SASCHA BRU AND ANKE GILLEIR

"Sagen": Brecht's Aesthetic of Public Address[1]

Perhaps the most famous instance of Bertolt Brecht addressing a live audience was his public hearing on October 30, 1947 in Washington, where the writer had been summoned by Joseph McCarthy and his House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). In preparation of this hearing, Brecht had composed and distributed a rather elaborate speech that focused on his career and artistic wager against Nazism.[2] Robert E. Stripling, who presided the committee's session that day and who opened the proceedings by thanking Brecht for sharing his text in advance, dissuaded Brecht from reading it. Stripling judged the text redundant, because only its last two paragraphs dealt with Brecht's activities in the USA and only these were the committee's concern.[3] Brecht subsequently got caught in a cross-examination in a foreign language, often (pretending to be) searching for his words yet always cleverly exploiting the committee members' poor mastery of German. For instance, when asked to comment on certain poems he had written in German yet read by committee members in English translations,

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[2] Bertolt Brecht, "Anrede an den Kongressausschuss für unamerikanische Betätigungen in Washington, 1947," in Bertolt Brecht, *Werke. Große kommentierte Berliner Ausgabe*, ed. Werner Hecht et al. (Berlin: Aufbau, 1988-1998), 23: 59-62. In what follows, we refer parenthetically in the main body of the text to speeches quoted from Brecht's *Werke* (see note 6) by mention of the volume number followed by page numbers. Works from this edition of collected works not mentioned in note 6 are quoted in footnotes, using the same parenthetical system. All translations in this essay, unless otherwise indicated, are ours.

[3] In February 1942 upon his arrival in the USA, Brecht as a German citizen had been registered as an "enemy alien." During his stay in the country he was put under increasing surveillance by the FBI up to the point that his phone was tapped (Werner Hecht, *Brecht Chronik 1898-1956* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997], 669 and 707).

Brecht corrected their translations, much to the delight of the audience that day, which on various occasions burst out laughing.[4] Brecht's friend and fellow German émigré, Lionel Feuchtwanger, later commented in a letter to Brecht that the HUAC hearing did more to further his fame than whatever else he had done before: "Your entire oeuvre has not had more publicity and success than those few, shrewdly awkward sentences."[5]

Feuchtwanger may have overstated the significance of Brecht's appearance before the HUAC, but he correctly pointed at the importance of Brecht's public address. Remarkably, however, Brecht's practice of, and reflection on, public speaking has so far received little attention. His speeches in particular have been largely ignored. In the 30-volume Suhrkamp edition of his collected writings, the speeches Brecht prepared and delivered during his life-time are not isolated as a genre in its own right. Three reasons for this neglect stand out. First, Brecht wrote remarkably few speeches during his otherwise enormously fertile career. Scattered throughout his collected works only a dozen speeches proper and even fewer drafts can be traced.[6] That these speeches are not isolated in the Suhrkamp

[4] The transcript of the HUAC hearing can be consulted online: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Brecht_HUAC_hearing_%281947-10-30%29_transcript (last consulted July 7, 2015).

[5] Lion Feuchtwanger to Bertolt Brecht (November 20, 1947), quoted in Hecht, *Brecht Chronik*, 796.

[6] Brecht's speeches or drafts for speeches in chronological order: "Rede im Rundfunk" (March 18, 1927, *Funkstunde Berlin*, 24: 40-42) and drafts thereof: "Entwurf einer Vorrede zu dem Lustspiel 'Mann ist Mann'" and "Aus einer Vorrede zu 'Mann ist Mann'" (24: 34-5 and 466-8); "Vorrede zu Macbeth" (October 14, 1927, *Funkstunde Berlin*, 24: 52-5); "Rede über die Funktion des Rundfunks. Der Rundfunk als Kommunikationsapparat" (November 1932, 21: 552-7, see also: Jan Knopf, *Brecht Handbuch. Lyrik. Prosa. Schriften* [Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986], 42); "Radiovortrag Bertolt Brecht" (March 1935, Radio Moscow, 22.1: 119-21 and 22.2: 918); "Über die Versuche zu einem epischen Theater" (1935, possible draft of "Radiovortrag" or another speech, 22.1: 121-4 and 22.2: 921); "Entwurf einer Vorrede zu einer Lesung" (Moscow, probably preparation for the *Verlagsgenossenschaft ausländischer Arbeiter*, May 1935, 22.1: 138-40 and 22.2: 926); "Eine notwendige Feststellung zum Kampf gegen die Barbarei" (June 23, 1935, First International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture, Paris, 22.1: 141-6 and 22.2: 930-31, possible draft: "Faschismus und Kapitalismus," 22.1: 105 and 22.2: 914); "Rede zum II. Internationalen Schriftstellerkongress zur Verteidigung der Kultur" (July 17, 1937, Second International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture, Paris, 22.1: 323-5 and 22.2: 1005); "Rede über die Widerstandskraft der

edition of his collected works as belonging to a specific form or genre can, second, further be explained by generic issues: the writer's speech is not really considered to be a literary genre at all. This is, thirdly, most adamantly the case in modernism studies, where scholars appear particularly inclined *not* to take notice of modernist writers' public addresses. As modernism is commonly understood as "a war on rhetoric,"[7] modernism studies show a blind spot as regards this rhetorical practice. As we aim to show here, however, in the case of Bertolt Brecht as well as in modernism at large, attention to the author's public address is long overdue. A closer look at this neglected genre not only furthers our understanding of Brecht's entire oeuvre but also advances our appreciation of modernism's complex relationship to rhetoric.

