
“Abolishing Aesthetics”: *Gestus* in Brecht’s *Arturo Ui*

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“To use Brecht without criticizing him is betrayal,” says Heiner Müller (14). While this is a provocative statement for which multiple interpretations are possible, one observation Müller certainly brings to the fore is the difficulty of making a claim about an artist’s work without necessarily “betraying” the artist and the work. Müller accentuates the usual notion that criticism is a necessary “betrayal” of the work being analyzed. His statement reveals that Brecht’s art demands that we be critical, that is, that we become aware of how Brecht, as artist and thinker, was always honing his ideas. Müller shows that taking Brecht at face value and not engaging with the contradictions taken up in his work is tantamount to concluding that Brecht’s complex work is merely a mass of confusion or inconsistencies. Such a conclusion would be quite inaccurate, for the *Grundgestus*—the fundamental attitude consciously fashioned—that guides Brecht’s plays and his theoretical writings may well be articulated as follows: Let contradictions be revealed. Anything that falls short of this edict “betrays” Brecht by refusing to consider his entire work as a dynamic attempt at exploring the role of the artist in his society, as opposed to any society in general. Brecht shows how the artist, in the end, can only speak in relation to his situatedness in a particular time and space. The artist does not transcend his society. Brecht faces this head on in various ways as his works take up particular political and social situations. Some may find it surprising that such specificity also allows him to grapple with the problem of art and with the situatedness of the artist.

Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui [*The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*] is a play which shows that, for Brecht, these two concerns—the artist’s reflection on art and the artist’s attitude toward the political and the social—are inseparable. To consider how *Ui* addresses these concerns will also shed light on what it means to heed the call to let contradictions be revealed. This insight is important because understanding Brecht’s views on contradictions will also reveal the complexity of his ever-evolving notion of *Gestus*. Known as a controversial play because of its satirical portrayal of Hitler and fascism, *Ui* forcefully challenges the conventional concept of the dialectical movement

in aesthetic pleasure. For Brecht, “contradiction is a moment in a process rather than a static structure” (Jameson 100), and this concept is crucial in understanding how Brecht’s parody can offer a parable that does not end in a “static” moral. Indeed, the play’s resistance to offering a simple moral demonstrates that Brecht’s notion of *Gestus* cannot be pegged in terms of simple dialectical materialism. *Ui* unmasks aesthetic pleasure as a bourgeois indulgence that (mis)uses dialectics to arrive at a neat, Aristotelian resolution of contradictions.

Let us consider *Gestus* as that which gathers together all contradictions and still allows their revelation without sublating them. Regarding “gest,” Brecht states the following in *A Short Organum for the Theatre* :

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. (198)¹

Thus, one way to ground an approach to Brecht’s difficult notion of *Gestus* is through a careful study of how Brecht’s texts reveal “the entire complex”—the myriad contradictions in human existence. I propose to approach *Gestus* by way of Brecht’s notion of *Verfremdung* [alienation or estrangement] for, as Reinhold Grimm describes, *Verfremdung* deals with the “act of laying bare, or exposing, the contradictions inherent in human society and history, indeed in the world in its entirety” (42).² The fact that *Verfremdung* reaches out, theoretically, on such a vast scale reinforces the significance of Brecht calling *Ui* a “*Parabelstück* [parable play].” In other words, parables communicate by “alienating” the usual desires or expectations of the reader who wants language to guarantee knowledge and meaning. Yet, this kind of alienation is designed ultimately to reveal something about the specific conditions of one’s existence.

It is important to note that Brecht’s notion of *Gestus* as the “exposing” or “letting be” of contradictions does not call for a blind resignation to the absurd; rather, *Gestus* is a vigorous attempt to reveal contradictions in a way that allows the audience, as readers or spectators, to engage actively with them. As Marc Silberman explains, “. . . [Brecht’s] theoretical ruminations, including the concept of *Gestus*, suggest ways of recognizing but not accepting contradiction” (331). It becomes clear that Brecht’s “political theater” is

founded on the very politicality of the contradictions contained within *Gestus*: political in the authentic sense of relating with an “other,” already implied in the *wider* [“contra, against, contrary”] of “*widerspruchsvoll* [“contradictory, inconsistent”].” Brecht’s gradual shift to the notion of *Haltung*, a disposition or attitude conscious of society, shows what had always been implied in Brecht’s thinking on *Gestus*.³ This connection is especially true if we consider that both *Haltung* and *Gestus* entail an *a priori* gesture to the “other” (not as an individual identity or subject). Let us look into Brecht’s unique notion of *Gestus* by asking how might *Ui* expose the contradictions inherent in existence? What are some implications of saying that, even in *Ui*, Brecht is able to maintain his stance of allowing contradictions? I will offer a reading of Scene 7 of *Ui* (Scene 6 in Ralph Manheim’s English translation) and a brief comparison with *Mann ist Mann*.

Before we proceed, it is important to note that in *Ui*, part of what is at stake in addressing the status of contradictions is the very question of whether or not the play ends up as a “satire which fails to stay on the level of its subject [and therefore] lacks spice” (Adorno, “Reconciliation under Duress” 157). My intent should not be judged strictly as a defense of *Ui* against Adorno’s criticism as presented in “Reconciliation under Duress” [“Erpresste Versöhnung”] and somewhat more extensively in “Commitment” [“Engagement”]. Instead, I am interested in showing that Brecht’s satirical portrayal of Hitler does not diminish the seriousness with which the play engages concerns about fascism. In both affect and effect, the play still offers possibilities to stimulate thinking that can translate to action in society. This implies that Brecht’s play, in practice, still adheres to his theories on theatre, especially that of the dialectic that does not resolve contradictions with a convenient “aesthetic” or “culinary” third term. In *Ui*, Hitler and the horrors of fascism are not sublated into an easily digestible moral, especially if we consider the unresolved nature of its ending. The play is consistent with Brecht’s understanding of the multi-layered social, historical factors that contribute to the “desire for a ‘Leader’”—a desire born from the struggles of modern existence, which city life epitomizes (Benjamin, “Conversations with Brecht” 208-09). (We will detail Adorno’s criticism further on.) For now, I will emphasize that the exploration of *Gestus* in *Ui* also opens up ways to see how Brecht’s use of parody remains consistent with his deep political and social concerns. Certainly, the theory and practice of *Gestus* helps Brecht to contrast himself against those whom he considered “bourgeois” writers,

such as Rilke, George, and Mann, saying that they “had driven literature to the brink” with “their aestheticist polarization of art and life” (Parker 235).

