but watch the gestures of the man who wishes only to survive himself.

Winnie of Happy Days is perhaps Beckett's least complicated survivalist. She takes the survivor's joy in the "inextricable" present. Immediacy for her is devoid of all self. At the same time, Winnie's greatest comforts, her "classics"--everyone from Milton to the Rubiayat--are both autonomous and engaged. She engages them in the desperate struggle to ignore her own complicity in present horrors. Happy Days was written in 1960 and 1961. In 1971, Beckett directed a German production of Glückliche Tage. In his Regiebuch he made the note: "Relate frequency of broken speech and action to discontinuity of time...experience incomprehensible transport from one inextricable present to the next, those past unremembered, those to come inconceivable" (qtd in Gontarski, Happy Days 15). The past, which revealed only self-deception to Krapp, reveals little or nothing to Winnie.

In the first act, buried "up her diddies" in a mound of earth, Winnie still draws comfort, even "joy", from the

things--hat, toothbrush, glasses, revolver--that she takes from a large black shopping bag. She finds even deeper contentment in her own words, when she is "in voice". Even the nightmare of her predicament can be sentimentalized; its absurdity reduced to silliness by her voice and her things. The scorching sun and the scorched earth that seem the correlatives of her words only spur her hopes for another "happy day". She turns her voice on her husband, Willie, who is until the final tableau hidden behind the mound of scorched earth which engulfs her:

Winnie: Ah well, natural laws, natural laws, I suppose its like everything else, it all depends on the creature you happen to be. All I can say is for my part is that for me they are not what they were when I was young and...foolish and...
 (faltering, head down)...beautiful...possibly.. lovely...in a way...to look at. (Pause. Head up.)
 Forgive me, Willie, sorrow keeps breaking in.
 (Normal voice.) Ah Will what a joy in any case to know you are there as usual, and perhaps awake, and perhaps taking all this in, some of all this, what a happy day for me...it will have been.
 (Pause.) so far. (34)

But, in fact, Winnie's happy day is always either a project

or "empty words":

Winnie: I speak of temperate times and torrid times, they are empty words. (Pause.) It is no hotter today than yesterday, it will be no hotter tomorrow than today, how could it, and so on back into the far past, forward into the far future. (Pause.) And should one day the earth cover my breasts...(Pause.) She takes up mirror.) I take up this little glass, I shiver it on a stone--(does so)--I throw it away--(does so far behind her)--it will be in the bag again tomorrow, without a scratch, to help me through the day. (Pause,) No, one can do nothing. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful, the way things...(voice breaks, head down)...things...so wonderful. (38-39)

Winnie has become what she refuses to be: a defender of the present--a survivor--the social burden of the self. In the struggle between Winnie and her times and condition, Act I is a gest of avoidance. Act II is a gest of desperation.

Act II: a blazing light, Winnie "imbedded" to her neck, her comforts are few: a caring audience, "someone is looking at me still. (Pause.) Caring for me still. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful" (49), and her "classics," "One loses one's classics. (Pause,) A part remains. (Pause.) (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful, a part remains,

of one's classics, to help one through the day" (58). These aids suffice, but less and less. Unable to move even her head, Winnie is driven to tell her "story." Unlike Hamm's or Krapp's, it is told in the third person, about Mildred:

Winnie: There is my story of course, when all else fails. (Pause.) A life. (Smile.) A long life. (Smile off.) Beginning in the womb, where life used to begin, Mildred has memories, she will have memories, of the womb, before she dies, the mother's womb. (54-55)

It recounts again an unspeakable horror of loneliness and betrayal,

Suddenly a mouse . . . (Pause.) Suddenly a mouse ran up to her little thigh and Mildred, dropping Dolly in her fright, began to scream-- (WINNIE gives a sudden piercing scream)--and screamed and screamed--(WINNIE screams twice)--and screamed till all came running, in their night attire, papa, mamma, Bibby and . . . old Annie, to see what was the matter ...(pause) ... what on earth could possibly be the matter. (Pause.) Too late. (Pause.) Too late. (Long pause. Just audible.)

Willie. (59)

"Milly" had been wrested from the womb; no one could ever again hide from her the horror and betrayal of conception. The play--Winnie's predicament-- does not merely abandon Winnie to her "story" of betrayal, it betrays her very presence onstage. In Act II, Winnie is without breasts, arms and even to all appearances without Willie:

There is so little one can say, one says it all.
 (Pause.) All one can. (Pause.) And no truth in
 it anywhere. (Pause.) My arms. (Pause.) My
 breasts. (Pause.) What arms? (Pause.) What
 breasts (Pause.) Willie! (Pause.) What
 Willie? (Sudden vehement affirmation.) My
 Willie! (Eyes right, calling.) Willie! (Pause.)
Louder.) Willie! (Pause. Eyes front.) Ah well,
 not to know, not to know for sure, great mercy,
 all I ask. (51)

Betrayal, loneliness and desperation mark Winnie's turn to her story:

And now? (Pause. low.) Help. (Pause. Do.)
 help, Willie. (Pause. Do.) No? Long pause.
Narrative.) (59)

Trying not to suffer, not to question her self in its material condition, its present tense, Winnie hums a music box tune from The Merry Widow, hiding in a love-ditty the horror of her inability to reconcile the self with its predicament:

Winnie: She hums tentatively beginning of song,
then sings softly, musical-box tune.

Though I say not
What I may not
Let you hear,
Yet the swaying
Dance is saying
Love me dear!
Every touch of fingers
Tells me what I know,
Says for you,
It's true, it's true,
You love me so!

Pause. Happy expression off. She closes her
eyes. Bell rings loudly. She opens her eyes.
She smiles, gazing front. She turns her eyes,
smiling to WILLIE, till on his hands and knees
looking up to her. Smile off. They look at each
other. Long pause.

CURTAIN

For Happy Days, Beckett has create an aggressive "set" opposed to Winnie's refusal to accept her betrayal. The off-stage aggression of Waiting for Godot and the "corpsed" world of Endgame now appear on stage as the "blazing light" that burns down on Winnie and the mound of earth that swallows her, keeping her from floating "into the blue." A set which forces the protagonist to be aware and to speak will re-appear in Beckett's 1963 play, Comedie, in the form of a spotlight and characters in jars. The set as antagonist first appeared in Beckett's Acte sans parole I, a mime written in 1956 in which the set torments "the man" in a "desert" under a "blazing light."

In Happy Days the earth keeps Winnie on the ground, on the scene. But, in Act I, buried to the waist, Winnie is both restrained and comforted by her predicament:

Winnie: Is gravity what it was, Willie, I fancy not. (Pause.) Yes, the feeling more and more that if I were not held--(gesture)--in this way, I would simply float up into the blue. (Pause.) And that perhaps some day the earth will yield and let me go, the pull is so great, yes crack all round me and let me out. (Pause.) Don't you have

to cling on sometimes, Willie? (33-34)

Winnie's words, like thrashing in quicksand, bury her ever deeper in the earth. At the same time, they, "lighten" her, increase the "suck" of the "blue." The blazing light burns her, but it keeps the scorched grass from growing and hiding the earth from her and her from the eyes of others. Despite her torments, the flesh won't melt and the grass won't grow. Winnie, the most reluctant storyteller in Beckett's gallery of failures, is in fact in dubious battle with the environment which both betrays and sustains her presence. She appears to know what is to come, because she is involved in fashioning her fate; she is aware of herself and her world and of their indissoluble ties. Winnie is married to her "set."

But the play's the thing and Winnie will not act, cannot stop her avoidance. At the close of Acts I and II, she happily anticipates the ringing of the bell "for sleep." Closing Act I,

Winnie: It is perhaps a little soon--to make ready for the night--feeling it at hand--the bell for sleep--saying to myself--Winnie--it will not be long now, Winnie--until the bell for sleep.
(Stops tidying, head up.) Sometimes I am wrong.

(Smile.) But not too often. (Smile off.) (44)

And just prior to the final tableau, after concluding Mildred's story,

Ah well, not long now, Winnie, can't be long now until the bell for sleep. (Pause.) The you may close your eyes--and keep them closed.
(59)

But the bell for sleep never rings. The only service the bell performs is to awaken Winnie to her situation. Opening Act I: "bell rings piercingly, say ten seconds, stops. She does not move. Pause. Bell more piercingly, say five seconds. She wakes. Bell stops"(8). Opening Act II, "Bell rings loudly. She opens eyes at once. Bell stops" (49). In the first minutes of Act II, when Winnie again closes her eyes, convinced that her mind is free of all the old "deep trouble" (51), the bell rings again. And finally, closing her eyes after her love song, she is quickly awakened to look at Willie, who is now "dressed to kill", crouched at the foot of the mound looking to her to be off his head, out of his "poor old wits". The bell, the inescapable immediacy of her predicament, is the one thing Winnie does not predict. All other events she anticipates precisely. The weak point in Winnie's armor, the bell, is the alienating

consciousness of the spectator. In Act II, Winnie's breasts disappear beneath the mound, and her "things" are reconstituted as if she had never touched them.

Winnie is stripped of her ability to employ "things", to manipulate objects, by the necessity of being among them. She is buried and forced to continue the horrible joke, the desperate struggle against the vulnerability-visibility of the self to the hostile world. Her increased earthiness in Act II creates a more acute predicament and is accompanied by a bell for waking and a desperate turn to "story". The desperation in the speech which preceeds the telling of Mildred's story expresses all the ambiguities of Winnie's struggle with the *mise en scene*. Beginning with a recognition of the reestablishment of things and the recurrence of the self--"to have been always what I am-and so changed from what I was. (Pause.) I am the one, I say the one, then the other" (51)--Winnie suffers for an instant the inescapable present as it continues to bury her. She denies the existence of her arms and breasts and escapes into a reverie of love. She closes her eyes and is rudely awakened by the bell. She calls the sound of the bell a happy "gouging":

Winnie: Ah yes, things have their life, that is what I always say, things have a life. (Pause.)
Take my looking glass, it doesn't need me. (Pause.)

