The Possibilities of Contemporary Dialectical Theatre: The Example of Representing Neonazism in Germany

Abstract: This article opens with a contextualizing examination of dialectics in the theatre and the ways that the category can function politically. It then analyses four examples of theatre works that confront the German Neonazi terrorist cell, the National Socialist Underground. It argues that representing the cell and the various social and political forces that allowed it to function for over a decade can best be apprehended by a dialectical approach that resists determinism and engages in grounded speculation. The four pieces in question exemplify the breadth of dramaturgical possibilities employed by the different theatre-makers, moving from the documentary to the fictional. The varieties of dialectical theatre discussed are contrasted with the limitations of Brecht’s practices in order to re-introduce the category to contemporary theatre-making. Consequently, the article notes some of the formal commonalities in the pieces it considers and proposes that these might offer ways of approaching other contemporary political issues on stage.

Keyword: dialectical theatre, representing contemporary politics, Elfriede Jelinek, National Socialist Underground, post-Brechtian theatre

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Dialectical theatre, a category associated most closely with the theories and practices of Bertolt Brecht, insists on particular ways of understanding reality that resist naturalizing and universalizing human activity and thought. ‘Reality’ is, of course, a contested term, yet Brecht deliberately described his theatre as ‘realistic’. He did not understand ‘realism’ in its aesthetic sense of reproducing the surfaces of daily life, but as a philosophical category. Reality, as will be discussed below, is always being constructed and, to Brecht, was the result of dialectical processes. He designed his theatre to expose these processes and stage reality as unstable and thus changeable. Over the years, Brecht has been criticized for variously simplifying or misrepresenting reality, as will be shown below. This article asks whether dialectical theatre can re-establish itself on the contemporary stage by investigating the theatre’s treatment of a recent public outrage in Germany, the scandal surrounding the self-styled Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund (National Socialist Underground – NSU). Nazism and Neonazism present an exemplary case study for how a dialectical theatre can look beyond individuals in order to suggest connections between ideology, history, thought and action. After analysing and evaluating a selection of dramaturgical approaches, taken from a sample of theatre projects about the NSU, I consider how dialectics after Brecht might still offer theatre-makers innovative ways of confronting contemporary realities.

The Premises of a Dialectical Theatre

A dialectical theatre is founded upon a series of principles regarding the nature of reality. A starting point might be found in Heraclitus’s well-known Fragment 49a: ‘We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not’.[[1]](#footnote-1) For all the different interpretations of the line, at least the phenomenological status of the river is clear: a river flows and despite appearances, time passes and the water is not the same the second time around. The philosopher’s proposition that change is an inescapable function of time lays a foundation for a particular way of looking at reality that accepts that no two moments are the same. The insight might then pique our curiosity to consider these differences and perhaps account for them, too. Yet while Heraclitus’s starting point is in nature, he swiftly moves on to change in human beings. The fragment becomes more problematic when it doubts the constancy of the toe-dipper, and this marks an important moment for identity construction. Heraclitus suggests that time has also passed for this person and that, by definition, s/he cannot be the same, however slight that change may have been. While the effects of time on ontology cannot be denied, the question arises as to what ‘change’ might mean here. The French ‘plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose’ (‘the more it changes, the more it’s the same thing’) offers a critique of the *appearance* of change and essentially embodies a conservative position that things will always stay the same. Dialecticians, on the other hand, propose that real change is both possible and evident.

The dialectic is a mechanism that accounts for change over time. Its central relationship is that of a contradiction between a thesis and its antithesis. The two exist in a tension until the contradiction becomes too great and change comes about. The nature of that change is itself contentious among dialectical thinkers. The Hegelian movement from thesis and antithesis to synthesis[[2]](#footnote-2) can appear a little too neat and easy, even though the synthesis becomes a new thesis, which will, in turn, be opposed by a new antithesis, creating a new synthesis, etc. Fredric Jameson, following Slavoj Žižek, takes issue with ‘that stupid old stereotype’, proposing that ‘there are no real syntheses in Hegel’.[[3]](#footnote-3) Theodor Adorno developed his idea of a ‘negative dialectics’ as a challenge to any kind of fixed resting place for a contradiction. Playwright Heiner Müller saw the dialectic in the following, open terms: ‘Marx hat ja kein System entworfen, sondern er hat an der Negation, an der Kritik des Bestehenden gearbeitet, und so war er prinzipiell offen für neue Realitäten’ (‘Marx didn’t devise a system, on the contrary, he worked on negation, on a critique of the existing state of affairs. Consequently, he was open to new realities in principle’).[[4]](#footnote-4) What connects all these responses to the dialectic is that change, in whatever form, is understood as a process that is brought about by contradiction. And because human beings are integral to the process, they are changed by definition. It would be difficult to argue that the impact of, say, the internet or mobile-phone technology has not changed whole societies’ negotiations of both time and space. The radical compression of these categories has had an effect on people’s behaviours and attitudes to social interaction in many different spheres. Other dialectical contradictions demonstrably affect the way human beings interact,[[5]](#footnote-5) and so, rather than positing an unchanging human nature, dialectical anthropology proposes that the only stable human quality is an ability to adapt and change to concrete material factors. As Sean Sayers puts it: ‘Marxism is a historical and social account of human needs and powers, and this leads to a historical form of humanism’.[[6]](#footnote-6) That is, human nature is not essentialist, yet neither is it absolutely relativistic. Rather, it is bounded by the material constraints of any given historical moment, and so an examination of these helps one understand the relationships between context, attitudes and behaviour. The dialectics’ political significance lies in the proposition that reality is predicated on contradiction and is thus always unstable. As a result, change is the only constant, although the nature of change is not in some way teleological, heading towards progressive and liberating states, as history more than amply demonstrates.

Brecht’s theatre has been examined for its dialectical features on many occasions.[[7]](#footnote-7) His much-quoted rejection of reproducing the surface of reality offers a point of departure for understanding his approach to representing reality:

Die Lage wird dadurch so kompliziert, daß weniger denn je eine einfache ‘Wiedergabe der Realität’ etwas über die Realität aussagt. Eine Fotografie der Kruppwerke oder der AEG ergibt beinahe nicht über diese Institute. Die eigentliche Realität ist in die Funkionale gerutscht. Die Verdinglichung der menschlichen Beziehungen, also etwa die Fabrik, gibt die letzteren nichts mehr heraus.[[8]](#footnote-8)

(The situation has become so complicated because the simple ‘reproduction of reality’ says less than ever about that reality. A photograph of the Krupp works or the AEG reveals almost nothing about these institutions. Reality as such has slipped into the domain of the functional. The reification of human relations, the factory, for example, no longer discloses those relations.)

