

BERTOLT BRECHT'S *HAUSPOSTILLE*: A PECULIAR LYRICAL FORM IN THE SERVICE OF POLITICS AND SOCIAL QUESTIONS

Patrice ADICO

Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Côte d'Ivoire

adicopatrice@yahoo.fr

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Wanitèmè Solange SILUÉ

Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Côte d'Ivoire

solangesilue2@gmail.com

Abstract: This article focuses on the particular manifestation of Bertolt Brecht's political and social involvement in one of his poetic works. To express the social and political in poetry undeniably opens up new creative fields for the poet. His interaction with the social and political environment leads him to give his poetic creations very particular forms. It is from this interaction, which is generated by the multiple junctions between the poetic impulse, the social and the political, that the poet reveals his opinions. Bertolt Brecht's poetic work *Hauspostille* is a perfect example of this. This study will therefore examine how the German poet formulates his political and social criticism on the basis of the specific features of this work.

Keywords: Poetry, postil, politic, society, involvement.

HAUSPOSTILLE DE BERTOLT BRECHT : UNE ŒUVRE POÉTIQUE SINGULIÈRE AU SERVICE DES QUESTIONS POLITIQUES ET SOCIALES

Résumé : Cet article s'intéresse à la manifestation particulière de l'engagement politique et social de Bertolt Brecht dans une de ses œuvres poétiques. Dire le social et le politique dans la poésie ouvre indéniablement des champs de créations nouvelles au poète. Ainsi, son interaction avec le milieu social et politique le pousse à donner des formes toutes singulières à ses créations poétiques. C'est de cette intrication engendrée par les multiples jonctions entre l'élan poétique, le social et le politique que le poète dévoile ses opinions. Ce constat est effectué chez Bertolt Brecht dont l'œuvre poétique *Hauspostille* en est une parfaite illustration. Cette étude se propose de savoir comment à partir des traits spécifiques de cette œuvre, le poète allemand formule ses critiques politiques et sociales.

Mots-clés : Poésie, postille, politique, société, engagement.

Introduction:

Poetry generally appears as produced by solitary and eminent literary figures who fascinated their time. These literary figures portray themselves as floating above concrete reality, meditative and dreamy. This is the common opinion about poets and poetry in general. The present analysis starts from premises that contradict this opinion and tries to refute them. We believe that lyric poetry is a complex social phenomenon that is not exhausted in the mere literary analysis of a world hovering above historical social conditions. Although pleasure remains an important factor of any lyric text and of any text

in general, a poem is not exclusively a text that has a jubilant rhythmic pulse. From this perspective, lyric poetry is not merely jubilant speech, but also relates to other dimensions of social life, especially those of political and social action. In this sense, the lyrical reality consists in representing human relations (Christias, 2004, p. 13). In order to appreciate this fact, we will proceed to the analysis of Bertolt Brecht's collection of poems "Hauspostille". The focus will be on the interaction with the social and political environment. We assume that the poet we are studying also fulfils other functions than that of a mere producer of dreams, namely that of a committed writer or educator. In fact, Brecht's "Hauspostille" is a composite text, created from poems conceived at different times. It is a collection of poems whose individual poems were written in the period from 1916 to 1925. The work first appeared in 1926 under the title "Taschenpostille". This work addresses the following research guiding questions: What is the use value of Brecht's "Hauspostille"? How is his political and social commitment expressed in this work? We can therefore assume that this poetic work has atypical characteristics. It can also be assumed that this peculiarity of this work serves as a basis for a committed poetry which itself takes on a different coloring. To answer these questions, this analysis is based on social-historical approaches. It is divided into three parts. In the first part, the specificity of this work is presented. On this basis, the political aspect of the work will be shown. The second part shows how Brecht presents the social aspect in this work. The last two points will be illustrated with specific poems.

1. Brecht's *Hauspostille*: a poetic work with an atypical look

Because of its structure and function, Brecht uses the form of the postil as a model for his work. The structure (instructions, lessons) and the function of edification are suitable for a utilitarian poetry. The postil is even for Brecht the ideal genre to "ein wirkliches Volksbuch [zu] schaffen" (Knopf, 2001:2).