The bell. (Pause.) One cannot ignore it. (Pause.)
 A gouge. (Pause.) One cannot ignore it. (Pause.)
 How often...(pause)...I say how often I have said,
 Ignore it Winnie, ignore the bell, pay no heed, just
 sleep and wake, sleep and wake, as you please, open
 and close the eyes, as you please, or in a way you
 find most helpful. (Pause.) Open and close the eyes,
 Winnie, open and close, always that. (Pause.)
 But no. (Smile.) Not now. (Smile broader.) No,
 no. (Smile off. Pause.) What now? (54)

Winnie cannot end her sinking; doubt and the mound of
 scorched earth is the price she has paid for surviving.
 Death and survival can be gestically equivalent.

Beckett has fashioned a *mise en scene* to keep Winnie
 down and talking. The set forces Winnie to recognize her
 suffering, her imprisonment, to the extent that she does. It
 forces her to express her lack of freedom. She can't, won't
 escape the shrinking conventions of her life--her
 "classics", her things, her habits--because she uses them to
 mask what her "opening" reveals. The self finds no adequate
 expression in the world, yet it can only change and be free
in the world. It cannot float away, like "gossamer" "into
 the blue". The bell which awakens Winnie to her struggle
 cannot bring her to a lack of need, to willess sleep. The
 free self can only be realized in the hostile conditions of

the present, in the mess. The self is not free of its social component.

Winnie's world is neither reality, or allegory, nor symbol. It is only and precisely what we see: a scorched earth swallowing a "well-preserved" fifty year old woman who babbles and fiddles. It is a world no climax can alter and no denouement can restore. The effect of Beckett's drama lies not in its technical innovations-- these innovations all appeared pre-war, in the drama of surrealism (Orenstein, 1-14) and in epic theatre. The effectiveness of Beckett's theatre derives from its peculiarly timely relationship to its audience. Previous theatre and previous audiences were too full of possibilities. Beckett's *mise en scene* is not an absurd device. It creates a barren hostile world, but one that has become so, one that merely completes the gestures of his Typi. Beckett's "clawing" works can be performed and his lonely integrity is more and more appropriate, more and more clearly of the period. The audience sees in his world and artistic transformation of their own world of exhausted, worked-out possibilities. The resulting gestures are real and pertinent. In a recent television documentary, a camera was mounted in an airplane which overflew hundreds of square miles of Arizona desert covered from horizon to horizon with the most modern, million-dollar fighter aircraft, rusting, useless--obsolete before they ever left the ground, human labor abandoned, exhausted, impotent

without having destroyed a single hostile home or harbor, man, woman or child: a Beckettian gest.

S.E. Gontarski speaks of the "vaguening" of Happy Days as it went through its various revisions. For example, in revision, Winnie's mound goes from a gently rising, grassy expanse to a mound of scorched grass; the light goes from a "strong sunlight" to a blazing light" (Gontarski 26). In Beckett's third revision, details about Winnie's intent and character are cut from the dialogue, making her less "sympathetic" (41). Gontarski notes that, "A pattern of revision tending toward greater ambiguity is evident in the manuscripts of a number of Beckett's works" (36). In Proust, Gontarski argues, Beckett described art as a contraction. Thus, in stripping down, contracting his characters, Beckett made them more artistic (35).

Beckett holds out for the purest, uncompromised failure. The "vaguening" of character and situation is the exhaustion of possibilities, the decrease of sympathy for errors made over and over "on the nothing new". What is left are gests. The action appears without intervening "Bilder", images. It is at once alienated and more immediate. The action is gestic in a Brechtian manner because it is not only part of story of a character. It is not man in a completed world, but men and women futilely and redundantly trying to re-make themselves as part of the mess. Love and

Knowledge do not mediate the Beckettian immediacy, the mess.

12 Directing The Gests of Endgame

In the summer of 1967, Beckett directed Endspiel, translated by Tophoven, at the Schiller-Theater in Berlin. As Michael Haerdter writes, Beckett exercised a "höfliche Diktatur" (103), a polite dictatorship, over the production. But, at the first rehearsal, Beckett made clear to the cast that he would not talk "philosophy". His concern was with what the play looked like. Its meaning would have to be discovered. This combination of audience, theater and director seems to have created a uniquely "Beckettian" Gesamtgestus for this Endgame. The production process, however, seems to have been in certain essentials remarkably Brechtian.

Beckett divided the play into sixteen sections, and organized the production according to his "echo-principle":

Während der Arbeit schlägt Beckett immer wieder kleine Teständerungen vor. Dabei folgt er einen bestimmten Prinzip: dem Echo-Prinzip. (99)

This principle then functions as a Gesamtgestus, replacing plot with a comportment:

Auch im Spiel wünscht er den Einbau von 'Echos.'
Clovs Stellung in der ersten Szene--er steht mit

Blick auf Hamm vor der Öffnung zur Küche--soll
jene der letzten Szene genau entsprechen. (99)

Beckett's control over the production also appears to have been aimed at keeping the events free of what Adorno called "images": psychological or moral atmosphere interposed between the audience and the event.

Der Text soll sehr einfach gesprochen werden,
'meistens ohne Farbe.' Es klingt fast entschul-
digend. Als er hinzufügt, 'psychologisch, moralisch,
ist in dem Stück nichts zu machen, man kann es
nur im Spiel erfahren.' Vielleicht beunruhigt ihn
die unausgesprochene Frage nach dem Endspiel-Sinn,
die alle bereithalten. (99)

In the winter of '75, Beckett was in Germany again, at the Schiller theater, to direct Waiting for Godot. Beckett arrived at rehearsal with a "step-by-step principle" of production, just as he had introduced the "echo-principle" into the rehearsals of Endspiel (Asmus, "Beckett inszeniert" 7). Walter Asmus, working with Beckett, records the following exchange between Beckett and Stephan Wigger who played Vladimir.

Wigger: 'But in spite of everything, it is at odd

moments quite a cheerful game.'

Beckett: 'Yes, of course, but that should be done very accurately. The splitting up of Vladimir and Estragon is such a point: they are, in fact, inseparable.... The principle is: they have to come together step by step.'

Beckett walks on the stage, his eyes fixed on the ground, and shows the movement as he speaks Estragon's lines: 'You had something to say to me?... You're angry?...Forgive me...Come Didi. Give me your hand....'

With each sentence, Beckett makes a step towards the imaginary partner. Always a step, the the sentence. Beckett comes up five, six or seven times, and it has got to be done very accurately. This is the balletic side of the story. Lucky falls twice , and this mustn't be done realistically, but very cleanly.

(Asmus, "Beckett directs" 23)

Walter Asmus describes his own reaction to Beckett's "principle" for the '78 production of Play:

Das Ziel sei, dass der Text atemlos, fieberhaft gesprochen werde. Ein rascher Rück, dann weider einer, wie in dem Bild des alten Handmähers im Stück.

The principle puts Asmus in mind of the Beckettian vision:

Ich erinnere mich an die Fernsehaufnahmen in Stuttgart im letzten ['77], als die Schauspieler in Nur noch Gewölke...die Augen regungslos für 50-Sekunden Grossaufnahmen offenhalten musste... Konzentration, Leere,-Entrücktheit zum Ausdruck einer absoluten Vision. ("Beckett inszeniert" 7)

Beckett's "principles" do not motivate character or plot; they replace plot and character as the structure of action, giving events their immediacy and relevance. They in fact organize gesticulations. The "echo-principle" of Endspiel, the "step-by-step principle" of Warten auf Godot, the disjunction and pacing of Play, all establish a Grundgestus, a basic comportment, for which each "event" is evidence, complete and immediate, without "false images" or atmosphere.

Beckett re-writes his texts according to his production principles. In the '74-75' production, Asmus describes one such re-write which makes the text conform to the "step-by-step" approach. Beckett has divided up the two acts of Waiting for Godot: act one into "A1" through "A6" and act two into "B1" through "B5". Asmus writes:

Right at the beginning, there is an alteration.

Estragon is sitting on the stone. Vladimir is standing in the shade near the tree, hard to see...This is' quite and important alteration, that both characters are on stage right from the beginning--as also at the beginning of the second act. But the stage direction in script still says: "Estragon, sitting on a low mound is trying to take his boot off.... Enter Vladimir." But now Bollman (Estragon) and Wigen are sitting next to each other....Beckett is on stage and demonstrates each move exactly on cue, while he speaks the lines....

What Beckett described just now as an approach is becoming clear: Vladimir approaches step-by-atep from behind the tree, which stands at the back of the stage to the right. Estragon is sitting on the stone in the front to the left. Vladimir is constantly in motion, Estragon sticks to his stone. The reason for dividing the acts is becoming clear: A2 starts when Estragon stands up and gets moving. With almost frightening concentration and willpower, A1 and A2 are gone over with absolute precision....The uncompromising attitude with which Beckett returned to the script time after time in the earlier conversation is now transformed into practice. (Asmus, "Quarterly" 24)

Beckett's principles are derived--like Brecht's

Gesamtgestus--from a precise study of what happens in the play, and they produce a similarly precise interdependence of language and physical action. For the '75-'76 Waiting for Godot, the principle was the "step-by-step approach" of Vladimir and Estragon toward one another. After the principle is arrived at, alteration and revision are undertaken whose "absoluteness" and "precision" seem to sacrifice "reality".