John Fuegi, among many others, notes that Brecht worked with Margarete Steffin on the play between 10 March and 12 April 1941 in Finland. *Ui* is known as the one play Brecht did not revise, an unusual omission for him. Moreover, it is one of the few plays that he wrote in a very short period of time. Martin Esslin records that 10 March 1941 was the date Brecht first mentioned the play in his diary and that by 28 March 1941 he was only one scene short of finishing it (78). Benjamin’s notes, however, indicate that Brecht had been planning *Ui* well before 1941. He records on 27 September 1934 that Brecht mentioned “Ui” as one of his shorter prose projects that would be a “satire on Hitler” (“Conversations with Brecht” 210).

Brecht wrote the play with an American audience in mind, as he was preparing to go into exile to the United States. He arrived in California on 21 July 1941, but no theater would stage the play. He is said to have been interested in gangsters and their depiction, like those in films starring James Cagney (Willett 122).⁴ Brecht also seems to have been fascinated by the figure of Al Capone. At first glance, we might say this explains his selection of Chicago as a setting. However, Brecht also read and collected information on Dutch Schultz, a New York gangster figure (Parker 350). Brecht’s choice of a big American city indeed reflects his understanding of the dread that is experienced in the modern, capitalistic urban space. He mentions that Kafka’s *The Trial* expresses concerns about the fact that such conditions are conducive to the emergence of a “leader” (Benjamin, “Conversations with Brecht” 211). However, it is not only Hitler, Capone, or Schultz who are implied in *Ui*, but also Richard III, Mark Antony, Macbeth, Faust, and other famous figures.

The historical context of *Ui* concerns the Third Reich and Hitler’s “resistible” rise to power. Its characters and locations strongly parallel history: Ui (Hitler), Dogsborough (Paul von Hindenburg), Giri (Hermann Göring), Givola (Joseph Goebbels), Roma (Ernst Röhm), Dullfeet (Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss), Chicago (Germany), and Cicero (Austria). Brecht is careful also to include many references to historical details. For example, Ui learns from an actor how to conduct himself in public, just as Hitler is said to have learned from Basil, a “provincial actor”; Roma and his men, in Scene 12, meet deaths similar in circumstances to those of Röhm, a *Sturmabteilung* captain and Hitler’s close friend, who was betrayed and killed along with his men on 30 June 1934 (Willett 122). Therefore, it is all the more significant that,

beginning with the play's title, Brecht seems to have vacillated in deciding the degree of irony with which to present Hitler's rise to power. Willett notes that the title was sometimes "*Der unaufhaltsame Aufstieg* . . . [The irresistible rise]" as opposed to "*Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg* . . . [The resistible rise]," pointing out that Brecht worried about whether people would understand his criticism of the "resistibility" of Hitler (244). In such a concern, we see Brecht grappling with how his play could address the contradictory, inconsistent nature of a society that, for many reasons, did not resist fascism. Brecht's deliberate, meticulous work with irony and parody is then crucial for the satire presented in *U!.*

Brecht's satire in the play has been received with mixed criticism over the years. Esslin describes the historical parallels of *U!* as "labored and unconvincing" (307), concluding that while "Brecht knew Hitler; he knew very little about Chicago" (307). Nevertheless, Esslin assesses Brecht's use of parody in a positive light, saying that parody was a part of Brecht's development as a writer which gave him a chance to "emulate" the many literary texts referenced in *U!* (307). Elizabeth Wright, on the other hand, places less emphasis on Brecht's use of parody as she attempts to defend Brecht from Adorno's criticism. Wright is critical of Adorno for condemning *U!* as a mere parody that "reduces" the horror of fascism and Nazism by aestheticizing it. For Wright, Adorno's description of *U!* as a static parody shows his failure to recognize that the work embodied Brecht's dialectical criticism of the Nazis' own aestheticizing of fascism (84). Still, the implicit presupposition in Wright's and Adorno's cases is that parody, in translocating an instance into a different mode of presentation, also somehow translocates value, whether aesthetic, political, or artistic. For both critics, the presupposition is that parody is capable of reducing the horror of Nazism and even of conferring aesthetic value to it. Because Wright approaches the issue from the same presupposition as Adorno, her solution is to combat Adorno's criticism by minimizing *U!*'s parodic elements. Wright states that Adorno fails to consider that Brecht is not so concerned with "parodying" as he is with "show[ing] fascism to be a continuation of Weimar bourgeois democracy" (84). Brecht may indeed seem interested in the latter, but his interest would appear to be fulfilled through the critical role of parody in the dialectical process that Wright discusses. Even as she identifies Adorno's problem as a failure to see how this dialectic is working, she likewise seems reluctant to give much credit to the status of parody in the dialectical structure of *U!*'s didactics.

We are compelled to wonder whether a didactic play, one that desires to teach, instruct, or convey some social criticism, can ever escape resorting to aesthetic means. Benjamin relates that Brecht saw possibilities in the parable form: “Brecht’s heroic efforts to legitimize art *vis-à-vis* reason have again and again referred him to the parable in which artistic mastery is proved by the fact that, in the end, all the artistic elements of a work cancel each other out” (“Conversations with Brecht” 211). Any possible aesthetic remainder is “cancelled out” in a parable.

In the context of poetry, Paul Celan, in his speech “*Der Meridian*,” takes up the problem of poetry having to be conveyed by means of art. In the notion of the *Atemwende* [breathturn], he offers possibilities for the poem’s sovereignty.⁵ Brecht’s problem of theatre having to rely on aesthetic means is related. His notion of *Gestus* as the neutralizing force (the dialectic of aesthetic experience) offers the possibility for a different kind of “didactics” in which traditional aesthetic pleasure is expunged. On various occasions, Brecht insists on this possibility. He does so especially as he works out the concept of Epic Theatre and most forcefully in his essay “Shouldn’t We Abolish Aesthetics?”. Parker describes the biographical, polemical backdrop to this essay,⁶ noting the shift that Brecht was eager to make from “old aesthetics” to a “sociological, hence scientific, position over the aesthetic” (240). Nevertheless many, such as Adorno, claim that Brecht, in attempting to criticize the Nazis’ aestheticizing of fascism, becomes implicated in that very same process of aestheticization. Does *Ui* resist aestheticizing Nazism and fascism? Just as *Ui*’s rise to power was “resistible,” so was Hitler’s.