1.1 Brecht's *Hauspostille* as a falsification of the religious postil

The word "postil" comes from the Latin „*post illa verba textus*“ and means literally „nach jenen Worten des Textes“ (Albrecht, 1997, p. 29). This term evokes links with ecclesiastical realities and thus refers to the words of Holy Scripture. Postils are books containing sermons for the instruction of Christians. They are: „eine Sammlung von Predigten, die der Erbauung der Gläubigen, stückweise in Lektionen verabreicht, bei häuslicher Erbauung dienen sollten. Die Postille soll damit als Hilfsmittel für die moralische Erziehung [...] dienen“ (Albrecht, 1997, p. 29). One of the first postils was the *Evangelibuch* by the important German preacher of the Middle Ages, Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg (1445-1510). Postils then experienced an upswing with the Reformation, especially with Martin Luther. He wrote two postils that shaped this period, namely his *Kirchenpostille* (1522) and his *Hauspostille* (1544). These postils formed the basis for many other Protestant postils. The fact that the believers have postils and thus know what is being preached on a particular day is a problem. This has a negative effect on church attendance, as the believers who are in possession of these documents prefer to read them at home. Faced with this unfortunate situation, preachers are trying to change the way they preach. Their sermons now take a more utilitarian form and reflect the language and situations of daily life (Holtz, 2011:25). In reality, postils are books for the edification of the believer, intended to convey a certain pedagogy of the Christian faith and to shed light on

the believer's everyday realities. This characteristic of the postil, of being a genre for edification, opened up a completely new approach to poetic writing for Brecht, because for him poetry, like the postil, must serve to describe the surrounding reality, it must be useful: “Und gerade Lyrik muss zweifellos etwas sein, was man ohne weiteres auf den Gebrauchswert untersuchen können muss“ (1966: 71). The other consequence of this decision is that the form of lyric poetry developed by Brecht thereby acquires a parodic biblical colouring, and even becomes anti-biblical. What fascinates Brecht even more about the postil is the inner structure of the postil itself, which is very pedagogically oriented, as its content is subject to a division into lessons. The reader of a postil is therefore called a “Learner” (Holz, 2011: 28) and can acquire knowledge. Over time, the postil loses its prestigious image. Brecht brings it back to life, especially as it becomes a means for him to educate readers about social and political realities. With the title “Hauspostille”, he makes the genre of the postil and its history known. His postil would have elevated him to the rank of poetic genius alongside many other poets. This testifies to the impressive power of this work: “Die Verse Brechts können ins Blut gehen, sie können aber auch verletzen” (Albrecht, 1997:53). That is why Hillesheim claims that “die Hauspostille ist nicht nur die bedeutendste Lyrik-Sammlung Bertolt Brechts, sondern sie zählt zu den herausragenden der Literaturgeschichte überhaupt” (2013: 11). This Brechtian postilion differs from the traditional postilion in many ways. One of the elements that makes it special is the fact that it is a counterfactual.