In short, the theatre needs to show human beings and their interactions on stage as a process in order to reveal how and why people behave as they do. The two keywords ‘show’ and ‘process’ require further comment, and I will deal with them in reverse order.

The notion of actions or opinions on stage as process suggests that they do not exist ‘in themselves’. The most fundamental human emotions, actions or reactions may appear to be self-evident, yet a dialectical interpretation of human activity questions this assumption. Its response is to frame action on stage in all its contradictoriness to bring out the complexity of any given situation. The conservative assertion, for example, that capitalism is the rightful system to deal with ‘innate’ human greed can be dialectically inverted. Here, capitalism as a system produces greed, that is, it is advantageous for those in power to accumulate profit *and* to encourage others to do so, however illusory such an ambition may be. In this reading, greed is not a fundamental human quality, but a manufactured desire that could be changed if human beings changed society. Dialectical theatre is thus concerned with unpacking apparently evident qualities and suggesting possible contributory factors to a particular behaviour or opinion. The dialectic is not, however, deterministic: situations exist as a constellation of forces, and the human beings they act upon are themselves complex. Dialectical theatre is designed to retain the quality of astonishment,[[9]](#footnote-9) not predictability.

‘Showing’ is also key to the aesthetics of a dialectical theatre. Drawing attention to emotions, actions and opinions previously considered ‘natural’ or self-evident is a way of jolting the spectator into a different relationship with the material on stage. It is obvious that no-one is born racist, or even socialist for that matter, and so a dialectical theatre can help open up the processes that have led to the adoption of such positions. Brecht called this operation *Verfremdung*, or making the familiar strange, and thus demanded a degree of artifice or heightened realism in performance as a way of dispelling a sense of naturalism.

Yet in contrast to these positive aspects, Meg Mumford has drawn attention to a certain simplification in Brecht’s practice and identifies ‘something closed about the performed structure of opposition, as if the promise of offering up multiple options had been replaced by a presentation of “the” alternative, the “socially efficacious” way of behaving, the “better” social solution’.[[10]](#footnote-10) Brecht, of course, was writing and directing at a specific historical moment, one in which socialism, in the form of the communist bloc, was both extant and a rival to the discourses and praxis of capitalism. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the implosion of communism in the East and the shift in Chinese economic policies might suggest that a dialectical theatre, along with State socialist models, can be consigned to the dustbin of theatre history (although, as this essay will argue, such a criticism throws the radical baby out with the conservative bathwater). It is also worth noting aspects of Brecht’s epistemology that suggest a need for an update: he allies the dialectic of *Verfremdung* with the acquisition of mastery over the phenomenon in question.[[11]](#footnote-11) The idea that certainty might reside at the end of this process is clearly at odds with the critics of dialectical synthesis, considered above. Brecht’s becomes a ‘theatre of knowledge’[[12]](#footnote-12) in this reading, whereas social issues may present problems that resist even implicit solutions.

This sketch of a dialectical theatre acknowledges the centrality of contradictions that exist beyond the individuals on stage and the ways in which they inflect, but do not deterministically define, what is represented. Yet Brecht’s design for a dialectical theatre also points to its own weaknesses from a contemporary perspective, and so the treatment of political and social phenomena may require both the retention and the critique of Brecht’s ideas. That said, the plays and projects discussed below may not deliberately seek to engage with Brecht at all. Brecht did not base his dialectical representations on a format or schema, but derived them from his observations of reality. As a result, the examples below need not open a direct conversation with Brechtian theatre as such; their complex understanding of how reality is constructed can prove an appropriate prerequisite for a dialectical representation of the NSU and its contexts.

Spotting the Differences Between Nazism and Neonazism

Brecht’s theatre was founded on historical specificity: the attitudes and behaviours of anyone on stage were dialectically related to their concrete social situation. It is thus necessary for theatre-makers not to elide the Neonazis of the NSU with the Nazis of the Third Reich. Hitler’s Nazism was a system that pervaded German society from 1933-45. Its structures were founded on its own laws and institutions, and it wielded hegemonic power over its populace. The NSU was a cell of three far-right terrorists from the former East Germany, operating covertly, but with the support of like-minded extremists. Uwe Böhnhardt (1977-2011), Uwe Mundlos (1973-2011) and Beate Zschäpe (1975-) were involved in nine racially motivated murders (of eight Turks and one Greek, 2000-6); one murder of a German policewoman (2007); three documented attempted murders (1999-2004), one of which was a nail-bomb attack in which, remarkably, no-one was killed; and fifteen documented bank robberies (1998-2011).[[13]](#footnote-13) The list of crimes may surprise and shock the reader, yet as more information emerged, the extent of the scandal stretched far beyond the NSU itself.

It was only after the final robbery in Eisenach on 4 November 2011 that the group’s existence ever came to light. The botched raid led the police to the campervan from which the two men were operating at the time. They allegedly set light to the vehicle, shot themselves and died in the wreckage. Their accomplice, Zschäpe, then set fire to their flat, went on the run, distributed a video publicizing the NSU before handing herself in to the police. At the time of writing, summer 2015, she is standing trial for her part in the cell’s activities. Material recovered from the burnt-out flat proved to be an archive of sorts that helped investigators connect the crimes and discover more about the NSU.

It is shocking that a series of racist murders was only revealed once the murderers themselves had died in the campervan, yet the story of the State’s role is even more staggering. The police had identified a common weapon in several of the murders, but rather than connecting the weapon to right-wing extremists, they believed that a shady ‘Turkish mafia’ was to blame. A mere four days after the nail-bomb in Cologne in June 2006, the Minister for the Interior, Otto Schily, stated that, according to the security services, the attack was most probably rooted in ‘the criminal milieu’ and was not terrorism.[[14]](#footnote-14) The security services themselves, in the form of regional units and their overarching federal centres, had been paying members of far-right groups for information since German reunification in 1990. Shortly after the botched bank robbery, secret agencies started systematically shredding files pertaining to these informants and other intelligence reports, a practice that did not cease when it was revealed at an official inquiry. It also emerged that a covert agent, one Andreas Temme, was actually present at the scene of one of the murders, an internet café in Kassel, 2006. He reportedly did not hear the shots fired nor see the dead victim when he paid up and left. In the aftermath, investigations revealed his own far-right sympathies and his office’s attempts to play down his presence at the café. His role in the crime remains unclear to this day. And as if prejudice, incompetence and duplicity on the State’s part were not enough, the public aspect of the serial murders was similarly unsavoury.