Similarly, the movement of aesthetic experience is resistible if we consider that parody becomes parable in the play. Brecht uses parody as a way to “negotiat[e] between opposites, between the readability of the message that threatens to destroy the sensible form of art and the radical uncanniness that threatens to destroy all political meaning” (Rancière 63). Just as it is not an easy negotiation, resistance against the aesthetic experience is also not easy. Epic theatre therefore demands intense, “scientific” concentration. Brecht himself understood the difficulty of such resistance, as revealed in the bitter irony of the title, which highlights why the people, in the end, were unable to resist *Ui*.

It is crucial then to examine how *Ui* can be a parody of Hitler’s rise to power of Hitler and Nazism while, at the same time, resisting the aestheticization of this rise. As parody depends on irony, let us consider the various

levels of irony contained in *Ui*. Irony depends upon a crucial distance between, on the one hand, the knowledge that characters possess and that is presented in the text (or performance) and, on the other hand, the knowledge that the audience possesses. Such a distance is presented in *Ui* through parody and satire. The problem then seems twofold. Does parody give aesthetic value to that which it parodies? What kind of power is being claimed for art when one asserts that a certain work of art is capable of “reducing” something external to it, such as historical events? Parody is defined as a type of high burlesque in which there is “an incongruous imitation. . . [of] the matter or manner of a serious literary work, or literary genre” which becomes “amusing” because “the form and style is elevated and [yet] the subject is low or trivial” (Abrams 71). The objective of parody can be to evoke laughter and thus to entertain, but it is often also used as a vehicle for satire. Certain distinctions are important here: parody is not the same as satire; parody is the particular technique used for satire, which is “the literary art form of diminishing a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, indignation, or scorn” (Abrams 167). Indirect satire is often used for didactic purposes.

The distinction between the technique of parody and the art of satire is significant when we consider the disturbing possibility that *Ui* inadvertently aestheticizes fascism. *Ui* does imitate the literary traditions of the Grand Style, represented in the works of Goethe and Shakespeare. The form is elevated, and yet the subject of petty gangsters in Chicago is not. On the level of intertextuality, *Ui* is rich with references to the elevated style of the great writers. For example, the iambic pentameter of Scene 7 is itself a parody of the Elizabethan Grand Style; Scene 12, where *Ui* tries to sweet-talk Mrs. Dullfeet as he leads her through their flower shop, parodies the garden scene in *Faust*.

However, Brecht does not use the parodic technique to entertain a learned audience. In fact, parody here is scathing if we consider that the target is not only Hitler, but also the old forms of drama that do not correspond to the new society. Brecht offsets the scene by the particular choice of Mark Antony’s equivocal speech over Caesar’s body and by the ominous conversation between Mr. Dullfeet and Givola, which is interpolated with *Ui*’s manipulation of Mrs. Dullfeet. Thus, the author ensures that the scene does not remain merely humorous. He thrusts the parodic elements into the machine of the dialectic where the telos is satiric commentary on Hitler’s rise to pow-

er. The use value of aesthetics—humor, in this case—is sublated for the achievement of the higher telos. Brecht's aim is to ridicule fascism as well as to problematize people's failure to resist fascism. Nevertheless, to conclude that *Ui* is a satire does not so easily let it off the hook when it comes to the issue of whether the ridiculed subject can come away without being assigned aesthetic value.

Let us approach the question by considering Brecht's other aim, namely to problematize people's failure to resist fascism. Why in Brecht's play could the people of Chicago not resist *Ui*? Yet, more disturbingly, why were the German people unable to resist the Nazis' rise to power? Scene 7 seems to be a strong commentary on the "theatricality of fascism" and the aesthetic appeal cultivated by Hitler. In the Western philosophical tradition, aesthetics deals with an appeal to the senses (Greek *aisthesis*). It is significant that such an appeal implies a judgment on that which is doing the appealing. It is a judgment that confers value with regard to the degree of pleasure and enjoyment offered. *Ui* tries to appeal to the "*kleine Leute* [little people]" by how he carries himself, gesticulates and speaks. The "*kleine Leute*" cannot judge concerning the dangers of not resisting *Ui*'s rise; their judgment is suspended by the pleasurable appeal of the "theatricality" that *Ui* offers. In other words, judging such dangers would contradict the aesthetic (Aristotelian) pleasure experienced in seeing *Ui* "strut and fret." Brecht's play takes up this implicit contradiction within the aesthetic experience. By portraying *Ui* as absolutely ridiculous, Brecht tries to unmask the theatricality of fascism. The author is keenly aware of the challenge that this poses, as he notes in his journal: "In *Ui* the problem was on the one hand to let the historical events show through, and on the other to give the "masking" (which is an unmasking) some life of its own, i.e., it must—theoretically speaking—also work independently of its topical references" (*Journals 1934-1955* 137). This "masking" that is also an "unmasking" suspends the movement of aesthetic experience: the laughter evoked in the audience paradoxically serves to break the immediacy of an appeal to the senses. Brecht shows how laughter can function in many modes. There is a distancing, an "alienation," which allows the audience to take a step back, resist empathy as much as possible, and think rationally (Brecht calls it "scientifically") about the problems posed in the play. The avoidance of empathy was crucial because "whoever empathizes with someone, and does so completely, relinquishes criticism both of the object of their empathy and of themselves" (Brecht, "On the Theatricality of Fascism" 201). The technique

of parody thus functions as a device for *Verfremdung* that, in alienating the audience, solicits criticism, a necessary component of satire. Consequently, *Ui* challenges the movement of aesthetic experience and thereby avoids conferring aesthetic value to Hitler, Nazism, or fascism.