Michael Heardter, in the '67 Endspiel referred to above, records the surprise of all present when Beckett summarizes the numerous alterations dictated by the "echo-principle" with a principle of realistic theater: "Man stutzt, als Beckett dies mit einem Prinzip des naturalistischen Theaters erläutert--'das Stück ist so zu spielen, als gäbe es eine vierte Wand anstelle der Rampe'" (Haerdter 97). On the other hand, faced with Lucky's nonrealistic, "balletic" fall in the '74-'75 Endgame, Stephan Wigger responds: "Does that mean there is no naturalism left whatsoever?" Asmus records Beckett's response:

Beckett demonstrates: he goes down on his knees and his arms first upwards then stretching forwards, lets himself slide on the ground. Wigger: "But how can one prevent the loss of all human consideration, how can one prevent it from becoming sterile?"

Beckett: "It is a game, everything is a game. When all four of them are lying on the ground, that cannot be handled naturalistically, That has got to be done artificially, balletically. Otherwise everything becomes an imitation, an imitation of reality."

Wigger: "Are you implying a certain dryness?"

Beckett stands up: "It should become clear and transparent, not dry. It is a game in order to survive. (Asmus, "Quarterly" 23-24)

Beckett's "principles" are neither aesthetic categories--"the echo principle" is not only a rhythm or ictus--nor social problems. Part of what makes these "principles" gestic is clear in Beckett's enunciation of the Brechtian values of objectivity and clarity, explicitness and commitment. In 1967, Haerdter describes Beckett's "embarrassment":

Um Becketts spöttische, puritanische schmale Lippen spielt ein Lächeln der Verlegenheit. Er neigt beim Sprechen den Kopf ein wenig zur Seite. "Ich will nicht über mein Stück reden, man muss es rein dramatisch nehmen, auf der Bühne feststellen. Es handelt sich darin nicht um Philosophie," sagt er mit Nachdruck und setzt hinzu, "vielleicht um Poesie." Dann schliesst er mit überraschender Endgültigkeit, die jeden Einwand zuvorkommt: "Das Stück interessiert hier

ausschliesslich als Spielvorlage." (Haerdter 97)

The "objectivity" of gestic theater, the new relationship of audience-actor play, stresses the events and the "transparent" relevance of the action.

That is, in Beckett's work as a director, there is a struggle for a "principled" objectivity which parallels exactly Brecht's more philosophical political struggle for a dialectic theater. In his reaction against both a dependent "realism" and an unaesthetic anti-naturalism, Beckett may seem to maintain that his are purely aesthetic principles, that his plays are only "Spielvorlage". But the "echo-principle" and the "step-by-step approach" are also social, political and philosophical strictures. They are principles of action, not only of language and theme. They demand of the players a comportment to the story being told. They involve the performers in an aesthetic relation to both the play and the audience. The players are not limited to discovering the mystery of character in the events. The choice of style--naturalism, anti-naturalism--can no longer be relied on to provide "atmosphere" to hold together disparate or contradictory characters or actions.

To the first rehearsal, Beckett as director brings his Regiebuch. Haerdter, in '67, describes its first, furtive appearance:

Während Beckett weiter arrangiert, holt er irgendwann aus seiner Mappe ein dickes französisches Schulheft hervor: das Regiebuch. Szene um Szene ist darin in Zierlicher, spröder Handschrift und mit Hilfe kleiner Skizzen ein exakter Aktionsplan des Endspiels entworfen. Eine vollständige Partitur. Er schiebt rasch die Brille in die Stirn, runde Gläser in Stahlrahmen, und kontrolliert, die Augen dicht überm Blatt, einer seiner Arrangements. Hasting liegte er das Heft an seinem Platz zurück. Als schäme er sich, dass er 'gespickt' hat. (98)

Beckett's Regiebuch is a detailed revision according to the "echo-principle".

In 1974, Walter Asmus gives this detailed description of the Regiebuch:

In a red hardbound volume of checked paper, a book has been created about another book: a meta-book. Written in black ink in English in 105 pages, there are detailed directions concerning the whole play.

Pages 2-53 contain the scenic arrangements. The right hand page is mostly used for a written description, while the left hand page is used for sketches or is left blank for corrections or addi-

tional notes. The divisions follow those of parts A1 to A6 in the first act, and parts B1 to B5 in the second. Each move, each section, is provided with the relevant cue of the German script, underlined each time.

The second part of the book is classified by theme: Lucky's movements; Estragon's feet; Estragon's sleep; the whip; Vladimir, Estragon and the tree; examination of location (with sketches); doubt--confusions; come let's go; help; what did I just say; heaven; sleep; to remember; step-by-step approach.

Added to each of the thematic cues are the relevant lines or situations; or (as in the case of Lucky's monologue) descriptions or explanations concerning meaning. Both parts are diagonally connected, too; in the second, thematic part, there are references as to where to find the relevant lines of the first part, and vice versa.

Beckett compiled this regie-book before he came to Berlin. It has got to be understood as his attempt to give a scenic outline--a structure--to a play that has been regarded as 'not visualized'. This is surprising: reading the script it appears to be a non plus ultra of exactness and form.

When Beckett made the attempt--sitting at his desk--to visualize his play, he knew of course why he always left the left-hand page in the regie-book blank.

The practice on the stage during the rehearsals led--even if only occasionally--to corrections. Without these additions (in red) the regie-book is now no longer complete. The classification by themes reveals the structure of the production: although under each heading there is an enumeration of all the places where the theme comes up, it cannot be re-garded as a mere catalogue. For--and this can be followed through in the diagonal connection--in the blocking and in the construction of the dialogues there is a structure of repetitions, variations, similarities, parallels, of echoes and accumulated references, structure and form, (Asmus Quarterly 23-24)

A detailed plan for the re-production of the artist's vision: Vladimir and Estragon are not "visualized" in the usual dramatic sense, as characters realistically unfolding. As in Brecht's Model Books, the characters do not reveal themselves, but make themselves and their world according to a principle of action, not of plot. All subsequent directors, actors and ultimately audiences are faced with a carefully researched and "principled" execution of an event. The result for the audience is the delightful vision of a way to create a world--good or bad--out of the meaningless circling of matter.

Beckett argues for a "fourth-wall" approach by

eliminating all references to the audience from the '67 production of Endspiel, and yet insists on the anti-naturalism of "balletic" movement. What Beckett seems to seek in performance is clear, explicit, "transparent" action, full concentration on the stage-inhabitants. In the revision of Endgame for German production, Haerdter reports, "...alle aufs Publikum Bezug nehmenden Repliker ('einer begeisterte Menge' u.a.) sind gestrichen: die Aktion soll sich ganz auf die Bewohner des 'Unterschlupfs' konzentrieren" (Haerdter 97).

In Haerdter's words Beckett institutes an anti-dramatic bühnenfremd discipline which, while disconcerting even his German actors, nevertheless makes the "landscape" of Endgame "transparent", like a "geological" cross-section". Haerdter attributes this new discipline to Beckett's "rationalism", but the effect is an alienation of the action which reveals the gestures of Hamm and Clov.

First, Haerdter describes Beckett's "rationalism" as it strips word and deed of their automatic, uncritical connectedness. Beckett introduces the alienating "Pause":

Becketts Regie folgt einem Ordnungsprinzip, das man zunächst für bühnenfremd halten möchte: entschiedene Trennung von Spiel und Wort. Als hielte er einen Mechaniklehrgang ab, doziert er etwa: 'Lassen Sie nie Haltungs-und Stimmewechsel zusammenfallen. Erst

kommt a) die veränderte Körperhaltung oder Gest; ihr folgt, nach einer PÄuschen, b) die entsprechende Stimmgebung." Hier schlägt sein Rationalismus durch. Aber erst durch diese Diziplinierung bekommt das Spiel Vielfalt and Tiefe. Das zeigt die Umsetzung durch die Schauspieler. Die "Landschaft" des Endspiels wird transparent wie auf einem geologischen Querschnitt. (Haerdter 100)

The effect reminds Haerdter of Brecht's "V-Effekt", the alienation effect. Brecht describes the "V-effekt in terms of breaking the audience of old visual habits:

The new alienations are only designed to free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today....In order to produce A-effects the actor has to discard whatever means he has learnt of getting the audience to identify itself with the character which he plays. Aiming not to put his audience in a trance, he must not go into a trance himself. His muscles must remain loose, for a turn of the head, e.g. with tautened neck muscles, will 'magically' lead the spectators' eyes and even their heads to turn with it, and this can only detract from any speculation or reaction which the gesture may bring

about. His way of speaking has to be free from parsonical sing-song and from all those cadences which lull the spectator so that the sense gets lost. Even if he plays a man possessed he must not seem to be possessed himself, for how is the spectator to discover what possessed him if he does. (Brecht in Willet, BoT 192-93)

The effect achieved under Beckett's direction is similar. What Haerdter calls Beckett's fine "clock-maker technic" is Beckett's attempt to control Brecht's old enemy, empathy. Beckett's marionette-like movements actually seem to substitute a kind of musicality for the trance of identification created by well-imitated emotive habits. (An obvious analogy here of course is with the aesthetics of the actor in Kleist's "Marionettentheater".) What, in fact, is controlled by both Brecht and Beckett are physical and linguistic signs which are merely social (gestic) clichés. The Brechtian actor refines and reduces an action until it independently reveals the complexity and depth of both the social and psychological forces that inspire it. Beckett's direction first creates linguistic and physical signs which reveal comportments.