The media were aware of connections between the murders, but rather than deploying investigative reporters, the press and other news organizations preferred to accept police theories and write stories speculating on the backstories of the victims, their possible criminal connections and their private lives. Perhaps the most grotesque element of the reporting was the coining of the term ‘Döner-Morde’ (‘kebab murders’) as an umbrella term for the killings. After its first usage in 2005 in relation to one of the murders in Nuremberg, the term gained currency in the following years.[[15]](#footnote-15) The term was declared the annual ‘Unwort des Jahres’ (‘ugliest/nastiest word of the year’) in 2011 by a jury primarily made up of independent experts in social linguistics. The justification of the award noted that with the deployment of the term ‘ganze Bevölkerungsgruppen ausgegrenzt und die Opfer selbst in höchstem Maße diskriminiert [werden], indem sie aufgrund ihrer Herkunft auf ein Imbissgericht reduziert werden’ (‘whole ethnic groups are marginalized and the victims themselves are discriminated against to a high degree in being reduced by dint of their background to a fast-food product’).[[16]](#footnote-16)

So, while a poisonous ideology connects the Third Reich with the NSU, the social contexts for both are quite distinct and pose new problems for theatrical representation. Brecht, in his play about life in Nazi Germany, *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* (*Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* – 1938), could direct his critique towards a social system that pervaded the lives of Germany’s citizenry in a series of discrete scenes. The NSU affair, on the other hand, took place in a liberal democracy in which the rule of law apparently protected the rights of all. In addition, while racist violence was State-sanctioned by the Nazis, it was carried out here not by an organization, but a cell, which was so low-profile that it only came to light after it imploded. What emerges from the events that surround the NSU is that the terrorists unknowingly found themselves in a constellation of interests that allowed them to operate unhindered, in part due to State negligence and complacency, but also due to broader social attitudes and prejudices concerning the relationship between ‘native’ Germans and other non-white ethnic groups.

A theatre that attempts to confront the NSU complex has a great number of factors to consider. The interaction of these factors suggests the possibilities for a dialectical treatment of the material, due to the contradictions it produces. A dramaturgy rooted in surface realism cannot approach the complexity of the NSU because it risks ascribing a sense of inevitability to any of the contexts, that, for example, prejudice against other ethnic groups is natural or that Neonazis are incorrigibly evil. Indeed, when considering the latter, it is clear from Aust and Laab’s analysis of the NSU that far-right organizations have a certain social function, providing camaraderie and a sense of purpose to the disaffected. This is not to defend their vile ideology or actions, but it helps explain their appeal, especially in places of high deprivation. A theatre based on such contradictions is thus a potentially potent form of exploration because it seeks to understand human beings in a breadth of contexts. Their actions and opinions are not inevitable, but the product of choices made in specific situations.

Rather than ducking the issue, German theatres have sought to grapple with the problems and questions thrown up by the NSU affair. No fewer than ten plays and projects have graced German stages since 2012. These include plays written by single authors, projects devised by teams based on documentary sources, fictionalized accounts, and hybrid forms. The sheer variety of the forms reveals the tremendous scope for theatrical attempts to confront the NSU affair. In the following sections, I will be examining, for reasons of space and the availability of materials, a sample of four works performed in recent years. The chosen works exemplify how playwrights and theatres have confronted their themes in ways that go beyond psychological re-imaginings of the NSU’s dynamics, a trend that can be identified in certain German productions.

The Documentary Impulse

Many of the plays and projects draw directly on documentary sources. The reason for this is clear: with themes that are so important and so complex, and events that are historically concrete and ongoing (at the time of writing, Beate Zschäpe’s trial is still in progress), fictionalization can run the risk of inaccuracy and distortion in the name of artistic license.

The compilation of documentary evidence is, of course, no guarantee of artistic success. This can be seen in *Auch Deutsche unter den Opfern* (*Germans Also Among the Victims* – premiered 17 January 2015, Theater Münster) by Tuğsal Moğul. The play opens encouragingly, with a scene that clearly owes much to the first section of Peter Handke’s *Publikumsbeschimpfung* (*Offending the Audience* – 1966). The three speakers, denoted only by the first three letters of the alphabet, conclude the scene thus:

C: Sie werden hier nichts hören, was Sie nicht schon gehört haben.

A: Sie werden hier nichts sehen, was Sie nicht schon gesehen haben.

B: Sie brauchen hier nicht Schiedsrichter spielen.

C: Das ist kein Spiel.[[17]](#footnote-17)

(C: You will hear nothing here that you haven’t heard before.

A: You will see nothing here that you haven’t seen before.

B: There’s no need to play the referee here.

C: This is not a game.)

The direct confrontation with the audience is laced with an accusatory irony: the story to be told is so familiar that it will offer nothing new, yet the audience has come to the theatre precisely for that. The promise is that the theatre will re-process the familiar and offer new insights. What follows, however, is often little more than a regurgitation of established facts, taken from the extensive reading list consulted by the author and appended to the production’s flyer. The play certainly points to the contradictions of the NSU affair with a focus on the failings of the German authorities. It concludes with a darkly satirical verdict on Zschäpe, delivered in a fictional 2021. The judge lists the charges and sentences her to ten years for arson (of the NSU flat) and membership of a terrorist organization. She is acquitted of murder due to lack of evidence and set free because she had already spent ten years in custody. Yet by the end of the show, the only differences between reading the books and articles that informed the play and attending the theatre are the time spent on the two activities and the volume of material digested. Documentary theatre in this vein is little more than information transmission. While reviewers noted that the scenes shockingly brought out both the authorities’ incompetence and wilful sabotage, spectators were simply overwhelmed by the torrent of information.[[18]](#footnote-18) Such a presentation of material does little to uncover or suggest connections that may have led the authorities to behave as they did, and the play functioned as little more than a satirical history lesson.