1.2 Brecht's *Hauspostille* as counterfactual

In its form, Brecht's *Hauspostille* resembles a Christian postil. But its content is far from reflecting that of the Christian religion. Hillesheim points out that in Brecht's postil there is no element of Christian reality in its content (2013, p. 20). He used the form of the traditional postil to insert his own content. In other words, he rewrote the content while retaining the formal aspects of the traditional postil. In the literature, this process is called “counterfactual”. The counterfactual is “das Resultat bestimmter Änderungsoperationen über einen konkreten Ausgangstext [...], deren Grenzen durch die Forderung nach augenfälligen Äquivalenzrelationen zwischen Vorlage und Adaption vorgegeben sind” (Veweyen & Witting, 1987: 27). This involves a poetic transformation that resembles a travesty. That is why it is called a “counter-creation” (Schweikle, 1999: 250). In this regard, Brecht's postil is “gar kein Konstrukt, bei dem man Gott und die Lehren der Kirche permanent bei sich tragen kann” (Hillesheim, 2013, p. 20), but a literary work with a very special aspect. Therefore, the title of his work sounds a little ironic. Formally, this collection of poems consists of a guide (instructions) for each lesson and ballads divided into lessons. There are five lessons in total. This is followed by a concluding chapter and an appendix. At the end of the work there are notes for some of the poems in the work with respective key indications and performance designations. In short, Brecht's Postille is “so geordnet, als handle es sich tatsächlich um eine der christlichen Postillen des ausgehenden Mittelalters (Albrecht, 1997: 30). It exactly resembles a Christian postil, which consists of a manual, lessons and a final chapter. The instructions become an element of highlighting the counterfactual character of the work in a special way: “Die Rolle der Anleitung und deren Beziehung zu einzelnen Gedichten bleiben eines der oft verblüffenden und zugleich anregenden Rätsel der Sammlung” (Schweikle, 1999:149). The instructions are the introduction to the structure and content of the work. In addition, they

talk about the respective lessons and how to use them. In the case of Brecht, they first point out that the work is for the reader's use and should not be eaten into unnecessarily. Then, one by one, the lessons are introduced into the sequence. Basically, it parodies one of the elements of the Christianity with the aim of refuting its dogmas. The parodic character of this work thus gives it an anti-Christian aspect and approaches satire, for he mocks:

Personen und Institutionen, von gesellschaftlichen Missständen schlechthin. Die Entstehung der Satire ist daran geknüpft, dass der angriffslustige, verbitterte Autor den Widerspruch zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit erkennt, um—vom Ideal her—die Wirklichkeit zu kritisieren, vielleicht sogar zur Verbesserung der Zustände beizutragen.

Grüzmacher (1987: 41)

In this context, a reading of his poems must take this reality into account. It is to be understood that, with Brecht, political and social circumstances must change if one is to strive for an overturning of the present circumstances that determine human life. Within this framework, one must be an anti-conformist, as he himself puts it:

Ich bin aufgewachsen als Sohn
Wohlhabender Leute. Meine Eltern haben mir
Einen Kragen umgebunden und mich erzogen
In den Gewohnheiten des Bedientwerdens
Und unterrichtet in der Kunst des Befehlens. Aber
Als ich erwachsen war und um mich sah,
Gefielen mir die Leute meiner Klasse nicht,
Nicht das Befehlen und nicht das Bedientwerden.
Und ich verließ meine Klasse und gesellte mich
Zu den geringen Leuten. (Brecht, 1999: 25)

This anti-conformism thus shows the poet's sensitivity to social phenomena and his dependence on social relations in a particular political and social context.

2. Politics in Brecht's *Hauspostille*

Understanding the poetic act is largely based on understanding the complexity of the political elements that produced the actual poetic act. In the following, some of these political elements will be explained on the basis of particular poems.

2.1. The poem "*Legende vom toten Soldaten*": the instrumentalisation of the soldier

The poem "*Legende vom toten Soldaten*" appears under the title "Ballade vom toten Soldaten". Brecht says the following about its origin: "Bevor ich mich der Literatur zuwandte, hatte ich schon im Kriegsjahr 1917 ein Gedicht [...] geschrieben, die *Ballade vom toten Soldaten*" (Brecht cited by Knopf, 2001: 50). This poem remains a war poem, or so Brecht says, "ein Gedicht gegen den Krieg" (Brecht cited by Knopf, 2001:50). This poem deals with an unusual fact: a dead and buried soldier is dug up and then comes back to life. Brecht proposes a fact that goes beyond human understanding to make known his point of view on the situation of the soldier involved in a war of which he is often unaware of the ins and outs. The first two stanzas of this ballad are very evocative:

Und als der **Krieg** im fünften Lenz
Keinen Ausblick auf Frieden bot
Da zog der **Soldat** seine Konsequenz
Und starb den Heldentod.