Nevertheless, parody and satire of this nature take the enormous risk of inadvertently trivializing their subject matter. What is crucial here is how “value” is measured in a work of art. In *Ui*, we will see that *Gestus*, with its dynamic possibilities, may well be what controls the status of “value” by ensuring that the work of art still “functions” (Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” 225) despite a variety of historical, social, and economic contingencies. In this context, we must distinguish between “doing violence” to a work of art and “violating” the work of art and, by extension, between “doing violence” to the matter treated in a work of art and “violating” the matter treated in art piece. What is most commonly understood as “trivializing” is perhaps the latter, the violation of whatever value the subject matter holds. In Adorno’s case, we can say that his criticism of Brecht is based on his view that Brecht violates the horror of Nazism by making it a subject for drama and, moreover, one of unrealistic, ridiculous satire. Adorno is critical of Brecht’s choice to parody Hitler as a petty gangster and calls the play “a kind of childish shorthand to try and crystallize out the essence of Fascism” (“Reconciliation Under Duress” 157). Adorno continues:

By thinking of Fascism as an enterprise belonging to a band of criminals who have no real place in the social system and who can therefore be “resisted” at will, you strip it of its horror and diminish its social significance. This invalidates the caricature and makes it seem idiotic even in its own terms: the despotic rise of the minor criminal loses its plausibility in the course of the play itself. (157)

From this point of view, *Ui* can only be a double failure: a failure of Brecht’s intention for theatre to be a didactic medium as well as failure on the level of a simple parody. Adorno’s concerns about art and, especially, the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz are well understood. My interest here is to show that Brecht’s play tackles similar concerns from a different angle as he tries to take up historical events without reifying them. To insist, in the manner of Adorno, that treatment of historical events always equals their reification likewise tacitly suggests that historical events and our memory of them can be violated. The salient issue is the potential to do violence. Doing

violence entails wrenching the subject from its proper context and translocating elsewhere. Thus understood, such violence is indeed something that happens always, because language itself may be considered as violent; the referent, in its very articulation, is translocated out of its original context, whether that context is the work of art or the historical subject matter the work treats. In this general sense one might suggest that *Ui* does violence to the subject matter of the play.

Even so, it does not follow that this translocation would automatically imply the conferral of aesthetic value. That would only be the case if Brecht's parody of Hitler and the historical reality of fascism reified Hitler or fascism. However, Brecht's play resists this reifying. The playwright strictly refuses to "psychologize" Hitler as an individual. Certainly, Brecht's concept of the dialectic exhibits little interest on the individual or on the individual's problem. For this reason it can be said that, at a certain level, ethics, which is concerned with the individual, is not as "central to [Brecht's concept of] the dialectic" (Jameson 143). Brecht attempts to exercise a different kind of dialectic, one not tied to the individual, that is, an aesthetic of the subject or selfhood; this intention, in turn, implies an attempt to articulate a different ethic. Hannah Arendt observes how Brecht's preference for epic over tragedy and ballad over lyric reveals that he was uninterested in psychologizing or emphasizing the individual (307-08). This point is crucial to understanding why Brecht could think it feasible to write plays independent of an "aesthetic point of view" ("Shouldn't We Abolish Aesthetics?" 21). We will see how *Gestus* liberates his plays from this viewpoint and neutralizes any possible renegade force of aesthetics that might still try to capture the play.⁷

Such neutralization is aided further by the playwright's use of parody—the mode *par excellence* to reveal extant contradictions. Brecht's parody, rather than reifying, destabilizes the authority of that which is being parodied. Brecht reportedly expressed the view that "even when a character behaves by contradictions, that's only because nobody can be identically the same at two unidentical moments. . . ." (Guillemin 15). By making *Ui*'s identity ambiguous, Brecht is able to avoid reducing the horror of Hitler and fascism. Instead of giving aesthetic value to Hitler or Nazism, Brecht neutralizes any possible value that might be claimed. This process of neutralizing is key to understanding the importance of Scene 7, in particular with regard to the charge that it may trivialize the act of "resisting." Lyotard, in his thoughts on language's relation to ethics, helps us to consider how the ambiguity of

Ui's essence reinforces the neutralizing: "That you are never me, that I am never you: can that be reflected upon, written reflexively? Written down, this is understood as follows: that the you is never the I, and that the I is never the you. In its wording, the ethical phrase is annihilated. Its secret, the asymmetry of the pronouns, is divulged and neutralized in their being autonomically grasped in the third person" (114). Lyotard shows that the "asymmetry" between the "I" and the "you" is at the heart of any ethical problem. Brecht's theories on theatre and art begin with the premise that any such symmetry is impossible, especially in modern society. In a way, Brecht's plays dramatize what Lyotard and Jameson describe as the violence that is done to ethics when the I-you relationship is articulated as a distanced relationship between a "he" and a "he." Respect loses its immediacy in the third person. The experience of the "he" is one in which the I-you experience is neutralized. What this implies for Brecht's play is that Ui, the character, does not experience himself as an "I" or even as a "you." In Scene 7, the reflection of Ui in the mirror is an excellent example of *Verfremdung*, emphasizing the impossibility of Ui to experience any coincidence of the self, either as an "I" or as a "you." The reflection remains in the mirror and neutralizes the potential of Ui to "become" himself. It is as if Ui cannot be identical to himself even at one identical moment, let alone at "two unidentical moments."

The ultimate failure for Ui to become Ui is indicated when he assumes the character of Mark Antony at the end of Scene 7. Although this scene may appear to be simple in its humor, the text is highly complex. It proves to be a significant moment in the play that allows us to distinguish between an *aesthetic*, "culinary," Aristotelian treatment of fascism and an *artistic*, non-Aristotelian, epic treatment of fascism. The latter might bypass aesthetics. The scene also questions the boundary between art and the artist. The hired actor in Scene 7 insists "*ich mache Kunst* [I make Art; I do Art]" (55).⁸ Yet, what if it is art that "makes," or "does," the artist? Indeed, from the start of the scene, who is serving whom becomes complicated. Is the actor serving Ui, or is Ui serving the actor? Is the reflection of Ui in the mirror serving Ui, or is he serving the reflection? Unlike Hamlet, who wants to hold the mirror up to nature, the mirror is literally held up to Ui. Is art serving aesthetics and politics, or vice versa? Stated differently, when Brecht is critical of aesthetics being made to serve fascist politics, does he, in turn, inadvertently make his own art subservient to both aesthetics and politics?

It is crucial here to ask whether or not the audience can empathize with

Ui. Is empathy aroused in seeing the irony produced by the distance between, on the one hand, the possibility for Ui to experience his authentic self and, on the other hand, his experience as a trainee miming the actor-trainer who is acting the part of Antony? Certainly Brecht is also poking fun at how bourgeois aesthetics reifies art and puts stock in the transcendence offered by it. Moreover, in looking at this specific scene, let us recall that Brecht, in writing *Ui*, had an American audience in mind, at least for its immediate staging. American theater, which relied heavily on the Stanislavsky method of acting, was familiar with the idea of getting into a role wholeheartedly. Brecht criticizes this type of identification with the character, insisting instead on understanding why “the coherence of the character is in fact shown by the way in which its individual qualities contradict one another” (“A Short Organum” 196).⁹ Brecht preferred much more distancing than that encouraged by the traditional method of identifying with the character. He wanted the actor to be aware of playing a role, to “quote” the character, instead of “becoming” the character, an approach that impedes the audience from empathizing with the character.