A more nuanced and tentative documentary theatre can be found in *Urteile* (*Judgements* – premiere 10 April 2014, Residenztheater, Munich) by Christine Umpfenbach and Azar Mortazavi.[[19]](#footnote-19) This research-driven project is based almost exclusively on interviews conducted with those connected to the two NSU murders that took place in Munich, establishing a local connection from the outset. The moral purpose of the piece was signalled in the opening article of the accompanying programme to the show: Munich was the last city to erect a monument to its own victims of the NSU in November 2013, over eight years after the second murder.[[20]](#footnote-20) Consequently, the production offered itself as a living memorial to the victims, deliberately shifting the focus away from the NSU, which virtually went unmentioned.

The edited interviews managed to strike a careful balance between the subjectivity of the speakers and their social context. A digital display screen, that scrolled from right to left, opened the evening by giving factual details of the two murders. Subsequently, it announced who was speaking, but this was given in generic terms, such as ‘the brother’, ‘the journalist’ or ‘the market trader’. The various roles were played by three actors, two men and a woman who was of Turkish heritage. The actors, however, did not aim for verisimilitude as such, as one of the men, for example, spoke the sections attributed to ‘the mother-in-law’. The project was thus able to anchor its texts in authentic material while suggesting that the personal utterances could also be understood in more systemic terms: the speakers were representing experiences that were larger than themselves. Indeed, one reviewer noted that she sometimes could not tell whether a family member on stage belonged to the first or the second victim.[[21]](#footnote-21) The speaker’s biography deferred to the wider interests of the speech.

The connection between individual and society posited a dialectical relationship between first-hand experiences and social formations. The inclusion of material from journalists who, out of their own mouths, exposed their prejudices and failings, was augmented by recordings of real politicians taken from the public inquiries that followed the exposure of the NSU’s crimes. The project also presented a metatheatrical reflection on the process of sourcing material. Director Christine Umpfenbach read out a letter from the former head of the Munich murder squad in which he withdrew from the project, denying permission to use interviews already conducted and citing the ways the police had been portrayed in the aftermath of 2011. The refusal to engage positions the letter’s author as an important node in a system unable to acknowledge its own shortcomings. In a note to the production, one of the researchers observed the difficulty of working with the representatives of the State and the media: ‘sie haben ihre eigene Wirklichkeit erst geschaffen. Ich dachte bisher, diese Arbeitsweise – zu erfinden, zu phantasieren – sei dem Theater vorbehalten’ (‘they have fashioned their own reality. Up till now, I thought that this way of working – to invent, to imagine – was reserved for theatre’).[[22]](#footnote-22) The theatre, however, was able to expose these ‘parallel worlds’ by presenting the material without irony and allowing it to speak plainly to its own contradictions.

In addition to the documentary material, three more poetic sections, each called ‘Körper aus Scham’ (‘body of shame’), were interspersed between the interviews. Here, dialogues presented as epic narration depicted how shame was constructed in the relationship between Germans and Turks. The brief episodes, when taken individually, were seemingly banal. A German salesman asks a Turkish customer to repeat his desired purchase three times before advising him to learn German properly. A Turk internalizes the behaviour of not crossing the road when the light is red, in case a German jokingly notes that Turks do not have traffic lights at ‘home’. In every case, the casual comments not only emphasize, but intensify otherness. The mechanisms described in these sections helped to show how the relationships encoded in the interviews could develop over time.

Director Umpfenbach stated that she had avoided using real photos of the crimes or the victims in order to short-circuit ‘was ein voyeuristischer Blick sein könnte’ (‘what could become a voyeuristic gaze’).[[23]](#footnote-23) The show’s design was thus metaphorical rather than metonymic: the stage was dominated by a life-size inverted tree hanging from the flies, a striking image of deracination [see fig. 1]. The deliberate emphasis on language, as opposed to image, served to communicate experiences as well as misinformation and self-deception. The embodied texts delivered by the same three actors thus demonstrated how such discursive realms could arise, how language and speech acts affected and transformed realities. By highlighting weasel words and dubious formulations, the production pointed to potential ways of changing the appalling situations that both brought about the murders and led to the police’s inability to solve them.

The triangulation between the authorities, the media and the victims allowed the production to speculate on potential connections that went beyond its focus, the individual suffering of the victims and their families. This intention was made clear in the programme, where co-writer Azar Mortazari, under the heading ‘Unsere kollektive Schuld’ (‘Our collective guilt’), stated ‘es geht um das Exemplarische’ (‘it’s about an exemplary quality’).[[24]](#footnote-24) The montage structure ensured that nothing fitted together too neatly and engineered carefully orchestrated collisions that begged further questions of the audience. One critic noted that the best moments were when the audience was confronted with its own prejudices, because some of the figures on stage reflected the spectators’ social background and opinions.[[25]](#footnote-25) This dynamic relationship, mediated ‘mit leiser Empathie’ (‘with gentle empathy’), as one reviewer put it,[[26]](#footnote-26) retained its critical edge without becoming overly emotional or maudlin. The coolness of the deliveries allowed the emotion to be felt in the auditorium rather than on the stage and thus opened up a space in which the issues could be discussed, not unfeelingly, but without manipulating the audience, either, with easy sentiment.

Historicizing the NSU

The most ambitious project of this survey is *Rechtsmaterial* (*Material on the Right* – premiere 29 March 2014, Badisches Staatsschauspiel, Karlsruhe), a project led by director Jan-Christoph Gockel and dramaturge Konstantin Küspert. Like *Judgements*, above, the play developed a specific relationship with its locality, but in different ways from the Munich-based project.

The text was built around one of Germany’s most notorious plays, *Schlageter*, written by a dramatist who would become the President of the Reichsschrifttumskammer (Reich’s Literature Bureau) in 1935. Hanns Johst dedicated the play to Hitler and based it on the life of the Nazi’s first ‘martyr’, Albert Leo Schlageter. The play is known today for the line, often incorrectly attributed to Hermann Göring, ‘wenn ich Kultur höre… entsichere ich meinen Browning’ (‘when I hear the word “culture”… I reach for my Browning’).[[27]](#footnote-27) It presents the last year in the life of Schlageter, a nationalist student who fought back against and was subsequently executed by the French in the occupied Ruhr in 1923. At the end of the second act, Johst has one of his characters prophetically stylize Schlageter as ‘der erste Soldat des Dritten Reiches’ (‘the first solider of the Third Reich’).[[28]](#footnote-28) The play pulls every emotional string to ally the spectator with the protagonist and his cause. On the last page, the hero calls for Germany’s reawakening in front of the firing squad, before accepting the bullet. The play premiered at the Staatstheater am Gendarmenmarkt, Berlin, on Hitler’s birthday, 20 April, two months after the Nazis won the Reichstag elections in 1933. It was then given, two days later, in Karlsruhe, the city close to Schlageter’s birthplace in the Black Forest and the seat of the Federal Republic’s Constitutional Court. These two points of reference made *Material on the Right* particularly resonant.