Vernunft" (November 5, 1937, s.l., 22.1: 333-6 and 22.2: 1007, draft: "Rede über die Dauerhaftigkeit der Vernunft," 22.1: 336-7 and 22.2: 1008); "Rede über die Frage, warum so große Teile des deutschen Volkes Hitlers Politik unterstützen" (1937, s.l., 22.1: 338-40 and 22.2: 1008); "Gefährlichkeit der Intelligenzbestien" (1937, s.l., draft of a speech to be held before fellow writers, 22.1: 340-41 and 1008); "Carl von Ossietzky" (speech for memorial event on May 14, 1938, Copenhagen, 22.1: 370); "Über experimentelles Theater" (part of a number of lectures Brecht held in order to enable his migration to Sweden, May 4, 1939, 22.1: 540-57 and 22.2: 1069); "Nichtartistotelische Dramatik und wissenschaftliche Betrachtungsweise" (draft of speech, also in English translation, November 25, 1935, uncertain where or whether he gave it, 22.1: 168-9 and 22.2: 948); "Über die Verwendung von Musik für ein episches Theater" (draft of a speech for theatre specialists, January 1936, Copenhagen, not held, 2.1: 155-64 and 22.2: 935); "Rede an die deutschen Arbeiter, Bauern und Intellektuellen" (draft of a radio speech, fall 1937, 22.1: 337 and 22.2: 1009); "Das andere Deutschland" (translated into English, read at the antifascist conference in New York on December 22, 1943, 23: 30-31 and 440); "Anrede an den Kongressausschuss für unamerikanische Betätigungen in Washington 1947" (23: 59-62 and 455, prepared as a speech yet not allowed to be read); "An den Kongress für kulturelle Freiheit" (June 26-30, 1950, West-Berlin, sent to be read by someone else, 23: 125-6 and 479); "Einige Bemerkungen über mein Fach" (speech for the First German Writers' Conference "Über die Unteilbarkeit der deutschen Kultur," Leipzig, May 16, 1951, 23: 150-52 and 492); "Einige Gedanken zur Stanislawski-Konferenz" (April 1953, Berlin, reworked version of an unprepared contribution to the conference, 23: 236-9 and 538); "Ein Vorschlag" (May 28, 1954, held at the Weltfriedenskongress Berlin/GDR, 23: 279-280); "Ausführungen vor der Sektion Dramatik" (January 1956, read at the Fourth German Writers' Conference, Berlin/GDR, 23: 365-74); and "Rede auf dem IV. Deutschen Schriftstellerkongress" (idem, 23: 382).

[7] Charles Altieri, *The Art of Twentieth-Century American Poetry: Modernism and After* (London: Blackwell, 2006), 52-96.

The Renaissance of Rhetorical Pathos

To gauge the aesthetic of public address Brecht developed from the 1920s onward, and to determine its relevance within his more encompassing oeuvre, we first need to canvas the forms of public speech he found wanting. Like many of his generation, Brecht did not fail to note how tired he had grown of the rhetorical, declamatory style that had become dominant since the late nineteenth century—"all words within the assigned mood, a sort of programmatic ('stuffed words in applesauce')."[8] Like other modernist contemporaries Brecht also avidly commented on fellow writers who spoke in public. Such was the case, for instance, when Thomas Mann, whose speeches in German modernism have perhaps received the most attention, in April 1920 publicly read fragments from his yet-to-be-finished novel *Der Zauberberg* (Magic Mountain, 1924) to a live audience. Brecht ridiculed the clearly commercial rationale of Mann's performance but also observed how the novelist's finely chiseled language was totally off-key when read in the public arena. In a rare moment of kindness towards Mann he noted how the author's eloquent sentences got completely lost in the racket his audience produced, to the extent that it set Mann off-balance. The refined manners of literary writing, Brecht thus suggested, no longer proved to be an effective mode of public address if art, as Brecht desired, was to impact the masses.[9]

More efficient, yet equally superseded, was the rhetorical apparatus employed by expressionist dramatist Georg Kaiser. In an essay entitled "Über das Rhetorische" (On the Rhetorical, 1920), Brecht commented on Kaiser's seemingly countless public speeches:

> Characteristic of our time is the renaissance of rhetoric, that is, pathetic rhetoric. […] G. Kaiser these days is learning to speak in public [*reden*]. He is like the never-ending [*redselig*] orator Wilhelm of German drama. […] All in all he is touching. His efforts are even laudable. In this he resembles Demosthenes. Like him Kaiser has difficulty learning it; he

[8] From a 1942 note reproduced as Bertolt Brecht, "Deklamation und Kommentar," in Bertolt Brecht, *Über Lyrik*, ed. Elisabeth Hauptmann and Rosemarie Hill (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964), 124.

[9] Bertolt Brecht, "Thomas Mann im Börsensaal" (21: 61-2).

> stutters, says everything two, three times and falls back on shouting as loud as possible. Yet instead of going to the lonely sea he goes to the theatre. (21: 49)

An endless bombardment of rhetorical commonplaces marked Kaiser's mounting the platform of public speech, Brecht noted. That he likened Kaiser in this context to emperor Wilhelm II was not a mere pun. The former emperor was renowned for his long-windedness as he had travelled to the farthest corners of the country to address his people in person. Worst of all, Brecht observed, Georg Kaiser had nothing to say. His hollow display of words was a slap in the face of intellectualism. The traditional rhetorical pathos writers had copied from bygone political icons and late nineteenth-century theatre, therefore, was as undesirable to Brecht as Thomas Mann's aesthetic subtlety.

Even so, as the fragile Weimar Republic toppled into the Third Reich, and later, during his exile in the USA, Brecht came to notice just how strongly the renaissance of rhetorical pathos manifested itself above all in political speech. Closely monitoring the strategies of public address deployed by Nazi officials in particular, and studying attentively their system of rhetorical composition, Brecht realized that Nazi argumentation, while not entirely devoid of logic, evolved mainly through syllogism.[10] Pretending to develop an argument, Nazi officials above all let apodictic sentences pass for rational logic. One of many examples is Joseph Goebbels's oration on the "treacherous gullet" (*Lügenmaul*) of the "Jewish" press delivered on February 10, 1933 in the Berlin Sportpalast, with its famous claim that "a good government without propaganda can no more exist than good propaganda without a government." Goebbels's syllogistic oration that evening was meant as an introduction to Hitler's speech "Das deutsche Volk" and its rabble-rousing nature was met with roaring applause. Such abusive use of language in Nazi public speech was strongly opposed by Brecht, whose own speeches hardly ever fell prey to verbal vituperation, not even when it came to the Nazis.[11]

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[10] Bertolt Brecht, "Briefe um Deutschland" (1934, 22.1: 50-51).