On one level, the play is also a parody of the Stanislavsky method of acting. It forces us to consider what is implied by an actor giving lessons. When does the “acting” end? Where do we draw the line between the “acting” and “not-acting?” This seems to be a boundary that is challenged when Ui’s “voice” takes over the actor’s voice at the end of Scene 7. It is also significant that Ui is taking over the actor-trainer’s recitation of Antony’s famous speech from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. Ui is supposed to be “acting” at this point, receiving training from the actor. However, the scene never shows the conclusion of the acting lessons. The curtain comes down with Ui still giving Antony’s speech, never coming out of the role of Antony. The implication is that Ui remains an actor-trainee who is working on the role of a Shakespearean character.

The blurring of scenes corresponds to the common understanding that Brecht’s epic theater places little stock in sequentially ordering the units within his plays. Nonetheless, since this play hinges on historical figures and events, there is a greater necessity to follow chronological sequence. Brecht does agree with Aristotle concerning “the predominance of plot over character portrayal” (Grimm 39). It is then safe to say that Scene 7 does indeed register a significant shift for the entire play, not in any development of Ui’s character, but in the plot surrounding Ui’s rise to power. Does Ui ever come out of

his role as Antony? Furthermore, does Ui ever “become” Ui? The boundary between scenes is effaced when Antony’s speech is resumed, immediately at the opening of the next scene. Does Ui ever stop acting? In a way, after this scene, a different layer of parody enters the play. The parody was initially on an internal level, with the characters and circumstances parodying actual people and historical events. The audience is aware of this parody. However, after Scene 7, we question how seriously the other characters and the audience can take Ui. It is implied that the other characters, represented by Givola in Scene 7, do not know how much of Ui’s subsequent actions and speech are a continuation of the parody of the Elizabethan Grand Style. The audience also participates in this ambiguity within the play. In the appendix to Section 53 of *A Short Organum*, Brecht offers a thoughtful insight into such contradictions:

The contradiction between acting (demonstration) and experience (empathy) often leads the uninstructed to suppose that only one or the other can be manifest in the work of the actor (as if the *Short Organum* concentrated entirely on acting and the old tradition entirely on experience). . . . His [the actor’s] particular effectiveness comes from the tussle and tension of the two opposites, and also from their depth. (277)¹⁰

The various contradictions in human nature that interest Brecht include the “tensions” faced within the actor as, for example, the “tension” between the contradiction of empathizing and of demonstrating that which the actor allows. As suggested, this notion is at the heart of Brecht’s *Gestus* as a dramatist: let contradictions be revealed. It is not at all a passive abdication. It is an active, energetic “tussle.” Brecht shows this confrontation in full force in the multi-layered tension in Ui’s acting lesson scene. The difficulty of “experience (empathy),” on the part of Ui himself and the actor-trainer, is accentuated in the unnaturalness of each action imitated. Simultaneously, the difficulty of absolute “acting (demonstration)” is indicated in the Antony speech that is recited rather empathetically. Ui becomes a “caricature” of himself, so much so that he almost ceases to be a “character.” Indeed, Brecht makes the following significant distinction between “caricatures” and “characters:” “To achieve a character rather than a caricature, the actor looks at people as though they were playing him with their actions, in other words as though they were advising him to give their actions careful consideration” (*Short Organum* 196).¹¹ Ui, full of only his own agenda, fails to “achieve” himself as a

character, implying the failure of an authentic I-you relationship on all levels (Ui-himself, Ui-other characters, Ui-audience). As a result, *Ui* thoroughly declines to psychologize or emphasize the individual.

It is important to note also that the tension between “acting (demonstration)” and “experience (empathy)” is magnified in the play’s stage productions, since the actor who plays the part of *Ui* adds another layer of tension with which to contend. Of course, the actual stage performance of his plays was crucial to Brecht’s theories on acting and especially on *Gestus*; *Gestus* in the dramatic, written text of the play and *Gestus* in each staged performance would never be identical. Brecht certainly revealed his ironic sense of humor when writing plays like this one and others, like *Mann ist Mann*, that call for a character within a play to role-play other characters. Humor in *Ui* is modified into a satiric mode by unmasking the unnaturalness of the bourgeois theatricality assumed by Hitler. To be sure, Brecht did not dismiss Hitler but understood the danger of his theatricality.¹²

Let us briefly look at Galy Gay in *Mann ist Mann* to see how Brecht treats the problem of character in similar fashion. The constantly fluctuating “role-playing” by Galy Gay heightens the ambiguity and the slapstick quality of the play. Galy Gay denies his identity and “acts” the part of several different people. Still, throughout the play, we are never sure of his degree of “acting.” The temporary acting gradually turns into an actual “becoming.” This transformation is witnessed at the plot level when the soldiers repeatedly request that Galy Gay, who agreed only to a temporary role-play, continue to act like Jeraiah Jip. Yet, the ambiguity of Galy Gay’s acting/becoming is also seen in the interaction with the other characters. For example, Galy Gay vehemently denies his own identity before Leokadja Begbick (Scene 4) and even before his own wife (Scene 8). He claims the identity of Jeraiah instead.

At the end of Scene 8, Galy Gay is forced to continue acting the part of Jeraiah. He tries to slip out but is brought back. Here, the audience can still sense that Galy Gay is merely acting the part of Jeraiah and that he wants to leave the men now that it has been announced that they are moving camp. However, a certain ambiguity to Galy Gay’s “acting” is introduced after Galy Gay is prevented from leaving. Eric Bentley, in “Brecht and the Rule of Force,” discusses this point in terms of Galy Gay’s “rape” by society (103). Surely, beginning with Scene 9, the situation becomes complicated, as Galy Gay is presented to the other characters and to the audience as Jeraiah Jip, who “mistakenly” thinks himself to be Galy Gay. Brecht takes the ques-

tion of identity to an extreme when Galy Gay, faced with the possibility of execution, oscillates between denying both Jeraiah's identity and that of Galy Gay. The crucial statement of the play is made by Uriah when he calls Galy Gay "*Mann ohne Namen* [man without a name]" (199) and conveys the military court's decision to execute him. It does not matter who Galy Gay really is. After all, as Kafka shows, "the Law" decrees that we are all guilty.¹⁵ Uriah's statement is another way to rearticulate the title and refrain of the play, "*Mann ist Mann.*"

The rest of the play reworks this notion as Galy Gay once again and, for the final time, assumes Jeraiah's identity. The funeral oration for Galy Gay's mock death symbolically marks the end to Galy Gay's identity. Ironically, there is no dead body in the crate. The audience is swept up in Galy Gay's identity-shuffling and is also subject to manipulation by the other characters. Benjamin describes Galy Gay as "nothing but an exhibit of the contradictions which make up our society" ("What Is Epic Theater?" 149).