The play uses extracts from *Schlageter* throughout.[[29]](#footnote-29) With a focus on Schlageter, his love interest Alexandra and his friend Thiemann, the trio already produced an echo of the NSU, something that was made plain later in the production itself when the actors doubled their roles thus. Indeed, all seven members of the cast played figures from both *Schlageter* and the history of the NSU. This approach reflected the project’s aim to historicize the acts of the NSU in the Brechtian sense of the word.[[30]](#footnote-30) To Brecht, historicization seeks to place action on stage in its historical context with a view to contrasting it with the spectators’ experience of the present.[[31]](#footnote-31) The aim is to rob events of a trans-historical sameness and create a relationship between actions, opinions and specific historical instances. An audience can then start to speculate about the connections that have engendered behaviours in the past with a view to understanding their distinctiveness in the present. The actors thus played their roles in Johst’s drama straight and without irony: the dated language and attitudes were clear enough to exact their own critique. One reviewer also noted that Johst’s characterization was so un-psychological and flat that there was no danger of the actors inhabiting the roles.[[32]](#footnote-32) As a result, it was not only the *Schlageter* scenes’ subject matter that created a distance between the stage and the auditorium, it was also their propagandistic dramaturgy.

Yet the project was not simply a critical performance of an historicized text. The scenes were often punctuated by metatheatrical commentary, with either characters breaking the fourth wall to address the audience or other members of the cast entering the stage and delivering information and/or commentary. For example, the actor playing the character Hausser from *Schlageter* interrupted a scene by telling the audience that he was only born in 1981 and thus not around in 1923, the year of the play’s action. He then used this opportunity to give some historical details about the 1920s. Videos also broke the flow of the action, with a generous amount of documentary material concerning the NSU, some featuring NSU members before they turned to criminality, as well as news footage on a range of connected material. The most unexpected interlude was provided by a film of the last attempt to stage *Schlageter*, at a school in Uelzen, directed by teacher Walter Blohm in 1977. The production was, of course, critical of the play’s subject matter, and attracted an amount of media attention. Outraged letters from nationalists were sent to local papers and a prominent supporter of the far-right, Manfred Roeder, attended in order to disrupt the production. Footage from the time and an interview with Blohm conducted by director Jan-Christoph Gockel were also projected. In addition, clips of politicians and other officials added to the rich texture of the project, contributing further counterpoints to the aggression and violence on stage. Again, a montage principle was present: disparate material raised questions and suggested, but did not explicate, connections between the production’s themes of ideology, xenophobia and violence.

As the performance continued, the stage transformed from Schlageter’s Weimar-era drawing room to the NSU’s shabby flat. The opportunities for interplay between the different time levels allowed the team to exploit fortuitous convergences between the *Schlageter* text and the story of the NSU. Thus, when the students discussed a turn to armed resistance against the French, one asked whether Germans might get hurt. At that moment, the date on which policewoman Michèle Kieswetter was murdered was heard. The events of the NSU’s present increasingly had an effect on those that the production sought to historicize, according to a note in the programme: ‘unsere Realität, in ihrer Brutalität, überlagert und überläuft […] die Distanz, die wir zur Weimarer Zeit empfinden’ (‘our reality, in its brutality, puts pressure on and collapses the distance that we feel towards the Weimar period’).[[33]](#footnote-33) This movement betrayed an interesting feature of post-Brechtian dialectical theatre: the stage is no longer able to delimit, and thus qualify, the terms of its own representations and prefers to pass that task on to the audience.[[34]](#footnote-34) At the centre of the project was the question as to what drives three individuals to plot and kill ten innocent people, the answer to which can never be fully explained, however contextualized the circumstances might be.

The victims, while not nearly as prominent as in *Judgements*, nonetheless appeared as white outlines, as one would find at a murder scene, painted by investigators while the trio ate dinner [see fig. 2]. At the end of the performance, all the actors took turns to read out the victims’ names, a short biography and their age when murdered. In addition, an exhibition in the theatre’s foyer, documenting the 169 deaths attributed to far-right violence since Reunification in 1990, offered the sobering view that the NSU was only one part of a broader network of Neonazi terrorists.

Taken as a whole, the project presented a dialectically historicized treatment of the NSU by deploying the *Schlageter* material as a sustained point of contrast between the events of the present and those of the past. The ideology of the Weimar extremists both converged with and diverged from that of the NSU, and thus provoked input from the audience with respect to identifying and accounting for the similarities and differences. The NSU’s murders were not treated as unique or as an aberration, but as actions that had a specifically German history. As a result, the ‘individuals’ on stage could be placed in a context in which they were not entirely sovereign, but part of a poisonous complex of social forces stretching back to the Weimar Republic. (In fact, the ancestry went further, to the foundation of the German Reich in 1871, through the older, aristocratic figure of His Excellency, General X in *Schlageter*.) In addition, the sheer number of disparate documentary elements generated a broad montage of related material that continued to raise questions regarding the interplay of social and political conditions. The work increasingly problematized the neat articulation of its contradictions and kept introducing new aspects as a challenge to the audience.

It is interesting to note that critical reactions tended to praise the project’s ambitions while criticizing their execution. A fairly typical response was ‘trotz aller Bemühungen, diese riesige Materialsammlung übersichtlich zu sortieren, zerfasert der Abend unübersehbar’ (‘despite all efforts to sort this huge collection of material clearly, the evening unmistakably disintegrates’).[[35]](#footnote-35) The charge was that the director could not offer a coherent overview of his relevant yet diverse sources. The assumption was that a clear ordering would allow the stage to fashion the terms in which its material was to be processed. Yet it might be questionable to expect such clarity when it does not exist in reality. As a result, the serial heaping of different montage elements onto each other may well indicate an appropriate treatment of the subject matter by deliberately deferring interpretation from the stage to the auditorium and overwhelming the audience with competing contradictory elements.