[11] In a speech draft from 1937, "Gefährlichkeit der Intelligenzbestien" (The Danger of Intellectual Animals), Brecht considered how certain words in Nazi discourse functioned. The word "Intellektbestie" (intellectual animal), for example, was first introduced by Karl

Yet it was not just brutality and syllogistic rhetorical composition that made up the Nazi speech, Brecht observed. Of equal importance was the delivery of that composition, which was constituted by the same pathos that had characterized Georg Kaiser's addresses. Brecht's *Nachlass* contains a collection of photographs and newspaper clippings, mainly from the *Völkischer Beobachter*, that capture the histrionics of Hitler speaking in public.[12] Such evidence shows that Brecht also paid ample attention to the role of the body in performances of the speech. Noting how artificial and ridiculous Hitler's bodily comportment was during his many public addresses, Brecht concluded that Hitler's style was a grotesque version of old theatrical models.[13] (And, indeed, it is well-known that Hitler as a young politician had taken lessons from Friedrich (Fritz) Basil, an old-school acting instructor, who had taught him to rehearse and make look natural a canon of gestures and poses as well as set modes of pronunciation.) Still, Brecht had to admit, these old histrionic models added to a powerful cocktail, endowing Hitler with a magical, charismatic persona, a perverted variant of Max Weber's "charismatic authority." In his essay "Über die Theatralik des Faschismus" (On the Theatricality of Fascism, 1939), he observed:

> Let us calmly study how he […] makes use of the artistic means of empathy [*Einfühlung*]! Let us consider what devices he employs. […] By means of a battery of old tricks the expectations of his spectators—for the people is to become a spectatorship [*Publikum*]—are formed and raised. The message has been spread that with Hitler one never knows in

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Kraus, yet was picked up and adapted by Goebbels in his relentless campaign against so-called intellectuals (see 22.2: 1009). Brecht's reply to these torrents of abuse bore none of these violent verbal features. In fact, it strikes by its seemingly naive *politesse*: "Die Faschisten malen gewohnheitsmäßig den Teufel an die Wand, der für sie schlimm werden könnte, alte Anstreicher, die sie sind." (22.1: 340 and 22.2: 1009; "to paint the devil on the wall" means to provoke trouble and "alte Anstreicher" means "old painters," a pun that refers to Hitler's former occupation as a painter; see also Brecht's 1930 poem "Lied vom Anstreicher Hitler").

[12] For details on Brecht's *Nachlass* in this respect, see 22.2: 1075.

[13] Bertolt Brecht, "Über die Theatralik des Faschismus" (22.1: 561-9). This semi-fictional dialogue was conceived while Brecht was working on his drama *Der Messingkauf*, but was eventually not included in the play. It is based on a discussion in 1939 with the expat actor Herman Greid (see 22.2: 1075).

> advance what the orator will be saying. Then he speaks, not in the name of the people; he speaks brutally but does not report what the people has to say. He is the unique individual [*Einzelperson*], the hero in the drama, and he moves the people, or rather, the spectatorship, to repeat his words. […] He makes his audience delve into himself, wraps it up in his movements, allows it to "take part" in his worries. (22.1: 566-67)

It was the combination of a rhetorical reasoning without logic on the one hand and an embodied, classic histrionic delivery on the other hand that made Hitler's speeches so effective and deceptive, Brecht concluded. Hitler's public address imbibed his audience.[14] Venting his own unfounded opinions, talking, if not shouting, about himself, his bodily kinetics managed to move the audience to the point of having it coincide with his own body.[15] The Nazi's rise to power, Brecht further suggested, was to a considerable extent due to their art of public speaking. It is significant that whenever analyzing Nazi politics, for example, he consistently turned to the regime's speeches and hardly ever to published ideological tracts such as *Mein Kampf*. The Nazi's public address, then, presented bad theatre in the realm of politics. Yet the fate of theatre and art followed a parallel route under the Nazi regime; theatre and art gradually became mere rhetorical babble too: "The poetic degenerated into the declamatory, the artistic into the artificial." (23: 151)

From reden to sagen: Brecht's Aesthetic of Public Address

However close Brecht drew the speeches of artists and politicians, throughout his career he remained an artist and not a propagandist. Much to the frustration of the Communist party, he consistently defined his art against "socially

[14] By contrast, in her excellent account of Brecht's so-called "intervening thought" (*eingreifendes Denken*), Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey notes how Brecht strove to prevent "that all things should be transformed into something to be imbibed." (See Ingrid Gilcher-Holthey, "Theater und Politik. Bertolt Brechts eingreifendes Denken," in *Zwischen den Fronten. Positionskämpfe europäischer Intellektuellen im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey [Oldenbourg: Akademie, 2006], 117-51, here 142).

[15] The cunning way in which Nazi speeches, many of them heard on the radio by Brecht, had managed to enrobe and disguise the regime's true intents, left a lasting impression on Brecht. In the speech he had prepared for McCarthy's committee, for instance, he noted how his work was soon labelled "*undeutsch* [un-German] […] a word I can no longer think of without hearing Hitler's wolf-like intonation" (23: 59).

concerned naturalism, reportage, official socialist realism, propaganda or agitprop."[16] A Socratic teacher of sorts, he wished to challenge and prompt his audience through his work to look at things differently, and his tools were those of the theatre, not politics. In a remarkable understatement, considering Brecht's life-long conviction of the political significance of his work, the playwright claimed during a 1951 speech for the first writers' conference of the recently founded GDR that his "profession, that of theatre, [was] but one area of culture, and not even the most important one." (23: 151) In the last speech he delivered, in January 1956, he nonetheless made sure to stress the singular role of theatre and the arts within culture and society, that is, to install "a better way of reasoning" ("*eine bessere Denkweise*") among the masses, to show rather than to tell the general public how change was possible and imminent (23: 382). Art, in short, had to follow its own rules, find legitimacy for itself as art. Yet with a clear purpose: to offer the modern masses a palette of possibilities for change.

The striking similarities Brecht observed between the public address in *his* domain and that of politics appear to have sparked an interest in exploring an alternative mode of public speech, one that did allow rational argumentation its pride of place without reducing its audience to mute spectators. This alternative mode of public speech is perhaps best captured by the verb *sagen* (to say). Indeed, a closer look at his writings reveals how often Brecht uses the words *reden* (to speak or speech) and *Rede* in a pejorative sense. When asked to take part in a survey on the role of art by the exile journal *Pariser Tageblatt* in 1934, Brecht subtly foregrounded the verb *sagen* as a possible alternative. The *Pariser Tageblatt* launched a survey on the occasion of Hitler's speech "Kultur und Eigentum," delivered on September 1, 1933. With the survey, the journal wished to inquire what German practitioners of culture made of this speech. In his response, Brecht never explicitly addressed the *Rede*, yet mincing his words carefully he appears to have pitted against Hitler's oratorical practice an alternative practice of *sagen*:

> To *say* the good, one must be able to listen well and to hear the good. The truth has to be *said* cunningly and to be heard cunningly. And for us

[16] Peter Brooker, "Key Words in Brecht's Theory and Practice of Theatre," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, ed. Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 185-200, here 186.

