

objective and the subjective: the latter, following style study, wishing to carry off the scenes in question into a uniquely private storehouse of personal fantasies (marked, however, by the dominant value of the unique or the particular, the unmistakable products of genius or madness), while on the other side the narrative idiosyncrasies are apt to harden over into conventions, which themselves tend ever more towards immutable human forms, psychologically eternal, and somehow detectable in all historical societies, however simple or complex. In what follows, we will draw on André Jolles's still too little known 1929 work *Einfache Formen*,<sup>32</sup> which has at least the advantage of being ambiguous enough to accommodate the subjective and the objective versions alike without choosing between them; and to invite historical analysis without prejudicing the outcome. Here, however, we must for the moment be briefer; for even Brecht's own dramaturgical categories – from *gestus* itself to the estrangement-effect and the judgements it calls for – along with many of the most famous scenes in his works: the courtroom episodes of *The Chalk Circle*, for example, but also the *mise en abyme* of *The Chalk Circle*, itself an exhibit in a larger 'courtroom drama' – all confirm Darko Suvin's wonderfully fruitful suggestion that it is André Jolles's category of the *casus* – the exemplary 'case' calling for judgement – which is the dominant one in Brecht's practice of narrative, and not only in the theatre as such. At any rate, we will find ourselves embroiled in the attempt to show that Brechtian storytelling, looked at in this way, is indeed informed by something like a 'method', but one which is rigorously non-formalistic, and thereby evades the philosophical objections to sheer method as such which have been outlined above. *Casus*, in other words, must be shown to be a form with genuine content, not merely an abstract frame into which narrative content of all kinds can be neatly arranged and subsumed.

Yet now we must triangulate these propositions, for it has been the assumption that none of the areas or dimensions of Brecht's work already touched on – his language, his mode of thinking, and finally his storytelling – has any special priority over the others; but, rather, that they can be seen as so many projections of each other into different media, just as a crystalline phenomenon might take on a wholly different configurative appearance in the domain of light waves, while remaining 'the same'. The object of study and characterization, then – something which can be identified as vaguely as the 'Brechtian' – takes on its various precisions as it is observed and measured through the three fundamental dimensions in question; but this triangulated and invisible object has no analytic language of its own or in its own right: we must therefore continue to translate each dimension into the languages of the

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much in common with the courtroom, and acts and acting seem to call out for that response we call judging and judgement.

One way out of this dilemma may be afforded by André Jolles in his remarkable and still too little known book *Simple Forms*, which offers an alternative to the traditions of French and Russian or Czech narratology, and a very different path from that of Frye as well.<sup>15</sup> For among his 'simple forms' – these are turns of thought which initiate elementary verbal formations that are later on, in some but not all cases, elaborated into literary genres – he includes a quasi-legal category for which it is best to retain the Latin word *casus* (which German reproduces): the English word 'case' has to be explicitly qualified and restricted in order to designate a legal situation, and is probably even then not altogether specific enough, failing, for example, to exhibit its kinship with 'casuistry' as such: namely, the arguing back and forth, the attempt to specify, particularly thorny legal issues and matters of judgement. Jolles gives us several of those, particularly paradoxical and savoury ones, which direct our attention to the form but do not particularly need to be repeated here.<sup>16</sup> Initially it seems clear that the problem of *casus* deploys and exacerbates a fundamental philosophical problem: the relationship between the universal and the particular – in other words, is this fact an instance of that larger classificatory concept, does this act fall under this particular category, what is the status of the existential uniqueness of a given action and its special claim on our sympathy, and so on? Literature seems generally to have staked out the realm of the individual and the concrete; and matters of the universal intrude merely as 'philosophical issues' or very specifically as so many identifiable *casus*; but ideological analysis has made it clear enough in recent years that abstract categories and hidden universals are always at work beneath the surface of a narrative, and best examined particularly where they seem most absent and best concealed. The judgement on Shen Te (in *The Good Person of Szechuan*) is thus scarcely some special case in literary form, but is probably being exercised and inflected whenever we identify characters as heroes or villains, or respond to the evaluations an author prepares and suggests for us.