The Language of Hatred

One of the best received plays about the NSU took an associative and intertextual rather than a strictly documentary approach. Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek has long engaged with social issues and historical scandals, although her means are hardly easy or accessible. For the last decade or so, she has created what have become known as ‘Sprachflächen’ (‘planes of language’)[[36]](#footnote-36) that absorb many impulses and present them as dense screeds of text. Her play about the NSU, *Das schweigende Mädchen* (*The Girl Who Remained Silent* – premiere 27 September 2014, Münchner Kammerspiele, Munich) is also written in this style, and the production reduced Jelinek’s 224-page original down to a more manageable 54 sides that played for just under two hours.[[37]](#footnote-37) The ‘girl’ of the play’s title is Beate Zschäpe, who has made extensive use of her right to remain silent in the trial against her. While much reference is made to her in the text, she is only given one stage direction, which was spoken aloud in this first production: ‘das Mädchen tritt vor uns hin und sagt nichts’ (‘the girl walks in before us and says nothing’).[[38]](#footnote-38) In this production, the girl only entered in the imaginations of the spectators.

Jelinek’s original assigns loosely phrased speakers, such as ‘Ich’ (‘I’) or ‘Der Engel oder ein anderer’ (‘The Angel, or someone else’) to blocks of text that can run for many pages. Such denotations already rend any potentially identificatory relationship between speaker and spoken. This is because Jelinek is keen to focus on the contradictions inscribed into discourses that surround the NSU and heaps them upon each other in dense sentences alive with wordplay and contradiction. For instance, ‘I’ responds to Andreas Temme’s presence at the scene of a murder in the first extended speech of the play. He was a member of a secret service, the ‘Verfassungsschutz’ (‘Protection of the Constitution’) and is thus a ‘Schützer’ (‘protector’). Yet Jelinek puns this status with that of a ‘Schütze’ (‘marksman’).[[39]](#footnote-39) The pun is tested to destruction in the course of the speech in order to expose the relationship for the farce it had become not only in Temme’s case, but in the case of the Verfassungsschutz as a whole.

As with all Jelinek’s plays of the past decades, the text was also informed by a number of additional sources, such as news reports on the NSU, lines from Heidegger, Agamben and Sophocles’s *Elektra*. The shifts in the lines’ texture and subject matter reflect the ontological unevenness of the speeches, again undermining a sense of an individual speaker and bringing out contradictory montage elements as a challenge not only to the audience, but the actors. For instance, Jelinek is famously critical of Heidegger,[[40]](#footnote-40) while supportive of Agamben, yet the two sit side by side in this play as antagonistic impulses. As one critic noted, this was not ‘Sprachrausch’ (‘linguistic intoxication’), but a complex engagement with the social, ideological and psychical conditions in which the NSU was able to operate.[[41]](#footnote-41) Language is thus exhibited (an equivalent to Brecht’s predilection for ‘showing’) in its own materiality because the density of the disparate impulses prevents a direct relationship between sense and reference. The words can only hover above potential meanings, a practice Jelinek uses to expose how apparently neutral words (like ‘mit Migrationshintergrund’ – ‘of migrant heritage’) assume more pejorative undertones in popular discourse.

Jelinek openly teases out contradictions, as in, for example, the following lines, spoken by an Angel:

Wir Engel des Herrn, wir bestimmen jene, die groß sein wollen, aber das sind ja alle! Wir bestimmen alle, und sofort wollen sie groß sein! Sie wollen Söhne des Höchsten genannt werden, aber sie sind überhaupt keine Söhne, sie sind Söhne einer Jungfrau, und die Höchsten sind sie selbst.[[42]](#footnote-42)

(We angels of the Lord decide those who want to be great, but that’s everyone after all! We decide all, and straight away they want to be great! They want to be called sons of the Highest, but they’re not sons at all; they’re sons of a virgin and they’re the Highest themselves.)

The ‘virgin’ is Zschäpe, the ‘sons’ the two Uwes, and the picture painted is one in which divine law is openly flouted by mortals who have adopted the language and privileges of divinity (here, the prerogative to kill). Biblical references run throughout the play and, in performance, acted as a constant *Verfremdung*, contrasting an obviously artificial frame with the horrifying events that underpinned it. The text also includes a Judge and it becomes clear that the trial that is nominally taking place on stage is more an allusion to the Day of Judgement than to the real hearing taking place in Munich. Jelinek is not trying to suggest that such a court might exist; instead, she adopts the metaphysical setting in order to explore moral and political issues by ironically elevating the perpetrators to the status of the sacred.

The text’s focus on language was retained by the stripped down aesthetic of the world premiere. The set did not change for the duration of the piece and alluded on its floor the NSU’s anti-Semitic parody of the board game Monopoly, Pogromly, a product it also sold to generate funds. Signs evoking Brechtian epic banners hung behind the actors and read ‘Erbschaftsamt’ (‘Office for Legacies’) and ‘Konservatorium’ (‘Conservatoire’) [see fig. 3]. While both terms have a literal meaning, metaphorical resonances were also present: difficult historical inheritances and preserved opinions and attitudes. Director Johan Simons opted for an essentially static mise-en-scène with the cast of seven[[43]](#footnote-43) sitting in a line in front of music stands that held their scripts.[[44]](#footnote-44) The Judge sat in the middle, wearing standard German legal attire. Three others, the Angels, wore monk-like robes with cowls. A male and a female actor, the Prophets, wore simple short-sleeved shirts and knee-length skirts that echoed the uniforms of the East German mass youth movement, the FDJ (‘Free German Youth’). This costume decision made a gentle nod towards the NSU’s roots in the German Democratic Republic. The final figure, who spoke the single stage direction about Zschäpe, had three short lines and a longer speech at the production’s conclusion. He was named in the Kammerspiele’s text and dressed in the production as Christ. This Estonian actor did not hide his accent and betrayed his foreignness to the audience. Three live musicians played specially composed pieces at specific points. The silence that accompanied the musical interludes was also deployed in the scenes themselves to offset the flood of words with reflective counterpoint. Such a decision served to engineer a pause for thought in the audience and called the power of the competing discourses into question. The minimalism of the staging also concentrated attention on the sparse movements made on stage, such as covering the face with a cowl or a simple embrace between figures. The focus on such details emphasised them and their deliberateness without actually explaining them.