> writers it is important to whom we *say* this and who *says* it […]. We need to *say* that people are tortured in order to maintain the distribution of wealth […] yet when we *say* this, we lose many friends […]. We must *say* it also to those who suffer the most […]. (22.1: 71-74, our emphasis)

Brecht's projected alternative writer's speech, in short, was to *say* the truth in an artful manner, and not, as his contemporaries did, to artificially draw attention away from it.

Brecht never put forth an aesthetic of public address in the didactic manner characteristic of his post-1920s writings on drama and epic theatre. He did not write an *organum* of the speech. Yet it is possible to reconstruct such an aesthetic if we go through his speeches and reflections on the genre attentively. In doing so, it becomes apparent that in Brecht's view three principal conditions had to be met for a speech to counter the ubiquitous rhetorical pathos and to be effective in a true and lasting manner. These three conditions, we will see, manifest how Brecht explored the potential of an alternative type of public address, as a dialectical mode of thought and interventionist art not unlike the one proposed by his epic theatre. Like Brecht's theatrical work the speech was to cause *Verfremdung* on the basis of a separation of elements, which could then be enrolled in dialectical play.

First, Brecht's alternative speech would have to address the truth, which—in line with his entire oeuvre—implied a making felt of the mechanisms, strategies and outgrowths of capitalism that affected people's everyday lives. Second, the empathy or *Einfühlung*, so typical both of conventional theatre and Hitler's speeches, had to be avoided. As Brecht argued in a public lecture in 1939:

> Empathy is *the* aesthetic device of our epoch, in which man is considered the numerical variable and the world he lives is the constant. […] It is not hard, therefore, to understand that abandoning empathy […] is of the utmost importance, if not the greatest experiment conceivable (22.1: 553).

This was a view Brecht defended throughout his career. Empathy was *bête noire* because it presented people only with illusions, allowing a momentary escape from a society that was thought to be unbearable yet unchangeable. People witnessing and listening to Hitler's speeches were moved much like theatre-

goers were by actors' conventional methods. They identified with fictional characters, or with Hitler, and in this performance failed to recognize their own agency vis-à-vis the play or within society at large. To counter this artificial convention the audience thus had to be detached from the orator and was to be recognized as such, that is, as an entity in and of itself, partly free to act yet also dialectically dependent upon a more encompassing social process.

Thirdly and finally, the new orator as well had to draw attention to his own distinct role as orator. Instead of falling back on traditional forms of aesthetic artifice, attention had to be drawn to the artifice of the public address itself. Self-irony and comedy seem to have been the first implied tactics here, for what Georg Kaiser as well as Hitler shared was a misplaced presumption of authority (in art and politics) that forewent their speeches. Kaiser, Brecht had observed, prided himself on being a great artist and intellectual while in actuality he never said anything. Hitler, in a comparable vein, considered himself a genius in the domain of politics. Irony would have been one way to avoid this. Similarly, the orator was to create space between his message and himself by reflecting on the message in the open. As Brecht noted in his "Rede über die Widerstandskraft der Vernunft" (Speech on the Oppositional Force of Reason, 1937),[17] the Nazi public address constantly defied reason, considered reason an illness even, or, put still differently, "denunciate[d] the intellect as a bestial thing" (22.1: 336). In light of his strong belief in humanity's capacity for reason, the true orator was thus also to reason out loud, to offer his audience information in a detached manner, so that the audience in turn could judge for itself. Unlike Hitler's mode of address, which disguised coercion as unanimity, an actual logic had to be made explicit, similar to Brecht's so-called fixing of the Not-But element in drama, by means of which characters made their choices public ("I could have done this, but I am now going to do that"). Hence, just as the good speech was to sever the rhetorical ties between audience and orator, so the orator was to detach himself from the message he conveyed and foreground the speech context. Even the art of declamation would have to be altered. As Brecht put it: "I propagate an open, unpriestly declamation, which avoids sonorous cadences, crescendo and

[17] As in other speeches, the verb *sagen* here is used rather frequently in reference to his own way of reasoning. The typescript of the speech is dated November 1937, yet it is unclear where and when Brecht delivered the speech (see 22.2: 1007, and footnote 6).

tremolos."[18] The role of the speaker's voice and body, too, then, had to be downplayed, almost to the point of reaching a sort of *degré zero* of recitation, a point where the ties between a speaker's body, his or her voice and the message conveyed appeared to be completely severed.

The few speeches Brecht wrote for delivery by himself to a live audience seem weak versions of the new art of *sagen*. Brecht prepared his public addresses attentively. For example, the typed version of the speech he delivered in Paris on June 23, 1935, for the first International Congress of Writers, is marked by careful, handwritten indications of pauses and emphases.[19] The impression of this rather old-fashioned rhetorical practice conveyed by this almost schoolish preparation is further reinforced by his use of rhetorical commonplaces—his speeches frequently employ repetition,[20] rhetorical questions, or emphatic apostrophes to address his audience as a collective ("Kameraden").[21] However, a closer look reveals how both the delivery and the composition of his speeches went some way towards the art of *sagen*. Eye-witness reports testify that his declamatory practice went without conventional gestures or vocal pathos.[22] Listening to a speech preserved in recorded form, we may, indeed, be struck by

[18] From a 1942 note reproduced as Bertolt Brecht, "Deklamation und Kommentar," 124.

[19] Another example of careful preparation before speaking in public is the script he wrote for his participation in a Cologne Radio debate on classical drama, "Gespräch über Klassiker" (An Exchange on the Classics, 1929). The script was never printed, yet it has been preserved as a typescript with handwritten additions, revealing that Brecht made several drafts of the talk and transformed it into a screenplay, where both dialogue partners (he and Herbert Jhering) were given balanced parts in advance. With Jhering's permission Brecht even included passages and quotes from his own work (21: 723). He was also meticulous in editing his texts after oral delivery. For example, he rewrote his contribution to the Stanislawski conference in 1953, for which he revised his unprepared contribution "because he ha[d] no talent for improvisation" (23: 236 and 538).

[20] See, for example, the rather repetitive patches in his "Rede zum II. Internationalen Schriftstellerkongress zur Verteidigung der Kultur" (Speech for the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture, July 17, 1937, Paris, 22.1: 323-5).