But in the case of Jolles's *casus*, these judgements are brought to the surface of the text and made, as it were, self-conscious, by a certain inner tension or conflict between various features and standards which are not normally challenged by the ordinary stances of courtroom activity, and in these special or unique 'cases' become veritable scandals and stumbling blocks. In place of Jolles's instances, I will cite a remarkable *casus* from the work of Alexander Kluge, which can also illustrate what this extraordinary writer was able to inherit and transform from Brecht in

his often interchangeable short stories and filmic episodes. This one is from a film, *Die Macht der Gefühle* (*The Power of Emotions*),<sup>17</sup> in which opera's powers to move us are juxtaposed with a variety of very different, and mostly criminal, episodes. In the matter that concerns us here, we follow the story of a depressed young woman who determines on suicide and, parking her car in a relatively isolated public space, passes into unconsciousness after taking a quantity of pills. There now arrives the repulsive figure of a middle-aged and respectably dressed male in search of adventure: the spectacle of the unconscious woman arouses him and, dragging her body into the nearby woods, he proceeds to rape her. The police notice two suspiciously empty cars, and apprehend the rapist, at the same time rescuing his victim, whom the hospital is able to revive and save from death. The legal question is then the following: is the man in question a criminal or a hero? He raped his victim, to be sure; but without his attentions she would never have been saved. Is he to be punished for one crime without being rewarded for the other, good deed of her redemption or salvation? The anecdote (which Kluge leaves in the form of a question) can clearly enough be read as a parable of many different forces and situations; but it is also a *casus*, by the nature of its structure; and this not merely because two kinds of laws are in conflict here – one of physical violence, the other of life itself – but also – and it is a point strongly stressed by Jolles – because the judgement is suspended (at least in Kluge's narrative). For once a *casus* is settled and a judgement made, the 'case', as it were, drops out of the form, and we have merely a simple empirical narrative. It is the contradiction which makes for the uniqueness of this simple form, and keeps it in being – for the *casus* represents a judgement about judgement as such: the passage of a sentence not with respect to a given norm but, rather, with respect to the very validity of norms as such, in juxtaposition with each other:

In the *casus* itself the form derives from a standard for the evaluations of various types of conduct, but in its fulfilment there is also immanent a question as to the value of the norm in question. The existence, validity and extension of various norms is to be weighed, but this very appraisal itself includes the question: according to what measurement or what norm is the evaluation to be performed?<sup>18</sup>

This is the sense in which the Brechtian revolutionary *casus* does not reaffirm the norm or Law but, rather, challenges it; in which the Brechtian dramatization of contradiction calls for a judgement which is not a choosing between two alternatives but, rather, their supersession in the light of a new and utopian one: 'nehmt zur Kenntnis die Meinung

der Alten, dass da gehören soll, was da ist, denen die für es gut sind' (VIII, 185): 'be mindful of the thoughts of the ancients, that the belonging of what is there should be to those who are good for it'. It will already be seen that the ethical value of this 'good' is here infused with a historical value: production, which includes change and the New; thereby displacing older kinds of ethics altogether.

We ought also to mention Jolles's conclusion: that 'what we are accustomed to call *psychology* in the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – the weighing and measuring of the motives for an action according to internal and external norms . . . seems to me to have a great kinship with casuistry in the Roman Catholic tradition'.<sup>19</sup> The break with the psychological, in the modern, then restores these inner movements of categories to the surface, and places the very acts of decision and judgement on stage. Such, at least, is their narrative structure; yet the tempting designations of fable and parable remind us that we must also examine their vertical or allegorical one.

### 13 Allegory

Allegory consists in the withdrawal of its self-sufficiency of meaning from a given representation. That withdrawal can be marked by a radical insufficiency of the representation itself: gaps, enigmatic emblems, and the like; but more often, particularly in modern times, it takes the form of a small wedge or window alongside a representation that can continue to mean itself and to seem coherent. The theatre is once again a peculiarly privileged space for allegorical mechanisms, since there must always be a question about the self-sufficiency of its representations: no matter how sumptuous and satisfying their appearance, no matter how fully they seem to stand for themselves, there is always the whiff and suspicion of mimetic operations, the nagging sense that these spectacles also imitate, and thereby stand for, something else. Even if that standing-for is what is generally referred to as a realistic one, then, an allegorical distance, ever so slight, is opened up within the work: a breach into which meanings of all kinds can cumulatively seep. Allegory is thus a reverse wound, a wound in the text; it can be staunched or controlled (particularly by a vigilantly realistic aesthetics), but never quite extinguished as a possibility.

I am tempted to say that every interpretation of a text is always proto-allegorical, and always implies that the text is a kind of allegory: all positing of meaning always presupposes that the text is about something else [*allegoreuein*]. In that case (having extended the meaning of this