What emerged from the dry, but occasionally rhythmic deliveries in performance brought about an unexpected clarity in the dense material. Like audio versions of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the calm spoken voices managed to articulate the lines’ variegated impulses without reducing their complexity. Simons publicly stated that he did not want to stage characters, but speech as a way of revealing patterns of thought.[[45]](#footnote-45) One reviewer recognized how the simplicity of the delivery actually brought out the gestic quality of the language,[[46]](#footnote-46) that is, its indebtedness to its social context.[[47]](#footnote-47) Under the epistemological sign of post-Brechtian theatre, the stage became a transmitter of uninterpreted contradictions, rolling out material that simply would not suggest its own solutions.[[48]](#footnote-48) Yet the dialectical nature of the language suggested that the circumstances in which the NSU could function were indeed open to change because of the contradictory nature of the reality presented in the play.

Concluding Comments: Dialectics and Contemporary Theatre

One-dimensional approaches to representing the NSU and/or those connected with it run a series of political risks. Characterization without context may suggest innate qualities in the perpetrators that no legislation or reformed social organization could alter; a broader trans-historical interpretation that each generation brings its own cruelty and destruction with it, regardless of social context, perpetuates a sense of inevitability; and a determinism in the ‘if x, then y’ mould precludes any sense of choice and implies mechanistic predictability. A dialectical dramaturgy, on the other hand, opens the stage to a variety of possibilities because it is more concerned with the juxtaposition of antagonistic forces than their resolution. The more successful plays and projects, discussed above, are testament to the potential of dialectical theatre as an interrogative form of critical representation.

Each of these examples framed the problematics of the NSU historically, as the product of several dynamic influences. As a result, the agency of the figures on stage was called into question. *Judgements* struck a careful balance between the personal and the general to suggest that the detailed, individual utterances, taken from authentic interviews, could be placed in a broader social context. The prejudices of, say, a court reporter were no longer exclusively his own, but ones associated with a series of social assumptions and pressures. These were more interested in looking to the Turkish and Greek communities for criminality rather than to the Neonazis in their own back yard. *Material on the Right* preferred to employ an historical model in order to map both the similarities and the differences between older militant nationalist ideologies and their contemporary manifestations. The use of depthless characterization already gestured towards a dethronement of the sovereign individual and invited the audience to speculate on why such figures might behave in such ways. Finally, *The Girl Who Remained Silent* stockpiled linguistic contradictions so deftly that only the spectators, and not the actors, were charged with negotiating them and reaching conclusions.

As well as having a common interest in destabilizing the autonomy of the individual on stage, the plays and projects, developed and rehearsed in the subsidized German theatre system, also deployed disparate elements as montage. Brecht promoted the montage principle in his dramaturgy and, with reference to *Fear and Misery*, noted how it was able to make broader connections beyond the content of its single scenes.[[49]](#footnote-49) Yet, in Brecht’s case, montage, like the *Verfremdung* discussed earlier, was a part of the formal arsenal that aimed to generate mastery over complex social material. The difference between Brecht’s and a contemporary dialectical theatre is that the latter’s understanding of montage no longer points the audience in particular interpretive directions. Rather, the elements, which are mostly comprehensible in themselves, raise questions as to their relationships with each other. In each of the pieces, the stage refused to reach a conclusion and left the contradictions open, passing judgement on to the audience. This is not to say, however, that the works played with a vacuous relativism: the NSU was never lauded and the victims never mocked. Instead, the pieces struggled with questions of cause and effect. The strength of a dialectical analysis is that it is able to articulate its contradictory terms, but does not necessarily propose how they might interact and what they might produce. The theatre’s job is thus to seek out contradictions and find appropriate representational forms for them. In the spirit of Jameson, Adorno and Müller, dialectical synthesis is never even suggested.

What the plays and projects indicate to the modern theatre is that dialectics need not be consigned to the Brechtian past. The deployment of an open, post-Brechtian dialectical dramaturgy has the ability to look behind the surface and start thinking about phenomena as processes, resisting representations and discourses of fixity, inevitability and unchangeability. In an age which is marked by a pervasive globalization in terms of economics, technology and the media, a refreshed dialectic can offer a non-reductive and historically specific approach for treating contemporary problems. Liberated of a binarism sometimes associated with Brecht, a modern dialectical theatre can engage with a complex analysis of society, unafraid of leaving important questions open for further consideration by the audience. Thus, the theatre becomes a site for an open exchange between stage and auditorium in which neither side asserts interpretive superiority. The work discussed above attests to a range of possibilities for dialectical dramaturgies and invites theatre-makers to find imaginative yet appropriate means both to approach contemporary problems and to bring them onto the stage.