Beckett then begins the exacting work of refining out uncontrolled opacities, accepted mysteries, Adorno's "images". He adjusts the movements of Nagg and Nell in

their ashcans. The result is not tears but a turn of the head, not an expressable sorrow, not a good cry, but the cross-section of an event:

Unglaublich wie viele subtile Nuancen der Diktion und des Spiels Beckett einem Dialog von wenigen Minuten abgewinnt....Statt von kleinen korrigierenden Hammerschläger ist hier eher von Uhrmachertechnik zu sprechen: exakte Einstellung von einem Miniaturlaufwerks. Mädchen soll in Mädchen greifen. Beckett differenziert und harmonisiert bisher Festgestelltes.... Beckett findet ein Bewegungsecho: zum Ausdruck ihre Emotion wendet Nell, statt zu wienen, ihren Kopf ein wenig von Nagg ab, dessen Kopf die Geste nach einem "Päuschen" (ein Wort, das Beckett liebt) wiederholt, bevor er fragt: "weinst du schon wieder?"

"Er weint, also lebt er" (Hamms kommentar über Nagg) sei ihm der liebste Satz im Endspiel, fällt Stock darüber ein, Mann kommt ins Plaudern. "Dreimal wird geweint in Stück," erläutert Beckett, "jedens seine Träne". Ist das Zufall, fragt man, um etwas zu fragen. Beckett apodiktisch: "Nein, es gibt keine Zufälle im Endspiel, alles ist auf Analogien und Wiederholung aufgebaut." (100)

After the elimination of tears from Nell's response to her memories, there are three references to weeping in Endgame. But they are only that, references. With the elimination of tears from Nell's performance, Beckett has alienated the sorrow of his characters in the three remaining references to tears: Nagg's tears reported by Clov which occasions Beckett's "favorite sentence," the father's weeping in Hamm's story, and Clov's claim, "When I fall I'll weep for Happiness." Brecht in conversation has described the effect of on-stage tears:

...Gottsched cites Cicero writing on oratory describing how the Roman actor Polus played Electra mourning her brother. His own son has just died, and so he brought the urn with his son's ashes on to the stage and spoke the relevant verses 'focusing them so painfully on himself that his own loss made him weep real tears, Nor could any of those present have refrained from weeping at that point'.

I must say there is only one word for such an operation: barbaric...[T]he object is to fob us off with some kind of portable anguish--that's to say an anguish that can be detached from its cause, transferred in toto and lent to some other cause. The incidents proper to the play disappear like meat in a cunningly mixed sauce with a taste of its

own....

Suppose a sister is mourning her brother's departure for the War; and it is the peasant war: he is a peasant off to join the peasants. Are we able to surrender to her sorrow completely? Or not at all? We must be able to surrender to her sorrow and at the same time not to. Our actual emotion will come from recognizing and feeling the incident's double aspect. (Brecht, in Willet BoT 270-71)

The social cliché--only exaggerated by Polus' technique--hides the gestic content. The tears are dramatically incomplete, at some level irrelevant and extraneous. Ultimately it is his son, her brother, or Nell's "yesterday" (Endgame 20). Beckett alienates these tears and turns them into compartments, by subordinating them or making them a part of Hamm's story.

Directing rehearsals, Beckett seems, at first, to ignore the audience. But the impression is the result of a deeper concern for the audience than traditional techniques require. As did Brecht, Beckett proceeds against pre-conceptions, and involves himself not merely in a sensitivity to the audience's expectations, but finds it necessary to undo habitual modes of perception and reaction.

Haerdter provides the most detailed and the earliest description of Beckett directing his own work. Haerdter records at least two instances in which Beckett directly confronts the problem of playing to the audience's preconceptions:

Beckett scheint ans Publikum nur zu denken, wenn er die Schauspieler ermahnt, es nicht zum Komplizen ihres Spiels zu machen, Offenbar betrachtet er sein Stück als ein "geschlossenes System."

Die Regiearbeit, so ist der Eindruck, ist (wie die literarische) Selbstzweck für ihn und hat nicht das Ziel, die Zustimmung des Parketts zu provozieren. Manchmal entzündet sich an diesem Punkt eine leichte Kontroverse zwischen den Regisseur und seinen Schauspielern. Ihr Lebenselixir ist nun einmal die Wirking jenseits der Rampe. "Am Anfang war das Klima gut," unterbricht Beckett zum Beispiel, als ihm die Fahrrad-Episode zu "stark" kommt. Schroeder widerspricht. Jetzt sei das Klima ja gegeben, Hamm und Clov müssen nun zeigen, dass sie noch am Leben sind-- "sonst schlafen die unten ein." "Zumal wir bald wieder down sind," ergänzt Bollman. Beckett gibt sich, widerwillig, geschlagen. (103-04)

But the "atmospheres: of Endgame--and there are more than

one--are in fact somnolent and confrontational--although not antagonistic. Mabou Mines in the 70's put on a production of Endgame at the Public Theater in New York which perversely exaggerated the play in the direction of Hanke's Publikunsbeschimpfung. The play became a challenge, a test of endurance and wakefulness as Clov climbed high into the rafters for his look at the "corpsed" world. The production ran over two hours without a break. The only exit was across the stage area through the door at the back of the "shelter". Clov, lame and gracious and arch, made his way to the door to usher out each preconception as the audience singly and in pairs abandoned this "shelter". Beckett's desire for confrontation without antagonism his "closed system" does create such Gesamtgesten.

Again, nearing the end of the '67 rehearsals of Endspiel, with for the first time an audience and with Madame Beckett present, Beckett is apparently disturbed that the undisciplined playing has used the audience to disrupt the "equilibrium" of the production:

Unter dem kritischen Blicken und der amüsierten
Teilnahme Madame Becketts treten neue Valeurs im Spiel
hervor, verschieben die alten. Alles is farbiger als
bisher, der Ablauf rascher. Mezzaforte verwandelt sich
in forte, unerwartete fortissimi manifestieren sich.

Der Kontrast zu den leisen Passagen wird damit "dramatischer" als in allen früheren Proben. Eine grosse Generalpause nach Naggs Fluch halbiert das Endspiel nun in eindrucksvoller Weise....Das Spiel eilt neuen Hohepunkten zu....Das bisherige Endspiel-Gleichgewicht ist gestört. Aber die "Zuschauerschaft" hat katalysierend gewirkt, die Elemente des Spiels sind zu ersten Mal zu einer--wenn auch prekären --Einheit verschmolzen. "C'est formidable," ruft Madame mit aufrichtiger Emphase aus. Becketts trockener Kommentar lautet: "Il y a encore du travail." (110)

Beckett's dissatisfaction, however, may not be an idiosyncratic commentary, but central to his conception of theater. A "melting pot" unity which destroys the equilibrium of a play may in fact be contrary to the precise "mathematics" by which Beckett orchestrates his production.

Beckett's demand for "equilibrium" and his--one would like to say--musical rather than "clock-maker" technique have their analogy in Brechtian epic or dialectic theater style. When Brecht demanded that the actor share with the audience the experience of insight into the gestures of a play, the result was also a kind of "equilibrium": an equilibrium required by the disjunctive nature of the dramatic gesture.

In the "Short Organum", Brecht describes the

complexity of the gest:

The realm of attitudes adopted by the characters towards one another is what we call the realm of gest.... These expressions of a gest are usually highly complicated and contradictory, so that they cannot be rendered by any single word and the actor must take care that in giving his image the necessary emphasis he does not lose anything, but emphasizes the entire complex. (Brecht in Willet, BoT 198)

The individual "gest" constitutes a kind of sudden independent insight:

Splitting such material into one gest after another, the actor masters his character by first mastering the 'story'. It is only after walking all round the entire episode that he can, as it were by a single leap, seize and fix his character, complete with all its individual features. (64)

Once the unity of the individual gests is captured, the disjunctions between gests are harmonized by the "story" the "great operation of the theatre". Brecht writes:

Once he has done his best to let himself be amazed by

the inconsistencies in an [episode's] various attitudes, knowing that he will in turn have to make them amaze the audience, then the story as a whole gives him a chance to pull the inconsistencies together; for the story, being a limited episode, has a specific sense, i.e. only gratifies a specific fraction of all the interests that could arise....

Everything hangs on the 'story'.... For it is what happens between people that provides them with all the material that they can discuss, criticize, alter. Even if the particular person represented by the actor has ultimately to fit into more than just the one episode, it is mainly because the episode will be all the more striking if it reaches fulfillment in a particular person. The 'story' is the theatre's great operation, the complete fitting together of all the gestic incidents, embracing the communications and impulses that must now go to make up the audience's entertainment. (200)

For Brecht, the events of the drama, recognized as "gests", are then harmonized through the complex task of telling the gestic "story"--the Gesamtgestus of any particular production.

A stable equilibrium, the elegant harmony which Beckett sought in Endgame, can only be compromised by "melting

together" the complex gests of which the play is composed. Beckett's Regiebuch for the 1967 German production divided the play into sixteen "atmospheres". As will be discussed later, they can easily be used to divide the play onto sixteen complex social gests. Melting them together destroys the ability of the text to claw by smoothing over the complex caontradictions of its gestic "atmospheres".

In a note entitled "Phases of Production", from the Berlin Ensemble's Theaterarbeit (Dresden: Dresdner Verlag, 1952), the first phase of production, for Brecht. was the analysis of story, its episodes and direction:

Find out what socially valuable insights and impulses the play offers.. Boil the story down to half a sheet of paper. Then divide into separate episodes, establishing the nodal points, i.e. the important events that carry the story a stage further. Then examine the relationship of the episodes, their construction. (240-41)

Beckett, in a similar fashion, fixed the nodal points of the '67 Endspiel in the sixteen "Stimmzusammenhangen" of his Regiebuch. What Brecht wanted done in public at the Berlin Ensemble's rehearsals, Beckett did in private. Nevertheless, both Brecht and Beckett appeal for an explicit social basis for their stories. This is the

famous Brechtian appeal for a sportsmanlike approach, the play as a boxing match, as a Spielvorlage. The acting must exhibit choices, not merely create an atmosphere:

The grouping of the characters on the stage and the movements of the groups must be such that the necessary beauty is attained above all the by elegance with which the material conveying that gest is set out and laid bare to the understanding of the audience....