The complexity of *Mann ist Mann* is similar to that of *Ui*, particularly with regard to the ambiguity of where *Ui*'s acting ends and the question of whether even a *Ui* exists who the gangster boss can again become. In *Ui*, there is no Jeraiah-like character whose identity can be assumed and cast off at random. What we have instead are only the reflections of *Ui* in the mirror, the actor-trainer, and Mark Antony. None is presented overtly in the play in terms of an alternate identity that is either forced on *Ui* or actively assumed by him. The problem of any possibility of authentic individual identity in *Ui* is thus presented in a subdued fashion. It is possible to view *Ui*, emerging in 1941, as a play that picks up where *Mann ist Mann* left off in 1926. We thus see the development of Brecht's thoughts on the status of "characters," from his questioning the stability or even the possibility of identity, to his suggesting the disturbing possibility that people may just be caricatures of them—"selves." In the end, he accomplishes a caricature of the entire concept of selfhood or subjectivity.

At the close of *Mann ist Mann*, Galy Gay, calling himself Jeraiah Jip, is the triumphant soldier who saves the day. As Brecht related to Guillemain (16), Galy Gay is not transformed into the "perfect" man. Even so, matters finally start to take a turn for the better. *Ui*, too, continues his ridiculous rise to power. He is a small-scale gangster at the beginning of the play but, by its end, he has increased his territory and influence. Scene 7 marks a shift similar to how Galy Gay's mock death marks a shift in *Mann ist Mann*. It takes place when the

Grundgestus takes on a more aggressive nuance; in *Mann ist Mann*, Galy Gay's execution and "resurrection" reinforce the *Gestus* of how unimportant one's name is because one is guilty nonetheless. In *Ui*, the actor-trainer's lessons for Ui reinforce the *Gestus* of why Ui's identity is inconsequential; rather, the emphasis is on how to influence the "*kleine Leute*." Brecht here modulates the arbitrariness of the Law applied to Galy Gay into the arbitrariness, or ambiguity, of when and if Ui stops acting a part.

Let us return to exploring the manner *Gestus* operates specifically in *Ui*. In addition to the intertextuality mentioned with regard to Brecht's parody of the "Grand Style," another significant point concerning his treatment of the Grand Style is found in the essential relationship between "style" and *Gestus*. We can think of *Gestus* as Brecht's alternative approach to art now that the Grand Style is no longer viable in the wake of the aesthetic violence effected by modern society, as exemplified by the Nazi appropriation of the Grand Style. ("Style" in the literary, dramatic, and artistic traditions culminated in the Grand Style of, among others, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Wagner.) The actor in Scene 7 is introduced as one trained in the "classical" style and who openly invokes his admiration of Shakespeare. He interprets Ui's request as a desire to master "*den großen Stil* [the grand style]" (54) and hence identifies the classical tradition with the Grand Style. This tradition is certainly important, but what would remain of style if it is stripped of such "baggage"? Brecht grapples with this dilemma in the various articulations of his ideas on non-Aristotelian theatre, epic theatre, parable, and especially *Gestus*. Yet, an examination of the possible relation between style and *Gestus* is in order. "*Stil*" is commonly translated as style, way, or manner. Style usually refers to how something is conveyed. In *Ui*, especially, we see that style lies dialectically between "what" is being conveyed and "that" it is being conveyed. The essence of what is conveyed must be distinguished from the various aspects of the fact that it is conveyed. The difference between the two ("what" and "that") comprises the manner in which the communication takes place. Style, in other words, may also function like "gesture," in the way that Agamben describes gesture:

The gesture is . . . communication of a communicability. . . . [It is] essentially always a gesture of not being able to figure something out in language; it is always a gag in the proper meaning of the term, indicating first of all something that could be put in your mouth to hinder speech, as well as in the sense of the actor's improvisation meant to compensate a loss of memory or an inability to speak. (59)

While *Gestus* is by no means simply translated as “gesture,” Agamben’s reflection reveals something akin to Brecht’s notion of *Gestus*, in that *Gestus* also communicates an attitude or stance. An attitude is the manner or style by which one comports oneself. How something is faced by a person (one’s stance) forms the *Gestus*, which is not a code with a certain signification, possessing an essential message and aspects of that message. It conveys a desire to communicate outside the self. This is a contradictory thought because communication usually implies an understanding of what one wants to communicate. However, as *Gestus*, like style, moves in a kind of in-between space, it is able to gather and present the various contradictions of human nature and existence without resolving them. We thus see that, for Brecht, the concepts of *Gestus* and *Haltung* are not nebulous, but instead concepts that move within a strange, immediate in-between space. In *Gestus*, the very desire to communicate is what is crucial; in *Haltung*, that desire becomes accentuated more overtly towards a paradoxical, depersonalized relationship with the “other.” As Silberman describes, Brecht uses *Haltung* to refer to a kind of “adjustment to the social environment, as a relation to necessity, which might also entail social resistance” (324). On a formal level, the parody of the Grand Style is one of the contradictions revealed in *Ui*. The elevated lines of iambic pentameter contradict the inelegant content and the lowly speaker. The technique of parody somehow exemplifies Brecht’s notion of *Gestus*—even his own as an artist and thinker—in its ability to let contradictions be revealed.

The *Gestus* of Scene 7, the manner of communication is defined by the desire(s) entailed in that communication. *Ui*’s desire is to act so as to impress the “little men” and solidify his power. How does this desire then define the style and the *Gestus* of the scene and of the entire play? The mode of impressing is to imitate the Grand Style of Shakespeare. What is crucial is that no attempt is made at seeming natural in this imitation. “Nobody’s natural in this day and age. When I walk, I want people to know I’m walking” (142),¹⁴ says *Ui* when Givola remarks, during *Ui*’s acting lessons, that his gait is unnatural. Such unnaturalness is also implied by Agamben when observing that “by the end of the nineteenth century, the Western bourgeoisie had definitely lost its gestures” (49). Givola’s interruptions create *Verfremdungseffekt*, a kind of alienation effect, representing the bourgeois concepts of how art must imitate life. In Givola’s naïve comments to *Ui*, Brecht criticizes the manner “the bourgeois theatre’s performances always aim at smoothing over contra-

dictions, at creating false harmony, at idealization” (“Appendices to the *Short Organum*” 277).¹⁵ Contrary to Givola’s traditional understanding of art, Ui asserts that everything is now unnatural. This gives rise, for example, to the fascist appropriation of theatricality where they understood it as an “in-your-face” type of acting.