1. Heraclitus, ‘Fragment 49a’, translated by John Burnet, undated, <http://philoctetes.free.fr/heraclite.pdf> (accessed 4 August 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Peter Singer, *Hegel. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Heiner Müller, ‘Da trinke ich lieber Benzin zum Frühstück’, in Müller, *Gespräche*, vol. 2, ed. by Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), pp. 431-45 (p. 432). Interview originally published in 1989. Translations from the German are mine unless otherwise acknowledged. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (London: Profile, 2014) for an extensive identification and analysis of dialectical tensions that pervade contemporary global geo-politics. The final chapter, ‘The revolt of human nature: universal alienation’, argues that social pressures produce discernible changes in human behaviour. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Sean Sayers, *Marxism and Human Nature* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See, for example, Steve Giles, *Bertolt Brecht and Critical Theory: Marxism, Modernity and the "Threepenny" Lawsuit*, second, revised edition (Oxford: Peter Lang, 1997); or Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Bertolt Brecht, *Der Dreigroschenprozess*, in Brecht, *Grosse kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, vol. 21, ed. by Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei and Klaus-Detlef Müller (Berlin and Frankfurt/ Main: Aufbau and Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 448-514 (469). Translated as Brecht, *The Threepenny Lawsuit*, in Brecht, *Brecht on Film and Radio*, ed. and trans. by Marc Silberman (London: Methuen, 2001), pp.147-99 (164-65). All subsequent references to Brecht’s complete works in German will be referred to as BFA followed by a volume and a page number. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See, for example, BFA 22, 207; translation: Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. by Marc Silberman, Tom Kuhn and Steve Giles (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Meg Mumford, ‘Brecht on Acting for the 21st Century: Interrogating and Re-Inscribing the Fixed’, *Communications from the International Brecht Society*, 29: 1 and 2 (2000), pp. 44-49 (45). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See BFA 222, 207; *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The term is Elin Diamond’s (in *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 3). Ironically, she describes naturalist theatre in these terms because it purports to offer an objective representation of the world that ‘reinforces […] the arrangements of that world’ (p. 5). Brecht clearly is not trying to reinforce existing states of affairs, yet his claims to mastery of reality are unsettling. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. All information concerning the NSU here and below is taken from Stefan Aust and Dirk Laabs, *Heimatschutz. Der Staat und die Mordserie des NSU* (Munich: Pantheon, 2014). This weighty volume draws on thousands of pages of official documents, inquiries and transcripts as well as a series of interviews. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Otto Schily, quoted in ibid., p. 590. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See Christian Fuchs, quoted in Michael Haller, ‘Aufbauschen? Abbilden? Wegsehen? Die Vermittlungsprobleme des Journalismus – eine Einführung ins Thema’, in *Rechtsterrorismus in den Medien. Der Mörder Breivik in Norwegen und die Terrorzelle NSU in Deutschland – Wie die Journalisten damit umgingen und was sie voneinander lernen können,* ed. by Michael Haller (Münster: Dr W. Hopf, 2013), pp. 5-27 (10-11). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See Nina Janich, ‘Pressemitteilung’, 17 January 2012, pp. 2 (1), <http://www.unwortdesjahres.net/fileadmin/unwort/download/pressemitteilung_unwort2011_01.pdf> (accessed 5 August 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Tuğsal Moğul, *Auch Deutsche unter den Opfern*, unpublished typescript, 2015. Script kindly provided by Nils Tabert of the Rowohlt Verlag. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See, for example, Natalie Block, ‘So viel Zufall!’, *Theater heute*, 3 (2015), pp. 57-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. I am grateful to the project’s dramaturge, Andrea Koschwitz, for providing me with a working copy of the script, dated 8 April 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See Anon, ‘Zum Projekt’, *Programme for ‘Urteile’*, pp. 2-3 (p. 2). I am grateful to intern Sophia Léonard for providing me with the programme and other materials from the production. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See Petra Hallmayer, ‘Aus der Heimat gerissen’, 11 April 2014, <http://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9392:urteile-christine-umpfenbachs-bewegender-dokumentarabend-ueber-die-opfer-der-nsu-morde&catid=671:residenztheater&Itemid=100190> (accessed 6 August 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Tunay Önder, ‘Urteile/Yargilar’, *Programme for ‘Urteile’*, pp. 7-8 (7). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Christine Umpfenbach, quoted in Phillipp Vetter, ‘“Es ekelt mich”’, *Münchner Merkur*, 9 April 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Azar Mortazari, ‘Unsere kollektive Schuld’, *Programme for ‘Urteile’*, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See Annette Ramelsberger, ‘*Urteile* am Münchner Residenztheater: Leben nach den NSU-Morden’, *SZ-Online*, 11 April 2014, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/urteile-am-muenchner-residenztheater-leben-nach-den-nsu-morden-1.1934973> (accessed 6 August 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Anon, ‘Hatten Sie eine Lebensversicherung?’, *die tageszeitung*, 14 April 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Hanns Johst, *Schlageter* (Munich: Albert Langen/Georg Müller, 1933), p. 26. The original quotation associates the protagonists with notions of real action rather than fictional reflection, a somewhat surprising position given that the line was to be delivered in a theatre. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Ibid., p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The script on which the following analysis is based is dated 28 March 2014 and was kindly provided by the project’s dramaturge, Konstantin Küspert. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See Konstantin Küspert, in *Unter allen Augen: Der NSU auf der Bühne*, directed by Kathrin Schwiering, broadcast on 3sat, 22 November 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See BFA 22, 807; Brecht, *Brecht on Performance: Messingkauf and Modelbooks*, ed. by Tom Kuhn, Steve Giles and Marc Silberman (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See Elske Brault, ‘Bühnengericht’, 31 March 2014, <http://www.staatstheater.karlsruhe.de/programm/presse/1697/> (accessed 4 September 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Anon, ‘Das Unfassbare fassen. Zur Inszenierung’, *Programme for ‘Rechtsmaterial’*, pp. 4-6 (p.5). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. For more details, see David Barnett, ‘Toward a Definition of Post-Brechtian Performance: the Example of *In the Jungle of the Cities* at the Berliner Ensemble, 1971’, *Modern Drama*, 54:3 (2011), 333-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Dennis Baranski, ‘Mörderglück mit Rinderrouladen’, 29 March 2014, <http://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9336:rechtsmaterial-eine-weitere-theater-verarbeitung-der-nsu-taten-von-konstantin-kuespert-und-jan-christoph-gockel-in-karlsruhe&catid=85:badisches-staatstheater&Itemid=100190> (accessed 6 August 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See Karen Jürs-Munby, ‘The Resistant Text in Postdramatic Theatre: Performing Elfriede Jelinek's Sprachflächen’, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 14:1 (2009), 46-56 for a more detailed discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. I am again grateful to Nils Tabert at Rowohlt for providing me with the original, and to Johanna Latz, a dramaturgical assistant at the Kammerspiele for the version edited by the production’s dramaturge, Tobias Staab. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Elfriede Jelinek, *Das schweigende Mädchen*, unpublished version, ed. by Tobias Staab, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Jelinek, *Das schweigende Mädchen*, unpublished version, p. 4. The section was retained in the Kammerspiele edit. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See for example, her play *Totenauberg* (1991), which sets Heidegger against Hannah Arendt. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. K. Erik Franzen, ‘Jungfrau Beate’, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 28 September 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid., p. 19. This text was also retained in the Kammerspiele edit. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. There were, in fact, eight cast members: the first, Stefan Hunstein, delivered the opening tirade about Temme from the stalls before climbing on stage and running off through the back of the auditorium, never to be seen again. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. The following description is taken from the version broadcast on 3sat, 29 November 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. See Johan Simons, in dpa, ‘Drama – Johan Simons über *Das schweigende Mädchen*’, *Focus*, 26 September 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See Christine Dössel, ‘Vorladung zum Sprachgericht’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 29 September 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See Lara Stevens, ‘Gestic Intertextuality in Elfriede Jelinek's *Bambiland*’, *Austrian Studies,* 22 (2015), 72-88 for an illuminating discussion of Jelinek’s use of language and its relationship to Brecht. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See Michael Stadler, ‘Die totale Verweigerung’, *Abendzeitung*, 29 September 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See BFA 26, 318; Brecht, *Journals 1934-1955*, ed. by John Willett (London: Methuen, 1993), p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)