The episodes must not succeed one another indistinguishably but must give us a chance to interpose our judgement....

The parts of the story have to be carefully set off one against another by giving each its own structure as a play within the play.... Shown thus, the particular and unrepeatable incident acquires a disconcerting look, because it appears as something general, something that has become a principle. As soon as we ask whether in fact it should have done so we are alienating the incident.... In short: there are many conceivable stories, some of them known and some of them still to be discovered. (200-201)

Except for the explicit political function which Brecht ascribes to the theater, one could not imagine a more

precise summary of the descriptions, by Haerdter, Asmus and others, of Beckett's own production of his plays.

The equilibrium of a gestic production cannot be achieved by melting together the disjunctions of its various gests. The equilibrium must underline those disjunctions and a "harmony" must be established on the basis of a particular principle, or Gesamtgestus.

For example, in 1984 the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts produced a version of Endgame directed by Joanne Akalaitis. An opening musical theme by Phillip Glass was added and Hamm's "shelter" was transformed into a subway platform. Beckett created a stir in the press by, first, trying to halt the production and, finally, refusing to have his name used in any publicity to the extent of requiring a disclaimer be placed in the program notes. The disclaimer called the production a "parody of the play as the author conceived it" and included a description of the original set (Freedman New York Times, 12/13/84, c 14). One must assume that Beckett found no resonance for the music and the subway--except a parodic one--in the actions of Hamm and Clov, or in the world they create. In the event, Glass' minimalist theme actually diminishes the incessant jangle of the alarm clock to which Hamm and Clov will later reduce "music"; the subway station of course entirely incidental, wholly incompatible with Hamm's purposeful construction of a

negative utopia. The ART's production sought an incidental relevance, rather than a principle relevant to the particular, unique case of Hamm and Clov, "nec cum te, nec sine te".

It is particular to Hamm and Clov that they have created a social relationship based on the vision of a madman:

Hamm: I once knew a madman who thought the end of the world had come. He was a painter--and engraver. I had a great fondness for him. I used to go and see him, in the asylum. I'd take him by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There! All that rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All that loveliness! (Pause.) He'd snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes. (44)

The subway station, appearing as it does on the same level of action as Hamm's missing painkiller, parodies rather than "generalizes", in the Brechtian sense, this mad vision. Hamm's blindness seems less complete in a complex scene of urban decay. The station platform, no matter how decayed and "alienating": is a comfort that dwarfs--"melts together"-- the social comportments of Hamm and Clov. Hamm's power lies in his ability to empty the world. That

is all his power: everything under its final dust. The New York Subway appears as a gross, parodic oversight and, worse, as reassurance of the triviality of Hamm's gestures. The wrecked station moves the radical gestic vision of commitment and destruction toward the reform of unpleasantness.

In contrast, by way of illustration, we have Brecht's notes on an abandoned "re-functioning" of Beckett's Waiting for Godot.

Werner Hecht examined Brecht's annotated copy of a 1953 Suhrkamp edition of Beckett's play. Hecht claims that Brecht had in mind a counter-play, a Gegenstück, to Waiting For Godot (Hecht 192).

Brecht's version was to be a negation of Beckett's "impasse" literature. But, as Arrigo Subiotto (14) observes, Brecht's counter plays usually give new life to the originals, shedding a new "dialectic" light on their relevance. The "dialectic" light illuminates the gesture, the socially significant comportment, of the original author, audience and production.

Hecht maintains that Brecht was interested in the form of Beckett's "absurd" drama. Brecht was attracted by the new bottle, throwing out the "old wine" of expressionism (122-23). Among the revisions Hecht describes are notes on altering the costuming to underline what Brecht saw as proletarian/intellectual and bourgeois/lackey-police distinctions in the two pairs of

personae, and a proposal to project above the action
 documentary footage of the building of a People's Republic
 in China (188, 192). But even these most apparently non-
 Beckettian of the changes Hecht describes do not change
 the basic gest of Vladimir and Estragon. Brecht's
 projection and costuming indicate a counter-play, but one
 which also underlines the essential comic gest of Vladimir
 and Estragon": the preoccupation with avoiding work in
 order to find the perfect work, the intellectualist
 conceit of creating no meaning but the perfect meaning.
 Brecht, in the Berlin Ensemble, meant to inspire his post-
 war German audience to constructive action (see, for
 example, Wekwerth 141). That must have been one reason for
 his choice of a play about passive dreaming. Interposing
 incidental images, the A-effect may simply undermine the
 gestic possibilities of, for example, Beckett's barren set
 and the clock "music". Brecht changed and added gests, but
 seems here to have been seeking a gestic principle. The
 ART production added only an incidental relevance.

13 The "Not...,But"

Christoph Müller, reviewing the 1977 Tübingen production of Warten auf Godot (Müller 61), directed by Beckett, observes that the clear "classicism" of Beckett's Berlin production had been modified, "humanized". Yet, according to Müller, the characters had become more disturbing, their movements determined by a choreography which created a "zentimetergenaue Konstellation". Beckett, it seems, retained the clear, "illustrative" character of unnatural, alienated movement.

Müller notes also that Pozzo plays his role as master "like a man who plays many roles". The description reminds one of the Brechtian strategy of "fixing the not..., but". A similar strategy is remarked by Haerdter in the '67 Endspiel, when he records Beckett's directions to Bollman-Clov: "Bei ihren Gängen müssen Sie den Eindruck erwecken, als ob Sie gehen wollten, aber nicht können." Fixing the "Not...,But" was a phrase Brecht used to describe the actor's method of alienating his actions, making clear the alternatives and thus awakening the creative, critical consciousness of the audience:

The very simplest sentences that apply in the A-Effect are those with "Not...But".... They include an expectation which is justified by experience but, in

the event, disappointed. One might have thought that...but one oughtn't have thought it. There is not just one possibility but two; both are introduced, then the second one is alienated, then the first one as well. (Brecht in Willet BoT 144)

Clov may wish to move, but movement may no longer be possible. He moves, but it is only by the quality of his wanting to. Every movement is alienated, revealing an alternative: Clov's contradictory desire both to move and to end.

I open the door of the cell and go, I am so bowed I only see my feet, if I open my eyes, and between my legs a little trail of black dust. I say to myself that the earth is extinguished, though I never saw it lit.

(Pause)

It's easy going.

(Pause)

When I fall I'll weep for happiness. (Endgame 81)

Brecht describes the alienating effect of the "Not...But", its ability in real life to reveal critical principles which can annihilate and re-construct nature:

An alienation of the motor car takes place if after driving a modern car for a long time we drive an old model-T Ford. Suddenly we hear explosions once more; the motor works on the principle of explosion. We start feeling amazed that such a vehicle, indeed any vehicle not drawn by animal-power, can move; in short, we understand cars, by looking at them as something strange, new, as a triumph of engineering and to that extent something unnatural.

Nature, which certainly embraces the motor-car, is suddenly imbued with an element of unnaturalness, and from now on this is an indelible part of the concept of nature. (Brecht in Willet, BoT 144-145)

In the '67 production of Endspiel, according to Haerdter, Beckett also alienates, this time through his "echo-principle". Clov confronts Hamm with the ruination of his world. Alienated, the confrontation reveals the gestic principle of Hamm's activity among men: personal survival capable of ending suffering by "extinguishing" all things.

Das Endspiel stellt einen ganzen Katalog von Dingen auf, die es "nicht mehr gibt": Natur, Fahrräder, Särge, Beruhigungsmittel etc. Für alle Sätze, die das mitteilen, wünscht Beckett irgendeine Art von "Verfremdung." Damit man sie erkennt und

wiederfindet. "Es gibt keinen Brei mehr." Er schlägt die rhythmische Betonung der englischen Inszenierung vor: "there-is-no-more-pap." Dass muss man ausprobieren. (Haerdter 100)

Survival means not to survive, but to expire, and the Gesamtgestus of this Endgame comes clear.

The alienating "Not...But" is central to the presentation of action-as-alternatives. Where there are no alternatives, there is no work for man except the recognition of the absence of alternatives. But the director and actor in gestic theater are not interested in terminal, no exit, situations, in what Adorno-after Jaspers-called Grenzsituationen (Versuch 182). That is what Brecht means when he eschews the "look of the hunted animal" in his actors. Beckett, too, is not interested in death, in Clov's terminal "happiness", but in dying, in Endgames, the gradual, purposeful reduction of alternatives. Beckett's plays have gradually reduced to the "gests " of failure, an apparent aphasia whose actions are perceivable only through the a-effect: esse est percipi becomes in Beckett's dramatic work the minimal social gest of art, the "not...but" of art, the artist's social object-identity.

14 Endgame as "Epic" Theater.

Beckett's work on his Regiebuch yields the working structuring principle. The "orchestration" based on that principle comprises the last phase of his work as director and produces the kind of "elegance" which Brecht also sought:

For Brecht...the set was primarily a space where actors tell a certain story to the audience. The first step was to give the actor the space and architectural elements he needed; the next was to work out the set so it by itself would tell the audience enough about the play's story and the contradictions...; the last step was to make it beautiful, light, "elegant"--as Brecht used to say. (Weber, "Director" 107)

This is the elegance which Brecht attempts to express in his favorite metaphor for directing, that of the conductor of a musical compositions. It is also the elegance of all human play. Richard Schechner wrote in 1965 about Brecht's Berlin Ensemble,

...Ensemble rehearsal techniques, based on close observation and experimentation rather than introspection, seem very like football or baseball

practice. Brecht may have modeled his plays on life, but his rehearsals were modeled on games. Brecht's theory, his practice at the Ensemble, and his plays all suggest a consciousness which is at once totally 'involved' in an activity and 'removed' from it at the same time. (Public 11)

In his rehearsals of Endspiel, Beckett too calls for an "inner intensity" from the actors, combined with a distancing "balletic" style, in order to communicate the significance of this old endgame played and lost of old. Godot he called a game for survival.