For Brecht, however, the unnaturalness of *Gestus* is closely linked with what Peter Szondi, in *Theory of Modern Drama*, describes as the breakdown in “interpersonal relationships” (70). Szondi helps us understand why Brecht’s epic theater and *Verfremdung* are ways to respond to a modern world where drama may no longer take for granted any possibility of transcendent communication. This would explain why Ui’s *Gestus* in Scene 7 rejects a desire to be natural. *Ui* is epic theatre par excellence. It shows how “epic theatre is by definition a gestic theater. For the more frequently we interrupt someone in the act of acting, the more gestures result” (Benjamin, “What is Epic Theatre?” 151). In this context, parody is one grand “interruption” where all is unnatural gesture. The scene offers just such a parody of fascist appropriations, while simultaneously and subtly affirming the contradictions inherent in the persistent need for people to communicate at all costs, even if it may be extremely difficult and “*unnatürlich*” for them to do so.

The contradictions between the seemingly natural, everyday actions and the de-naturalization of these actions are also conveyed in the very diction of the scene. Ui requests that the actor teach him the following: “*Auftreten* [the entering]” (54), “*Das Gehen* [the walking]” (54), “*Das Stehen* [the standing]” (55), “*Das Sitzen* [the sitting]” (57), “*Reden* [the speaking]” (59).¹⁶ While the German language is comprised of flexible word renderings, such nominalized present infinitive verbs are particularly effective in this scene; the intransitive quality of verbs that have dropped their objects emphasizes the de-naturalization of the actions. Ernest Fenollosa, in his comparative study of poetry, states that “there is no such thing as a naturally intransitive verb” (18). Of course, the immediate context of Fenollosa’s analysis is the Chinese character. His insights into grammar nevertheless shed light on Brecht’s modulations of verbs. He points out that intransitive verbs, such as “‘live,’ ‘see’ [sic], ‘walk,’ ‘breathe,’ are generalised into states by dropping their objects, so these weak verbs are in turn reduced to the abstractest state of all, namely bare existence” (19). In *Ui*, the imitation of the actor, an abstract action in itself because he is only acting as well, is somehow supposed to provide Ui with a state of being that will impress the “*kleine Leute*.” The diction here exposes a

state of communication reduced to communicating sheer communicability. Hence, Ui insists that his walking is supposed to be recognized as such. The verb-becoming-noun opens a space where *Gestus* can gather the grammatical contradictions into a single *Gestus*.

Brecht is more than aware of the possibilities of presenting contradictions through writing instead of just only through acting. He discusses, for instance, in “On Rhymeless Verse with Irregular Rhythms” his attempts to deal with rhythm, diction, and rhymes in ways that would allow his poetry “to show human dealings as contradictory, fiercely fought over, full of violence” (116). The diction and contra-diction in Scene 7 of *Ui* opens a space where we, in turn, see the contradictory attempts by Ui to assume the semblance not only of the actor, but also of his own reflection in the mirror. Ui’s self-conscious gestures take the poetic quality out of the gestures and turn them rather prosaic, if we think of prose as what is elicited by the desire to explicate poetry. Ui’s deliberately unnatural movement becomes a caricature of natural movement. Similarly, we can say that it is a caricature of himself which Ui becomes as he observes his own reflection in the mirror. Even the result of observing the hired actor does not escape the level of ironic caricature, if we consider the ridiculousness of attempting to imitate an actor who is himself acting. In fact, Brecht comments on the importance of the actor’s ability to “observe” others as to avoid becoming a “caricature” that is striving instead to “achieve a character” (*A Short Organum* 196).

Ui thus reveals the various levels of contradictions inherent in existence, from the contradiction experienced in the suspension of aesthetic experience to the contradiction in communicating sheer communicability—even here, Brecht maintains his stance on allowing the revelation of contradictions. To say that *Ui* allows contradictions to be revealed does not translate into any affirmation of the horrors of fascism. It rather gestures to the possibility that parody and satire deal with contradictions without offering trite resolutions or attempting to bring some sort of closure to the didactic, dialectical process. By calling *Ui* a parable play, Brecht reinforces the impression that epic theatre bypasses the conventional need for a cathartic release or a purging of emotions (Benjamin, “What is Epic Theater?” 150). If there is a cathartic experience, it would be more in the Greek etymological sense of catharsis as a “recognition,” “awareness” and, as Leon Golden has shown, “intellectual clarification” (477). Not surprisingly, Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, in his discussion of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* [*Rise and Fall of the City*

of *Mahagonny*) cites the epilogue of *Ui* as another example of Brecht's use of *Verfremdungseffekt* "to interrupt the construction of a totality of the represented, to avoid 'empathy' [*Einfühlung*], and to render the discussion of reality possible" (27). He states that such epilogues avoid both having the play taken as a pure representation of reality and having the play taken as a pure work of art. It may be said that, with the ending that is not really an ending, the actor's epilogue in *Ui*, manages to keep the dialectic of the contradictions in flux:

The world was almost won by such an ape!
The nations put him where his kind belong.
But don't rejoice too soon at your escape—
The womb he crawled from is still going strong. (162)¹⁷

Brecht forces the audience to think of what it means to have "leaders" like *Ui* emerge and, furthermore, to have a society like that of Chicago or Cicero where residents did succumb to *Ui*. Yet, the absence of a direct mention of *Ui*'s name is significant. So is the use of "*die Völker*," given all that noun invokes, is no accident. Manheim's translation as "the nations" is particularly insightful in that it allows the multivalence of "*Volk*" to include other countries. On a textual level, it is the figure of *Ui* that makes possible any reference to Hitler. In the epilogue, *Ui* does not physically appear, but he is implicitly present. The same holds true for the figure of Hitler because he and the horrors of fascism seem not to be "conjured away."¹⁸ As a matter of fact, the contradiction—here, a strong paradox—is that *Ui*'s absence allows for the figure of Hitler to emerge most overtly in the play. *Gestus* is the immanent experience of this paradox. We see that *Gestus*, in its refusal to resolve the contradictions, is the tenuous guarantor of the resistance to aesthetics; it at least operates to suspend an aestheticization.