[21] See, among others, his speech "Eine notwendige Feststellung zum Kampf gegen die Barbarei" (An Essential Statement for the Battle against Barbarity, June 23, 1935, First International Congress of Writers, Paris, 22.1: 141-6).

[22] As a witness of a poetry reading by Brecht in May 1935 in Moscow reported, for example: "Brecht abstains from every form of rhetorical crescendo without however diminishing his reading's profound effect in the least […]" (report in the *Deutsche Zentral-Zeitung*, May 14, 1935, quoted in 22.2: 926).

the calm and neutral, undramatic yet persistent, tone of his delivery.[23] As regards composition, what often stands out is his dialogic, Socratic way of speaking in public. A good illustration of this is his public address, "Ein Vorschlag" (A Proposal), which he read at the World Peace Conference in Berlin in 1954. It dealt with the major threat of atomic pollution. First came a series of questions calling upon his listeners to reflect on this issue themselves: "How shall we go about this? How shall we battle pure ignorance? How can we revive our imagination blunted by the horror of two World Wars?" (23: 279-80) Inverting the propagandistic strategies of politics, and modestly approaching his audience ("I think […]" [*ich meine*]), Brecht then went on to suggest that the best way to spread the news about the risk of atomic pollution was not top-down mass notification through the press and propaganda, but mouth-to-mouth, bottom-up communication. All individual members of his audience were simply to raise this problem with their neighbors. The facts would speak for themselves, and they would not, as the Nazis had always done, have to be sold as truth to the people by a government. "Ein Vorschlag" is an exception, however, in that it is the only speech in which Brecht actually addresses his audience as a group of individuals; other texts he read to a live audience in person proved not as successful at separating and then engaging the audience dialectically.

That Brecht's own speeches rarely read as samples of the experimental public address projected by his aesthetic of *sagen* has several reasons. To begin with, Brecht often held speeches out of necessity. The series of lectures he gave in Scandinavia in 1939 to an audience reported to have been only mildly enthusiastic were delivered to enable his migration out of Germany.[24] Likewise, he often talked upon a request for explanation. Brecht was frequently asked to expound on his theory of theatre, for instance. His speech explaining his activities before the HUAC is another case in point. Circumstances here and

[23] Brecht, "Rede auf dem IV. Deutschen Schriftstellerkongreß Berlin, 1956" (22.1: 382). A recording of this speech is available on Ubuweb: http://ubumexico.centro.org.mx/sound/brecht_bertolt/tondokumente/07_Bertolt-Brecht_IV.-Deutschen-Schriftstellerkongress.mp3 (last consulted July 7, 2015).

[24] As a refugee from Hitler's regime Brecht began working on a speech entitled "Über experimentelles Theater" (On Experimental Theatre, 1939) in Denmark. It would later often be rewritten to be delivered on various occasions throughout Scandinavia in 1939 and 1940 (for further details, see 22.2: 1069).

elsewhere, in short, were not ideal for trying out innovative modes of public address. Indeed, they demanded a conventional address in which the speaker would have been bound by limitations built into the genre.

Everything further suggests that Brecht simply disliked speaking in public. It stands beyond doubt that during various phases of his career he could have spoken every night had he wanted to, yet he did not. This did not go by unnoticed in the press. As a GDR journalist of *Der Morgen* on May 18, 1951 noted, after Brecht had spoken at the First German Writers' Conference, "Brecht, who met with tempestuous applause, only rarely speaks at large events like these."[25] Brecht's reticence to speak *ex cathedra* stands in sharp contrast to the fact that he often lent his voice for dialogic interviews. Werner Hecht, who compiled a great amount of conversations with him, underscores that Brecht excelled in thinking out loud in such dialogic constellations. His aesthetic of *eingreifendes Denken* (of intervening in others' thoughts), Hecht observed, in fact required the provocation and potential retort free conversation allows for.[26]

Finally, Brecht seems to have realized that he himself was in a bad place to act as the impersonal orator, no matter how hard he tried to avoid emphatic declamation. It had always been his aim to reach the masses with his art, and he had proven very successful at this. Yet this went at a cost. His first plays and role as a critic earned him considerable authority in the cultural realm. By the late 1920s Brecht had become a sort of celebrity in Germany, and it is worth noting, too, that his celebrity status was partly continued in the USA. The HUAC hearing, for example, was attended by a considerable amount of press representatives.[27] Brecht as a person, then, with his almost iconic facial features to us today, could never fully be separated from the author function, to use Foucault's term, which always forewent his message. The fact that he gave few speeches thus also evinces how consequential he was when it came to his aesthetic of public address. Yet Brecht did not consider the speech to be a genre that had been so thoroughly tarnished and tainted, abused to such an extent in

[25] Anonymous report in *Der Morgen*, May 18, 1951, quoted in 23: 493.

[26] Werner Hecht, afterword to *Brecht im Gespräch*, ed. Werner Hecht (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975), 206-7, here 206.

[27] Hecht, *Brecht Chronik*, 795.

both art and politics, that he had to keep clear of it altogether. While the circumstances in which he operated and his renown may have stood in the way of performing *sagen* himself, as a body in front of a live audience, his parallel speeches and reflection on radio manifest how seriously he contemplated an alternative art of public address.

On the Radio: the Separation of Elements

It took Brecht only a couple of years to gain access to the medium of radio after its first official broadcast in 1923 in Germany. In the late 1920s he would write or adapt a number of plays for the radio—*Mann ist Mann* (March and June 1927[28]), *Macbeth* (October 1927) and *Lindberghflug* (multiple broadcasts in 1929)—and throughout the 1920s in particular he lent his voice to a number of speeches and talks in which he addressed the issue of the radio itself. Brecht shared the enthusiasm of the many contemporaries who hailed the medium as excitingly new. It was an unprecedented invention, he claimed on many occasions, one that could instantly reach a mass audience, but very soon it had become obvious that radio was put to use in inherently old-fashioned if not jejune ways. The radio was "not a mere fashionable but a truly modern phenomenon" (21: 217), yet old forms, and not least old modes of public address, soon occupied this new media space. In fact, the same voices that could be heard on the streets and in auditoria soon figured on the radio as well, performing the same traditional tricks. This was not surprising, Brecht claimed, because writers soon found out that there was money to be made from appearing on the radio for doing the same things. On the occasion of one of Gottfried Benn's radio speeches, for example, Brecht sarcastically noted:

> When radio was invented and lectures on rabbit-breeding or marine-life research soon proved to be well paid, our poet was taken over by a strong urge to teach. He produced some dark theories for the radio about humanity, about the fall of tradition, etc. that one best reads in the old, beautiful fashion. (22.1: 9)

[28] Hermann Naber, "'Unsere Isoliertheit ist grenzenlos.' Rundfunk: Ein neues Medium in der Kontroverse," in *Dichtung und Rundfunk—1929: Ein Dokument der Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste*, ed. Helga Gutsche et al. (Berlin: Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste, 2000), 5-29, here 9.