It is the necessity of harmonizing the observed disjunctions of social gests that brings both Brecht and Beckett to a ventured critique: a Gesamtgestus which unified the social gests. Such harmonies, such unities, require an "eyes-open" delivery of the social gest. Brecht writes:

One more thing: The delivery to the audience of what has been built up in the rehearsals. Here it is essential that the actual playing should be infused with the gest of handing over a finished article. What now comes before the spectator is the most frequently repeated of what has not been rejected, and so the finished representations have to be delivered with the eyes fully open, so that they may be received with the

eyes open too. (in Willet, BoT 204)

Clov's answer to Hamm's "anguished" "What's happening, what's happening?" may be played as a banal Zen mystery or as an open-eyed gest which Beckett wrote into the play several times to build a "gest of handing over" into the Gesamtgestus of the play. To Hamm's anguish, Clov responds: "Something is taking its course," and as this banality repeats throughout the play it "hands over" the Gesamtgestus of Endgame: the inadequacy of surviving, the echo principle.

The sixteen "Sinnzusammenhängen" which Beckett introduced into the '67 Endgame accord with this Gesamtgestus. A gestic division of the "story" of Endgame can be superimposed on the sixteen divisions. The Gesamtgestus of Beckett's "echo-principle" is survivalism: the hollow, dying repetition of a sound which is no longer real. The gest of the perfect ending, without history, is the Gesamtgestus of Endgame and is reflected even in Beckett's "mathematical" and "musical" division of his play.

According to Haerdter, Beckett divided the play into two parts. The first, consisting of the first ten "atmospheres," culminates in Clov's "Rebellion" in "atmosphere" 8 and ends with Nagg's cursing Hamm in 10. Part two, "atmospheres" 11 through 16, consists of Hamm's time-serving efforts to stave off Clov's "Emanzipation" which begins in 15 and ends in 16 where Hamm, the bad

player, makes senseless gestures in a game lost long ago: "Nun macht er zuletzt noch ein paar sinnlose Züge, wie sie nur ein schlechter Spieler macht, ein guter hätte längst aufgegeben" (p. 107). This second half is full of large-scale gestic echoes of the first. The first half, and Beckett's subdivisions of it, are a series of gests which tell the "story" of two survivors, Hamm and his rebellious servant, Clov.

"Atmosphere" one: "Clovs stummes Spiel und erster Monolog," the opening action and Clov's first speech. The gest of this part is contained in Clov's allusion to the pre-Socratic philosopher, Eubulides:

Clov: . . . Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day,
suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the
impossible heap. (Endgame, p.1)

The sentence contains the gest of the first "atmosphere": Clov's "revolutionary" awareness that personal survival does not produce meaning, significance: he who laughs last laughs best, unless--as Beaumarchais knew--he is alone. Clov moves about the stage removing the sheets which cover Hamm, Nagg and Nell, and punctuates his "exposition" of the set and its canned and covered inhabitants with selfmockery and "brief laughs". The order of things, which his master, Hamm, has

created, amounts to nothing. Meaning can never arise from these things, but precedes them and makes meaningless Hamm's grotesque "duty": his "grain-by-grain" survivalism which extinguishes life--the impossible heap.

The purpose of Eubulides' argument of the millet grains was to prove that the world of phenomena was an illusion, a failure of mortal man to perceive the unity, the oneness, of perfection. Thus, according to the argument, the idea of the "heap" must be prior to and independent of the discrete grains which "one by one" can never yield their "heapness". The threat of meaning which would be conferred by the end of Hamm's meaningless activity comprises a threat of rebellion which hangs over Hamm's survival. This threat of ending-meaning would loom over Hamm even were he able, as he says, to reduce himself to "a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe" (36). The gest of part one states that no meaning is possible before the final curtain. Its final meaning is "outside" itself. Hamm's order perceives its end, but fights it off as the one act which would turn its meaningless lingering decay into a meaningful past, into history.

Part two, "Hamm's awakening, first monologue, first dialogue with Clov," might be entitled "the treachery of Hamm's project." The treachery consists in the subversion of all change into the unending dying away of Hamm's

grotesque final solution. Hamm debarks from the blood-choked engine of history and lives on in the light-gray echo of the ruins it leaves behind. Hamm, in this scene, subverts change by invoking a "story", reducing the present to a matter of survival and the future to an avoidance of any insight which would fix, end, the present order and thus occasion change. This gest, which resonates through part two, is contained in Hamm's opening monologue:

No, all is a-

(he yawns)

-bsolute,

(proudly)

the bigger a man is the fuller he is.

(Pause. Gloomily.)

And the emptier. (3)

Man as a corpse, man robbed of an end. The "full" man merely "empties", and change is robbed of its endings. Man's decay can be traced through the biology of the worm, to the biochemistry of bacterium, to the physics of the atom, back through all of Hegel's "bad infinity" without ending: no revolution, only reduction, fading echoes. Man is no more than the matter he consumes. In order to reduce his suffering, then, reduce that matter. The purpose of living: control, the mastery of change, becomes, for Hamm,

the reduction of the mass of suffering. Quantity never becomes quality and change is subverted into an ever-fading echo of the "progenitor", the "fornicator", history. Nagg and Nell are now the subjects of the last piece of "exposition": part three, "Dialog Nagg-Nell".

Nagg and Nell are exhibits "A" and "B" in Hamm's argument from "history". The past, as recorded by Nagg and Nell, was richer and more naive, richer in its surprises because more naive in its expectations. Nell is the more tightly stretched between Hamm's "nowadays" and her own "yesterday". Nagg, however, still experiences the naive range of feeling: love, tears, the expectation of reward and the desire for revenge. Nell does not and sinks, like the world outside the shelter, beneath Clov's inability to perceive life. She "dies", but she also delivers the gest of part three. She produces the third "fundamental sound" of Endgame. She admonishes Nagg for his naive perception of old discontinuities, for his belief that the old jokes, the old discontinuities, are adequate for this world where life is suffering and the present a fading echo of "history":

Nell: Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant
you that. But--

Nagg (shocked): Oh!

Nell: Yes, yes, it's the most comical thing in the

world.

And we laugh, we laugh, with a will, in the beginning. But it's like the funny story we have heard too often, we still find it funny, but we don't laugh any more. (19)

Discontinuity--expectation, desire, love--can produce nothing new, not even laughter. Instead it produces only a dying echo, a fading repetition of the unchanging world of Hamm's ablated desire. There are no more punch lines. At the same time, there is nothing which is not funny in this reduced fashion. Deprived of change, of discontinuity, the world decays and the gest of Nagg's joke about the tailor and god is contained in the delivery of the lines:

I never told it worse. (Pause. Gloomy.)

I tell this story worse and worse. (22)

The joke, a defiance of Nell's admonition, merely echoes it. Beckett is exploring failure: there are no more punch lines. This "not..., but" of laughter echoes throughout the play, revealing the Beckettian gests of failure.

There are three fundamental sounds, three gests in the first three expository "Sinnzusammenhängen" of the '67 production of Endgame: the first, the self-limiting palace revolt of Clov, the second, Hamm's reduction of

man, the third, the attribution of that reduction to history. The stage is completely under the sway of Hamm's survivalism. Even Clov's rebelliousness finds it "impossible" to name, to fix and end the heap of Hamm's days. According to Beckett's research into his play, according to his Regiebuch, Clov's "rebellion" occurs in part 8, but it is only an "emancipation" which finally occurs in part 15. After the three scenes of "exposition", parts 4-7 form a rising action which creates the threat of meaning. But, under the combined effort of Hamm and Clov, the threat is neutralized by what Beckett called the "ironic mirror-image of the dog episode" at the end of part 7 (Haerdter 98): Clov to Hamm's right, the "stuffed pomeranian" to his left. In these parts, 4-7, "revolutionary" gestures are made by Clov. Clov's activity threatens the cruel-to-be-kind morality of Hamm's survivalism. That Clov's capitulation, his adaptation to the logic of survival. Hamm makes the gestures of survival in parts 4-7.

In part 4: "Der erregte HJamm-Clov-Dialog mit der Rollstuhlrunde, abschliessend mit Clov's Seufzer 'Wenn ich ihn töten könnte' (98), Hamm makes the first gesture of survivalism: isolation, reduction. It is the gesture of the medieval manor: a local area of order in the surrounding chaos. Making his "turn" round his world, Hamm lays his hand on its wall and embraces an order of hells, an order

of chaoses:

Hamm: Stop!

(Clov stops chair close to back wall.

Hamm lays his hand against the wall.)

Old Wall!

(Pause.)

Beyond is the...other hell.

(Pause. Violently.)

Closer! Closer! Up against. (26)

Hamm draws comfort from his homeostatic wall: a wall which separates him from the nothing new.

Part 5: "Clov's 'Komödie' mit Leiter und Fernglas". Clov performs a comic routine with an intentionality which robs the action of humor, turns the comic into the intentional so that the torture of Hamm echoes the unhappiness he creates, the emptying of the world. We laugh, when we can, at the comedy of frustrated intentions, at willfulness which misfires. But here there is a clash of wills. The humor is juxtaposed to a tragic will-to-control. The punch-line is estranged then given back. Even in this music-hall turn, the controlling gesture of survival operates.