As Müller observed, it is important to engage critically with Brecht in order not to "betray" him. So, has our meditation on *Ui* remained loyal? Perhaps criticism is like a chess match, at least the type of match envisioned by Brecht. After all, Brecht wished for a "new game" of chess where there was "develop[ment]," a game where "the positions do not always remain the same; where the function of the pieces changes if they have stood for a while on the same square" (Benjamin, "Conversations with Brecht" 206). Likewise, *Gestus* ensures our "game" as well, to the extent that we recognize it as an articulation of the fierce desire to keep open possibilities for constant change.

Notes

¹ Willett's translation of the following: *Den Bereich der Haltungen, welche die Figuren zueinander einnehmen, nennen wir den gestischen Bereich.... Diese gestischen Äußerungen sind meist recht kompliziert und widerspruchsvoll, so daß sie sich mit einem einzigen Wort nicht mehr wiedergeben lassen, und der Schauspieler muß achtgeben, daß er bei der notwendigerweise verstärkten Abbildung da nichts verliert, sondern den ganzen Komplex verstärkt.* (689-90, *Kleines Organon für das Theater*). Unless otherwise mentioned, all translations from *Kleines Organon* are Willett's.

² I agree with Grimm concerning the proposal to leave Brecht's neologism, *Verfremdung*, untranslated (41), since the active quality of *Verfremdung* must be constant and dynamic, especially in the context of how important Brecht deemed contradictions. Among common translations, Grimm privileges "alienation," while Willett, in *Brecht in Context*, suggests "detachment" (239).

³ See Marc Silberman, "Brecht's *Gestus* or Staging Contradictions," *The Brecht Yearbook* 31 (2006): 318-35; Silberman offers an "archeology" of the concept of *Gestus*, especially in its relationship with his concept of *Haltung*, noting *Gestus* as the "smallest element of *Haltung*" (324).

⁴ For more on Brecht's interest in American gangster films and gangster leaders, see also Gerz, 461-62 and Parker 350.

⁵ Celan, "Der Meridian" 26: "Wer weiß, vielleicht legt die Dichtung den Weg--auch den Weg der Kunst--um einer solchen Atemwende willen zurück?"

⁶ Parker observes that Brecht's essay was written in 1927 as a polemical partner piece to Fritz Sternberg's anonymously published essay "Letter to a Dramatist from Mr X." In it, Sternberg is most critical of drama's possibility of surviving in modern society, claiming that the old "Shakespearean" forms can no longer hold sway (239).

⁷ Jameson notes that Brecht's insistence on his plays' paradoxical openness changes the status of "judgment" within the work's experience. This is akin to how the dialectic neutralizes any clean binary contradiction (Jameson 134).

⁸ Translation my own. Manheim's translation is "art is my life" (142). A literal translation emphasizes the scene's implicit questioning of the relationship between artist and work of art.

⁹ "Die Einheit der Figur wird nämlich durch die Art gebildet, in der sich ihre einzelnen Eigenschaften widersprechen" (*Kleines Organon* 686).

¹⁰ "Der Widerspruch zwischen Spielen (Demonstrieren) und Erleben (Einfühlen) wird von ungeschulten Köpfen so aufgefaßt, als trete in der Arbeit des Schauspielers nur das eine oder das andere auf (oder als werde nach dem "Kleinen Organon" nur gespielt, nach der

alten Weise nur erlebt)... Aus dem Kampf und der Spannung der beiden Gegensätze, wie aus ihrer Tiefe, zieht der Schauspieler seine eigentlichen Wirkungen" (703).

¹¹ "Um vom Abklatsch zur Abbildung zu kommen, sieht der Schauspieler auf die Leute, als machten sie ihm vor, was sie machen, kurz, als empfänden sie ihm, was sie machen, zu bedenken" (*Kleines Organon* 687).

¹² Hermand notes that Brecht insisted on the importance of taking Hitler seriously rather than denying his "personality" status. Brecht disagreed with Lion Feuchtwanger and others by arguing "that one could not fight against him [Hitler] by portraying him either as a puppet on a string, pulled by the big industrialists and Reichswehr generals, nor as a 'deformity, perversity, humbug,' or even a 'pathological case'" (184).

¹³ Benjamin's "Conversations with Brecht" reveals the impact of Kafka's writings on Brecht: "There [in *The Trial*] above all, he [Brecht] thinks, we find the fear of the unending and irresistible growth of cities. . . . The inexplicable mediations, dependencies, entanglements besetting man as a result of their present form of existence, find expression in these cities" (Benjamin 208-209). The view Brecht expresses on *The Trial* is consistent with his portrayal of the urban desolation of *Uz's* Chicago and, I would argue, also with the ironic "depersonalizing" in *Mann ist Mann*.

¹⁴ Manheim's translation. "Kein Mensch ist heut natürlich. Wenn ich gehe, wünsche ich daß es bemerkt wird, daß ich gehe" (55).

¹⁵ "Die Darstellungen des bürgerlichen Theaters geben immer auf die Verschmierung der Widersprüche, auf die Vortäuschung von Harmonie, auf die Idealisierung aus" (*Nachträge zum Kleines Organon* 706).

¹⁶ Translations my own. While most translations, such as Manheim's, use the more colloquial phrases beginning with "how to," i.e., "how to walk," what Brecht does with the nominalizing of the verbs seems quite significant and effective in this scene.

¹⁷ Manheim's translation. "So was hätt einmal fast die Welt regiert! / Die Völker wurden seiner Herr, jedoch / Daß keiner uns zu früh da triumphiert- / Der Schoß ist fruchtbar noch, aus dem das kroch!" (124).

¹⁸ Adorno's major criticism of *Uz* is that the horrors of fascism and Hitler are "conjured away": The true horror of fascism is conjured away; fascism is no longer the product of the concentration of social power but rather an accident, like misfortunes and crimes. The goals of political agitation decree this; the opponent must be scaled down, and that promotes false politics, in literature as in the political praxis of the period before 1933. Contrary to all

dialectics, the ridiculousness to which Ui is consigned takes the teeth out of fascism, a fascism Jack London had accurately prophesied decades earlier. The anti-ideological writer paves the way for the degradation of his own doctrine to ideology. (“Commitment” 83)

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