Used for educational, entertainment, and not least for political purposes, the potential of the medium radio for transforming the art of public speaking was thus left unexploited by writers and artists.

Conspicuous for Brecht was that everyone appeared to reduce radio to a unidirectional medium while in actual fact it worked in two ways: there was a speaker, a voice, yes, but there was also a heterogeneous audience of listeners. Radio performers simply failed to challenge the desires and needs of that audience. They subjected the medium to "already worn-out and old needs." (21: 189)

> Radio is one sided when it should be two. […] It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him. On this principle the radio should step out of the supply business and organise its listeners as suppliers.[29]

On the surface, Brecht's observation amounted to little more than a statement about the economic logic at work in radio production: radio makers simply treated their audience as mute consumers as one would with any other commodity. That was certainly what he tried to bring across, but he further implied that radio makers did not see they had *no audience whatsoever*, at least not an active audience that truly participated in broadcasts: "the simple state of hearing does not create a collective." (21: 263) Therefore, what was called for were alternative forms and formats to which people would actually commit themselves through active listening rather than mere registering. Radio makers were to stop using the medium as a simple megaphone, and instead were to go down into the streets and the theatres. They could broadcast from parliament, do

[29] Bertolt Brecht, "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication," in *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. Jon Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 52. Originally published as "Der Rundfunk als Kommunikationsapparat," in *Blätter des Hessischen Landestheaters* 16 (1932).

interviews and air debates. The idea of an "acoustic novel" was to be explored, alternative dramatic forms had to be experimented with. As before, *reden* was out, but *sagen*, conspicuously, was not. Brecht's speeches on radio in fact prove to have been much stronger versions of *sagen* than the few addresses he uttered in person to a live audience.

"Rede im Rundfunk" (Radiospeech, 1927) offers a rich and rewarding example. While no recording of this speech survives, its script has been preserved because it was printed, possibly after minor amendments, first in the *Berliner Börsen-Courier* on March 19, 1927, and subsequently in various other papers and journals, always under the title of either "Vorrede" (Foreword) or "Vorrede (zu *Mann ist Mann*)" (Foreword to *A Man's a Man*).[30] As the latter title suggests, Brecht's speech was intended as an introduction to his first radio play, *Mann ist Mann*, which was broadcast immediately after his speech.

Two other drafts of the speech survive, which are remarkably different from the one eventually aired. These other designs are interesting, because they illustrate how Brecht was trying out different rhetorical and narrative techniques as well as divergent topical approaches before making up his mind.[31] "Rede im

[30] For details, see 24: 468.

[31] In a first, very early draft of 1926—"Entwurf einer Vorrede zu dem Lustspiel 'Mann ist Mann'"—Brecht directly addresses the *Rede*, turning in particular to the compositional practice of the "orating socialist on the general" (24: 34). When a socialist politician is asked to explain socialism, Brecht observes, he sets an abstract theme, comes up with vague arguments and even vaguer counterarguments. An idealist, the socialist thus asserts that socialism is clear and necessary. Yet as a true bourgeois he then notices that the proletariat does not understand socialism because it cannot think. To this Brecht's draft objects: "To be able to express oneself, one does not have to be able to think. What one needs is a strong feeling. I have never read that a polar researcher died of hunger because he could not translate his hunger in Eskimo language or because his hunger was that big, that he could not find the right words for his overpowering feeling of hunger. I can thus allow myself to conclude, from the fact that the proletarian cannot express himself, that his feelings are too weak. But that is a horrible reproach" (24: 34-5). Explaining the necessity of socialism, Brecht thus implied, could only be done in a materialist fashion. When one explains socialism bottom-up in such a way, he further suggested, it shows itself as a very complicated affair, not so easily put into words. For, as his first draft concluded, "that socialism is easily understandable [*klar*]" simply does not hold. Brecht's intention here, possibly, was to go on suggesting that his play *Mann ist Mann* was an attempt at showing why socialism was needed. Yet he did not elaborate this draft further,

Rundfunk" is the most dialogic speech Brecht ever wrote and delivered himself. The text is composed of three rhetorical parts. The first part is a sweeping display of Brecht's vision of the future. It opens with a query that instantly involves the audience:

> You see, our plays in part deal with new things that emerged long before the Great War. This also means, however, that they no longer deal with older things to which we have grown accustomed. Why do our plays no longer comprise these elements that were *once* appreciated and thought of as important? That, I believe, I can tell you with precision. (24: 40)

Brecht goes on to explain that the people who once cared about these "old things" in theatre—intended, clearly, is the bourgeoisie—are on the decline. Their imagination and creative powers, too, are waning. Yet, a new type of human being is emerging today, a being that is in creative control of machines and no longer enslaved by them.

Brecht takes considerable time to expand on his idea of this new type of man, but then suddenly aborts his grand narrative and goes on to the second part of his speech, which turns to the play *Mann ist Mann*. The play which listeners are about to hear, he claims, does not deal with all aspects of the future thus projected. However:

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perhaps because he realized that, despite his limpid language and his use of a clear metonymic comparison, this was perhaps not yet the right way to involve the audience. Admittedly, he clearly appealed to his audience by making it complicit in his reasoning. But his draft is also prescriptive, rather than dialogic. Furthermore, this draft said very little about the role of his work and about art in general. In a second draft from early 1927—"Aus einer Vorrede zu Mann ist Mann"—he therefore tried a different approach: the more neutral survey of what went before. The second, retrospective survey indeed describes how Brecht and his colleagues met with misunderstanding and mild resistance from the audience when they entered the realm of theatre "around the year 1920." Here, the idea of clarity and comprehension returns, but applied to his work in the theatre. As with socialism, his initial bourgeois audience did not get it: "they saw force at best, but by no means clear forms [*klare Formen*]." This second draft, too, ends *in medias res*. Not a word is spent on *Mann ist Mann*, and no real attempt to involve the radio audience surfaces.