Hamm: Look at the earth.

Clov: I've looked.

Hamm: With the glass?

Clov: No need of the glass.

(Exit Clov.)

Hamm: No need of the glass!

(Enter Clov with telescope.)

Clov: I'm back again, with the glass.

(He goes to window right, looks up at it.)

I need the steps.

Hamm: Why? Have you shrunk?

(Exit Clov with telescope.)

I don't like that, I don't like that.

(Enter Clov with ladder, but without telescope.)

Clov: I'm back again, with the steps.

(He sets down ladder under window right,
realizes he has not the telescope, gets down.)

I need the glass.

(He goes toward door.)

Hamm (violently): But you have the glass!

Clov (halting, violently): No, I haven't the glass!

(Exit Clov.)

The music-hall routine is now transformed into the comic
gest of the action:

Hamm: This is deadly.

(Enter clov with telescope. He goes towards ladder.)

Clov: Things are livening up.

(He gets up on ladder, raises the telescope, lets it fall.)

I did it on purpose. (27-29)

The gest is a comedy of exhaustion: the significant social commerce of these survivors, for whom every incongruity disappears in intentionality.

According to Haerdter, Beckett deleted the action which follows Clov's admission from the '67 production. In the original, Clov turns the 'glass' on the audience and sees "a multitude...in transports...of joy." Beckett removed all references to the audience in order to concentrate the action on the inhabitants of the shelter (97). Beckett improved the gestic quality of the action, sacrificing the attack on traditional attitudes--Brecht's "Glottz nicht so romantisch"--in order to clarify the counter-rhythms of the action. The gestic in Hamm's "this is deadly", thus, becomes more "elegant", echoing the question he twice poses to Clov, once in the opening action of the play and once in the closing: "Aren't you tired of this...thing?": a murderous despair of survivors.

The gest of parts 6 and 7 develop the rising threat

that action, as the creator of meaning poses to Hamm's survivalist purpose. Because he fears meaning as he fears ending, Hamm takes comfort in minimal action. Waiting for his pain-killer, his blindness is his solace; he is soothed repeatedly by Clov's "something is taking its course," and repeats with satisfaction "We're getting on."

Part 6 in this gestic "rising" action makes the gest of the paradox of meaningless action as, in Beckett's words, Hamm's "uneasy questioning" of Clov is "raised to the burlesk Flea-scene" (98). Clov, under orders, reports the diminution of the world, the dying of the light, then demands, "Why this farce day after day?" Hamm attempts to put him off, "Routine. One never knows." But to ask the question posed by action is to doubt the value of Hamm's survivalism, to doubt its appropriateness as an answer to the meaningless universe--the "other hell". Hamm, after a pause, remarks:

Hamm: Last night I saw inside my breast.

There was a big sore.

Clov: Pah! You saw your heart.

Hamm: No, it was living.

and wonders whether they are not beginning to mean something:

Hamm: What's happening?

Clov: Something is taking its course.

(Pause.)

Hamm: Clov!

Clov (impatiently): What is it?

Hamm: We're not beginning to...to...mean something?

Clov is not so subtle, so "crooked" a thinker and retorts:

Clov: Mean something! You and I, mean somethinhg!

(Brief laugh.)

Ah that's a good one. (32-33)

But action creates meaning, and meaning makes Hamm uneasy.

Meaningfulness contradicts Hamm's accommodation to the cruelty of "nowadays". Suffering, Hamm fears, is not a sufficient cause. The reason for suffering haunts Hamm's resolve. Solely to survive, not to end, means not to act; but to survive may appear to be acting. Even a "little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe" acts, rests somewhere, fighting off the end, nothingness. The dilemma of "that old greek": Hamm is caught between the continuity of this survival and the discontinuity of its dream--the end of suffering. He fails, retreats into his endgame, infinitely adaptable, and anti-Quixote, a windmill. Hamm, open to any rationalization of his principles, answers Clov's scornful

laugh:

Hamm: I wonder.

(Pause.)

Imagine if a rational being came back to earth,
wouldn't he be liable to get ideas into his
head if he observed us long enough.

(Voice of rational being.)

Ah, good, now I see what it

is, yes, now I understand what they're at!

(Clov starts, drops the telescope and begins to
scratch his belly with both hands. Normal

voice.) And without going so far as that, we
ourselves...

(with emotion)

...we ourselves...at certain moments...

(Vehemently.)

To think perhaps it won't all have been for nothing!

Clov (anguished, scratching himself): I have a flea! (33)

The rational beings will not return to earth; all we
have in the bunker is Hamm and Clov. Clov performs the
flea-scene, burlesquing Hamm's melodrama of meaningfulness.
At the opening of part 6, Clov changes the subject from the
burlesk puns of the flea-scene to more practical concerns:
"How about that pee?" The gest of part 6 is a complicated

bit of rationalization and avoidance. The significance of Hamm's survivalism is established not only as the routine cruelty of "nowadays", but as the barrenness of this age of "survivors".

Hamm counters Clov's solicitous pragmatism: "I'm having it," and opens part 7: "Dialog Hamm-Clov abschliessend mit dem ironischen Spiegelbild der Hund-Episode." Part 7 "raises" the action until it creates the ironic mirror-image: Clov-Hamm-the dog, Clov reflected through Hamm as the dog. The scene contains a gest which marks the way Clov's activity is degraded to the production of incomplete, sexless images of his life with Hamm. But the central gest, the "not..., but" of Clov's action is expressed in Hamm's prophecy:

Hamm: [to Clov]...One day you'll say to yourself, I'm tired, I'll sit down, and you'll go and sit down. Then you'll say, I'm hungry, I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up and you won't gety anything to eat. (Pause.) You'll look at the wall a while, then you'll say, I'll close my eyes, perhaps have a little sleep, after that I'll feel better, and you'll close them. And when you open them again there'll be no wall any more. (Pause.) Infinite emptiness will be all around you, all the

resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn't fill it, and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe. (36)

and in Clov's response:

It's not certain.

The Brechtian title to part seven could be "The Comforts of Apathia": survivalism boiled to an essence. The comfort of apathia for Hamm is its complete consonance with his lost endgame. Survivalism is the path to his apathia, an echo-life.

Part 8, "Clov's rebellion gathered up into Hamm's story of the madman and dying away in the alarm-clock scene" brings the "rising" action to a "climax". But the rebellion never really happens. Clov has collaborated too long. Hamm's continued survival makes an irrefutable argument; it is too much for Clov. Clov is unable to make a full gest of revolt, unable to name the "heap" of his days with Hamm. Clov's half-gest, what Beckett called his "rebellion", comes in fact as a petition for re-definition, but such re-definition is not petitionable:

Hamm: Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday!

Clov (violently): That means that bloody awful day,

long ago, before this bloody awful day. I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent. (43-44)

The other half of the gest of part 8, the gest which follows and "contains" Clov's rebellion, is Hamm's story of the madman:

I once knew a madman who thought the end of the world had come....I used to go and see him in the asylum. I'd take him by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There! All that rising corm! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All that loveliness! (Pause.)

He'd snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes. (Pause.)

He alone had been spared. (Pause.)

Forgotten. (Pause.)

It appears the case is...was not so...so unusual. (44)

Hamm's story interests Clov, who asks, "A mandman? When

was that?" Hamm brings Clov back to the nowadays: "Oh way back, way back, you weren't in the land of the living."

Clov: "God be with the days." Clov worries and Hamm comforts:

Clov: There are so many terrible things.

Hamm: No, no, there are not so many now. (44)

Clov is fascinated and distracted by the willfulness of the old madman: a madness able, despite the illusion of the particular, to see the ash-heap that the world would soon become. There was no dying away in that old vision; there was only the dead. Again, the past is richer in willfulness, and its madness carried a surreal message of the "nowadays" for Hamm.

Clov's "rebellion" is a gesture recognized, inspired, and completed by Hamm in the story of the madman. Hamm "naturally" wants Clov to leave, to rebel; he offers Clov the combination to the cupboard. In return, Hamm only wants a sign from Clov that he has left. But the heap cannot be a sign to the grain of millet. Revolution is a discontinuity. Hamm cannot know of Clov's departure; therefore, Clov cannot be allowed to depart in a manner different from Nell or Mother Pegg. There is always something left for Hamm. His last words in the play: "Old stancher!...You...remain," (84) reduce, but do not

annihilate Hamm. The gest of the last, 16th, part is thus also a gest of survivalism. Survivalism cannot accept the nature of change--the revolutionary discontinuity that insight can reveal like the end of a play.

The gest of non-ending is echoed in the final piece of business of part 8. Clov, to let Hamm know when he has done, sets the alarm; testing it, they both listen as it rings down. The clock-episode echoes Clov's need to fulfill Hamm's need to be informed. They make aesthetic judgments of the noise:

Clov: The end is terrific.

Hamm: I prefer the middle. (48)

Clov like the running down, the compromise that achieves nothing but duration, that simply runs out of steam without intervention, and end that doesn't change but merely exhausts. Hamm's taste for the middle is, of course, the finer, more complex. The end is not an aural function of the beginning or the middle; it is merely the consumption and dissipation of the energy of a coiled spring. It plays itself out and "the end is in the beginning", trivially. At any point the total is the sum of what has been and what is to come; the middle is preferred by symmetry. That endlessly repeated noise echoes the gest of Hamm's ambiguous attempt both to survive and to waken Clov. The

minimalist clock is an echo of the fundamental gest of Hamm and Clov.