> I thought that many things in the play *A Mann's a Mann*, and especially that what the protagonist, your Packer Galy Gay, does and doesn't do, might estrange you, and because of that it is better that you imagine not to hear an old acquaintance of yours talking [*reden*] about himself, as has so far been the custom in theatre. Rather imagine a new type, or maybe a forerunner of this new type of human being, about which I just spoke. (24: 41)

The main character, Packer Galy Gay, is not a man of the *Rede*, Brecht claims. He talks in an entirely new fashion, which also requires a new attitude from the listener. In every sentence hereafter Brecht addresses listeners, prodding their imagination and common sense ("I was thinking […] you might think […] you are probably used to […]"). Brecht then describes his hero as a big liar, an opportunist who can adapt to all circumstances, a man without an opinion of his own and a character who just cannot say no. For all these reasons, Brecht argues, you, listener, might think he is weak, "but this Galy Gay is not a weakling, quite the opposite, he is the strongest … and this becomes very clear when he stops being a private person. He first becomes strong as part of the masses." (24: 41)

In the final, concluding section Brecht suggests that a listener might lament that circumstances force Galy Gay to give up "his priceless self" (*sein kostbares Ich*). Yet this is not the case, Brecht concludes. In fact, it is a wonderful affair. Galy Gay does not get hurt and wins. And such a man, Brecht upholds, should thrive. Then come the final sentences: "Yet perhaps you will have another opinion. To this I do not in the least object." (24: 42)

Many things are striking about Brecht's radio speech as a sample of public address. First, there is its infrequent use of rhetorical figures. Indeed, Brecht introduced remarkably few rhetorical tropes, opting instead for a neutral mode that comes very close to everyday language. As one critic observed in the journal *Funkstunde* shortly after Brecht had read the speech, what struck above all was Brecht's "precise choice of words" (*präzise Worte*).[32] All the more striking, therefore, is the degree of indeterminacy the speech simultaneously manifests. The links between the speech's first and second part, for example, are very loose, thus introducing what Wolfgang Iser might have called *Leerstelle*, implied

[32] Arno Schirokauer, "Brechts Mann ist Mann," *Funk* (March 1927): 101 (see 24: 468).

connections that activate the listener's participation. Brecht's speech also leaves open alternatives and invites debate at the end. The listener is to decide for him- or herself: is giving up one's precious, yet perhaps illusionary, individuality in a struggle for survival and merging with the masses in that struggle a good thing, or not? Equally striking, finally, is the dialogue Brecht sets up between himself and his audience, addressing each of its singular parts individually and inviting it to think outside the box as a collective. In the process, he constantly draws attention to the speech context of the radio transmission, not so much by referring to its technological aspects (although it is clearly implied that the radio as a machine, too, will be subservient to the future new man), but more so by constantly drawing a line between speaker and listener, naming and thus separating both.

As a form of *sagen*, in short, Brecht's "Rede im Rundfunk" proves much more successful than the speeches he delivered in person to a live audience. This is not simply due to the alternative and open way of reasoning it introduces. It is as much due to an aesthetic operation, which strips the traditional rhetorical make-up of the *Rede* to the bone. The medium of radio itself as well seems to add to the success of this speech. First, the medium separated audience and speaker *for* Brecht, for the public of radio was no longer to be found in a single space or auditorium but in a multiplicity of places, from households and cafés to offices and factories. The speech context, in brief, was such that a radio voice was de facto always already addressing a group of individuals spread throughout the public space, and when addressed as such these individuals could also be involved in collective reflection, if not, action.[33] This aspect of radio made it

[33] In fact we may argue that the play *Mann is Mann*, which Brecht's "Rede im Rundfunk" introduced, also thematized this. Inspired by Rudyard Kipling, Ivan Goll and others, *Mann ist Mann* is a parable that basically addresses the equality but also the exchangeability of all identities. Many characters in the play undergo a change of identity and even sex. This was Brecht's way of suggesting that under capitalism identity is little more than a commodity and that the supposed individuality of subjects was an illusion. From this perspective it is perhaps not so coincidental that this play of his was the first to be aired on the radio, a medium that fractures the traditional audience of the speech into a group of individual listeners, a scattered collective of identities. For this, too, is what happens in the play. As it progresses, it becomes clearer that what truly defines subjects is the collective, the social constellation in which they are involved. As such, *Mann ist Mann* can in part be read as a meta-reflection on radio as a means of mass communication.

easy for Brecht, it seems, not to depart from any preconceived notion of the public, as was customary in the *Rede* and in Joseph Goebbels's radio propaganda. Second, the medium of radio also made the speaker's presence of an acousmatic nature, literally reducing the speaker to a voice. Brecht, as we saw, might have realized that as an authority and later as a celebrity he was in a bad place to deliver his projected alternative to the *Rede*. As a speaker on the radio, however, he was no longer the full physical presence, but a voice addressing his audience undramatically.

Yet Brecht's radio experiments were aborted before long. As Burkhardt Lindner points out, circumstances more or less forced him to cease his radio experimentation after his emigration to the GDR. For only a short period, in fact, during the years of the Weimar Republic, was he given the opportunity to develop radio as a channel for the art of *sagen*.[34] An attempt to map Brecht's aesthetic of public address, however, can go one, final step further; it can also turn to the countless speeches we find in his work for the theatre. For it was on the stage, and not on the radio, that Brecht would eventually come to perfect the art of *sagen.*

Brecht's Epic Theatre and Modernism Reconsidered

Mann ist Mann, as an early play, was one of the first to display many of the characteristics that were to become defining of Brecht's epic theatre, such as the use of songs to interrupt the action and the destruction of theatre's fourth wall among others by actors' direct address of the public. *Mann ist Mann*, for example, also houses one of the first so-called *Zwischensprüche,* intermezzo talks or speeches in which an orator-cum-narrator intervenes and approaches the live audience without mediation. In the play, as it premiered on stage in 1926, after the eighth scene an actor came on—as the stage directions read, "next to the portrait of mister Bertolt Brecht"—claiming that Brecht the playwright had so far proven that one could do an awful lot to and with people: "Here tonight a

[34] Brecht's views on radio have gained attention in recent media studies, yet as Burkhardt Lindner points out, what is often left unmentioned is that Brecht's use of radio as an artistic device was enabled by the experimental climate of the Weimar Republic and was abruptly ended by his exile and his subsequent settlement in the GDR. See Burkhardt Lindner, "Zu Film und Radio," in *Brecht Handbuch*, ed. Jan Knopf, vol. 4, *Schriften, Journale, Briefe* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005), 107-116, here 116.

man is reassembled like an automobile without that man losing anything whatsoever."[35] The audience was then invited to let go of its individuality and to adapt to a more hostile world evoked from the subsequent scene onward. However, for the radio broadcast of the play in 1927, where no portrait of the playwright could be shown, Brecht in person delivered the *Zwischenspruch*. The complex irony of this act is clear: not only did Brecht's intermediate speech draw attention to the artificiality of the performance and the medium of radio, thereby estranging the audience. It further drove a wedge between his voice and his author function, because it was Brecht appearing as the character Brecht who was now addressing listeners. As a speaker here, Brecht as it were came to exit his own body, contemplating it from the outside, while making his voice or speech a mere instrument of authorial intention.