Following the quick gest of the "rising" action and their "climax" in Clov's abortive rebellion, the ninth "atmosphere"--"Hamm's story of the beggar"-- presents a summary gest. In Hamm's story, he offers a "beggar" shelter and "a nice natural death, in peace and comfort" on the condition that the man abandon his child to the mercy of an early death. Part nine presents the survivalist gest of Endgame: the cynical social gest of the survivor. The quality of Hamm's mercy is strained between his "responsibilities" and the world. To the "beggar's" request for corn for his child, Hamm responds:

Hamm: Corn, yes, I have corn, it's true, in my granaries. But use your head. I give you some corn, a pound, a pound and a half, you bring it back to your child and you make him--if he's still alive--a nice pot of porridge....The colors come back into his little cheeks--perhaps. And then?

(Pause.) I lost patience.

(Violently) Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth, there's no cure for that!

(52-53)

The psychological part is that of a man who suspects that his actions reveal more than his explanations. The irony of his language signals the irony of his actions. Thus, the social gest: Hamm "fictionalizes", in the story, the story of his endgame. He draws back from the consequences of mercy by withdrawing his will into a world of conventionalized art; mercy in Hamm's story fulfills only the "responsibilities" of "nowadays". "Oh I put him before his responsibilities," Hamm asserts in his final monologue which takes up again the beggar's story (83).

Hamm's storytelling is for him merely a formal exercise: "nicely put that," "A bit feeble, that". Hamm looks at the form while the content disappears behind a parody of concern: "you're on earth". Hamm's story extricates the storyteller's intention, his will, from "nowadays", while his comments worry about aesthetic "effects". Artists escape convention to discover the new forms of their visions; Hamm merely reproduces an aspect of his experience according to an idea of form. Hamm's art does not produce insight, merely argument. He worries, at the end of part 9, that his story will be "finished" unless he finds new characters. He prays to God to provide them. His formalist artistry--its conventional forms pasted over an unexamined world "nowadays"--is the gest of Hamm's tale of adaptation and survival: the fundamental gest of Endgame.

Hamm's art, like his stage-life, is an act of avoidance, an avoidance of that insight which sees into the gächis. Insight advances into the unformed by fixing it, overcomes convention by--to use Brecht's term--refunctioning it according to previously hidden laws of matter and society. Hamm cannot tolerate the burden that the world-creating fact of art imposes. The survivalist will not recognize that his principles create a world, that they define and complete his social life. Hamm is not unlike the sociologist who invents the principle of "self-fulfilling prophecies" in order to avoid insight into the forces that determine social life. Hamm cannot finish his story, just as he cannot end his game, because his art attempts to adapt to "nowadays". Avoiding the creative role his principles have played in constructing his "shelter", in fixing it, finishing it long ago. Hamm's artful story is the gest of his endgame.

As Haerdter describes it (104), part nine forms a kind of peripeteia and climax, a "Kulminationspunkt", from which the play turns down to reach, at the end of part ten, the "zero-point" when Hamm--an ironic Prospero--announces "our revels now are ended." Part ten, "the prayer, ending in Nagg's curse", marked in the '76 production the end of the first half of the play. Hamm's story forms the central gest of the play, but he is running out of characters. In

a futile attempt to people his world-without-end drama, Hamm in part ten offers prayers to God, but concludes--sour grapes--"The bastard! He doesn't exist!" The gest is that of the survivalist as he sets up his straw-man, god. But the 2,000 year-old excuse no longer works. The shelter is hell, as vast and empty as "that other hell". Nagg's curse finally ends the revels. Nagg's curse seems at first to bristle with all the joys, passionate hatreds and cruelties of the past. But Nagg's curse is only an old, ornate sound which, stripped of overtones, modulates through Hamm as the fundamental sound of the play--survival. Nagg can only hope and survive: "I hope I'll live till then, to hear you calling me like when you were a tiny boy, and were frightened, in the dark, and I was your only hope" (56), a hope founded on the weary hope of survival. Nagg performs the solipsistic social gest which makes history a hollow reverberation of suffered evils: Nagg, the father of Hamm.

According to Haerdter, then, Beckett divided the play into halves. The first, parts one through ten, make the fundamental sounds of the play; the second, parts eleven through sixteen, form the "plunge into despair", "the dark gray floor of the play". The second half, Haerdter writes, simply kills time, dragging out the end which is repeatedly conjured in parts eleven through sixteen.

...[I]n Naggs Verfluchung Hamms, die der "Geschichte"

fast unmittelbar folgt, vollzieht sich der Sturz in die Verzweiflung. Sie ist die Basis, der schwarzgraue Boden des Stückes. Den Nullpunkt setzt Hamm: "Das Fest ist jetzt zu Ende." Was danach kommt, ist die zweite Hälfte des Endspiels, ist barer Zeitvertreib, blosses Hinauszögern des Endes, dessen Präsenz immer von neuem beschworen wird (Haerdter 104).

This is the final gest of Endgame, except that Hamm and Clov are not time-wasters as Haerdter says, but caretakers. They are not killing time, but preserving a status-quo, putting off the end. The gest of parts eleven through sixteen are a fading echo, always under the threat of ending.

In the second half of Endgame, Hamm's and Clov's actions become formal theatricalk motions. They play their roles with an increasing sense of desperation, revealing themselves as both more and less tha their situation. As Hamm constructs it in his final "monologue":

You prayed--

(Pause. He corrects himself)

Your CRIED for night; it comes--

(Pause. He corrects himself)

It FALLS: Now cry in darkness.

(He repeats, chanting.)

You cried for night; it falls: now cry in darkness. (83)

This is the gest of the final half, fulfilling the gest of the first in the emptying echo of compromise, cruelty and pragmatic "principles". The titles Beckett gave to these last "atmospheres" reveal the parallel between them and our gestic reading: (translating from Haerdter's model book)

11. Hamm's and Clov's play within the play: Hamm's serial novel.
12. The second round in the armchair with castors.
13. Hamm-Clov dialogue, leading to:
14. Hamm's "role".
15. Clov's emancipation, closing with his monologue and exit.
16. Hamm's closing monologue.

The social gest now becomes a desperate attempt to act when all along all that had been required of activity was survival. The curtain, the end, becomes more inevitable as the actions become more arbitrary. In part twelve, Hamm wants "to hear the sea":

Clov: You wouldn't hear it.

Hamm: Even if you opened the window?

Clov: No.

Hamm: Then it's not worth opening it?

Clov: No.

Hamm (violently): Then oepn it! (65)

The need in the second half of Endgame is to act, to defy the futility of survival, while at the same time choosing it.

Beckett removed Clov's sighting of a small boy outside the shelter from the '76 production. Haerdter remarks, as has been noted, that this had the effect of concentrating the action on the denizens of the shelter (97). For our reading of the play, this important revision increases the gestic, critical line of the play. It clarifies the gest of survivalism: the denial of change. Brecht might have approved of the clarification of action that it accomplishes. Clov's full complicity is needed to make the fundamental gest--the social act of survivalism--complete. Hamlet can be portrayed as a hapless man of conscience, or--as Brecht saw him--as a man whose type of rationalism proved useless in barbaric Denmark. Hamm and Clov can be played as men who inhabit a shelter, men--as Hamm would have it--at the mercy of "nowadays". Or, they can be played as men who built and maintain a "shelter", separated only by their desire from "that other hell". In 1958, two years after Beckett wrote Endgame, the U.S. government expanded

its Civil Defense program in order to build and stock public shelters against atomic war. These shelters are now fallen into ruin; there are those who would re-stock them. The play echoes through modern history: the panacea of Nazism, final solutions; Hitler in the bunker not realizing when the light is no longer worth the candle; Clov as Albert Speer, not able to suffer enough; the peace of the graveyard. In this second generation of survivors, where the perfidy of reformism poisons the air, the echoes in the play of Hamm and Clov are gestic.

But why translate the "principles" that have guided Beckett in his productions? The Brechtian terminology certainly sounds foreign in the subjectivist criticism that surrounds Beckett's work. Beckett himself, as Haerdter describes, sifts pragmatically through the technical vocabulary of the theater to communicate the effects he desires. The rest, to him, is "headaches among the overtones". The connection, the reason, is of course gestic theater, and the recognition of the primacy of performance in gestic theater. Both Brecht and Beckett are concerned to create "definitive" performances, not definitive in detail, but in principle. Carl Weber writing about the much touted "eclipse" of Brecht's theater in Europe, attributes much of it to a misunderstanding of this basic concept of Brecht's theater:

In the history of German Brecht productions, one can discover two strands mainly pursued: one being the staging of more or less stale variants of the basically unchanged models from the 1950s; the other being the grafting of fashionable or often faddish imagery on the plays to arrive at "stylishly dressed" spectacles, sometimes cleverly conceived but rarely the fruit of thoughtful effort to "tell a remarkable story for the entertainment of an audience". Intellectual complacency may be the root of the first trend; purely formalistic, success-oriented speculation motivates the second.

...Brecht's attitude of viewing every event as a historic phenomenon and of analyzing these events in terms of dialectics is as important to today's theatre as it was to his. It is this attitude which seems to be lacking in many of the present-day productions and in the discussions of the 'Brecht malaise' we hear so much complain about. (Weber, Eclipse 123-24)

It is the relevance, the contingency, of aesthetic principles that is ignored. Opportunism and ignorance are careful to protect their "principles" from the test of practice. The gestic of a play are not revealed except in the Gesamtgestus of author-actor-audience, in the social place of the play. To understand why the theaters of Brecht and Beckett seem so impossibly different, even

incommensurable, except trivially (see Fuegi, and others), is perhaps explained best by geopolitics. The West praises Brecht's formalism, but begrudges him his content, and the East grants Beckett formal innovation, but begrudges his content. That separation of form and content is reason enough, as Weber notes, for the eclipse of a theater.

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