It would take us too far to sketch the many and well-studied speeches Brecht from this point onward was to introduce in his theatrical work, but it should at least be hypothesized that as a genre within his more encompassing aesthetic of theatre, such speeches might have proven impossible without his consideration of *sagen*. Indeed, Brecht soon seems to have realized that he could actually speak far more effectively in public without saying a word himself. Instead he could have actors perform a polyphony of speeches he merely was to direct, almost like a ventriloquist. Brecht would go on to develop not only a new type of declamation but also his own alternative to traditional histrionics and bodily comportment of actors-cum-orators. He would, furthermore, come to see that within the semi-fictional universe his plays opened onto, orators were by no means restricted by the in-built confines of conventional public address and that various speeches could in fact be combined in polyphonic wholes. Thus, one character could hold a speech and defend a style and an opinion diametrically opposed to that of another character's speech. Perhaps the most famous instance of this, and certainly one that ties together all the issues that have been addressed here, is his play *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* (The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, 1941). A harsh satirical allegory of Hitler's rise to power, this play stages a panoply of orators. There is Arturi Ui himself, performing speeches in the old-fashioned manner so despised by Brecht. There is the actor commenting

[35] Bertolt Brecht, "Mann ist Mann. Die Verwandlung des Packers Galy Gay" (2: 93-227, here 123).

on these speeches in an address to the audience. There is the orator-cum-narrator who frames the whole play in yet another series of speeches, and so on.

That speeches in Brecht's dramas abound, and that only here the genre is exploited to the maximum as an artistic mode of address should not come as a surprise. For as he made clear in the earlier quoted response to the *Pariser Tageblatt*'s inquiry into artists' opinions about Hitler's 1933 *Rede*, *sagen* in theatre was a particularly powerful instrument for dismantling what had been proclaimed as truth. Shakespeare, Brecht suggested in his response, already knew this when in *Coriolanus* he introduced the protagonist's mother's very weak and unconvincing speech, thereby blocking the audience's identification with her lies. Similarly, in Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, Mark Antony's subtle and eloquent speech over Caesar's corpse could show the audience how in mimicking Caesar's art of address Mark Antony manipulated the masses as well as the truth. It had always been to the orator in the theatre, then, that the audience was to lend its ears, and it was in drama therefore that Brecht himself was to perfect the art of *sagen*.

While attention to Brecht's aesthetic of public address thus potentially alters our view of Brecht's epic theatre, it also opens novel perspectives on modernism more generally. Modernism is commonly defined, in the words of Charlie Altieri, as a "war on rhetoric."[36] It was against conventional and ossified forms of speech that modernism pitted its own and new art of writing, as Jean Paulhan was to deplore in *Les Fleurs de Tarbes* (The Flowers of Tarbes, 1941). This is no doubt true and modernism studies has been particularly good at analyzing the alternatives to rhetoric high modernist writing thus supposedly developed. Yet such analyses to this day remain somewhat weak because they tend to fall short in describing what exactly was the rhetoric modernism opposed.

If rhetoric is first and foremost a toolkit, a system for persuasion, then the public address is perhaps the rhetorical gesture *par excellence*. Like many of his generation Brecht was suspicious of the way in which rhetoric was used and abused, and not unlike many modernist contemporaries he further defined his art in stark opposition to such abuse. Pitting his work against the ornamental tropes in conventional artistic exposés as well as against the oratorical histrionics of

[36] Altieri, *The Art of Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, 52-96.

political speakers like Hitler, Brecht went on to develop an alternative model of his own. In this respect, he was quite singular. Not many modernists were in fact so consistent as Brecht was. While it is possible to read much if not most of modernist poetry and writing as the written record of a design for an alternative, idiosyncratic system of public address, very few modernists went as far as Brecht to also practice such an alternative model. One could think here of the Italian Futurist alternative art of declamation put forth by F.T. Marinetti during the Great War and perhaps a handful of other examples, but the list is not endless. In fact, most modernists fell back on the rhetorical stock when they themselves had to address an audience in public speeches. And address such an audience they did. For German modernism there is only one book-length study that we are aware of that actually scrutinizes the modernist writer's speech as a distinct phenomenon—and the volume in question notably limits its scope to the five years succeeding the Second World War.[37] However, provisional research within the MDRN research lab on speeches delivered by German modernists during the inter-war period has yielded a list of no less than 1,300 speeches performed by over a hundred writers.[38] Most of these speeches, performed by modernist luminaries like Robert Musil, Alfred Döblin and the mentioned Gottfried Benn or Thomas Mann, strike as eminently conventional in rhetorical terms. What is more, many of these public addresses continued an afterlife in a rewritten essay-form and some of these essays today rank among the most important writings in modernist literary aesthetics. The writer's speech, in short, deserves to be taken more seriously in future research. For it suggests that at least in one way our common understanding of the relationship between modernism and rhetoric is fundamentally flawed. If anything, the writer's speech evinces that modernism's complex aesthetic of writing very often began in the most rhetorical mode conceivable, with writers putting to an audience in conventional terms what their allegedly anti-rhetorical work was all about. And Brecht, in this context, is an exception to the rule, a flash of lightning that estranges us all from what we have come to take for truth.

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[37] Waltraud Wende-Hohenberger, *Ein neuer Anfang? Schriftstellerreden zwischen 1945 und 1949* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1990). Worth mentioning additionally here is Brigitte Stocker, *Rhetorik eines Protagonisten gegen die Zeit: Karl Kraus als Redner in den Vorlesungen 1919 bis 1932* (Vienna: Lit, 2013).

[38] For more information, see: http://lmi.arts.kuleuven.be/project-2-literary-speech-performance-writing-throughout-different-media#overlay-context.