Der **Krieg** war aber noch nicht gar
Drum tat es dem Kaiser leid
Daß sein **Soldat** gestorben war:
Es schien ihm noch vor der Zeit. (Brecht, 1999:138)

The fact that the terms soldier and war are repeated in these stanzas suggests a link between these two notions which is reinforced by the cross-rhyming. For Brecht, the true identity of a soldier is grafted onto the notion of war, a soldier is only a soldier if he fights. The cross-rhyming shows their inevitable relationship, especially as the fate of a soldier seems to be linked to the advent of war. But, in truth, Brecht's thinking is precise. He only wants to talk about what he knows, what he has experienced. This is why he evokes the state affiliation of this soldier who is nothing but a German soldier: "Sie malten auf sein Leichenhemd / Die Farben Schwarz-Weiß-Rot / Und trugen's vor ihm her" (Brecht, 1999, p. 138) The poet brings to light the bad wartime situation in Germany in 1917 of which the poem is a testimony. Indeed, the text is written by Brecht in 1918, the year he turns 20 and is drafted into the German army as a nurse. All of these dates take us back to the First World War, which ends with Germany's defeat. However, in the course of the denouement, the empire, which is gradually collapsing, is eager to continue the long lost war. General Ludendorff at the time still needs soldiers for his great offensive:

Im Frühjahr 1918 durchkämmte der kaiserliche General Ludendorff zum letzten Mal ganz Deutschland von der Maas bis an die Memel, von der Etsch bis an den Belt nach Menschenmaterial für seine große Offensive. Die Siebzehnjährigen und die Fünfzehnjährigen wurden eingekleidet und an die Fronten geschickt (Brecht cited by (Knopf, 2001: 74).

It is a testament to the fact that almost every German should be fighting. For this reason, all over Germany, men of all ages are recruited and summoned to go and defend the country that is falling apart. It is in view of this disastrous situation, the leading of people to massacre, that the poet points out: "Man gräbt schon die Toten aus für den Kriegsdienst"(Brecht, 1999: 138). This verse can be seen as the basis of Brecht's "Legende vom toten Soldaten". He criticises the fact that no value is placed on the lives of soldiers during the war. Those who send soldiers to the fronts are indifferent to their fate. Politicians and army generals are only interested in the objectives they have set for themselves in the war. The lives of the soldiers are only a means to achieve their purposes:

Der Krieg war aber noch nicht gar
Drum tat es dem Kaiser leid
Daß sein Soldat gestorben war:
Es schien ihm noch vor der Zeit.
[...]

Und der Doktor fand, der Soldat wär k. v.
Und er drückte sich vor der Gefahr. (Brecht, 1999: 138)

Brecht ironically depicts the attitude of politicians metaphorically represented by the term “Kaiser” (emperor). The emperor shows a kind of hypocrisy by pretending that he is sorry for the death of his soldier. But on closer inspection, it is the fact that the soldier is no longer alive that achieves the emperor's goal in the war. The soldier loses all human value and is even reified. At least that is what the abbreviation K. v., which stands for “Kriegsverwendungsfähig” (suitable for use in war), suggests. The soldier is used by political and military forces to satisfy their desire for glory. In order to do this, for this reason they make them lose all will: “Und der Soldat zog taumelnd mit / Wie im Sturm die Flocke Schnee” (Brecht, 1999: 137). Brecht compares the soldier here to a snowflake in a storm. The direction of the snowflake is in any case conditioned by the storm, because it is stronger. Like a snowflake and without a will, the soldier allows himself to be led by those in charge, like a beast of burden. He is therefore conditioned to wage war. The soldier becomes a puppet, because he does not enter the war voluntarily. It is precisely to accentuate this condition and to accompany it on the field of hostilities that a spiritual preparation is more than necessary. To ease their conscience and justify the war they are waging, the leaders therefore turn to the Church:

Und weil der Soldat nach Verwesung stinkt
Drum hinkt ein Pfaffe voran
Der über ihn ein Weihrauchfaß schwingt
Daß er nicht stinken kann. (Brecht, 1999: 137)

This presentation of the church is metaphorical. Brecht refers to one of the elements used in the Christian religion, namely incense (Weihrauch), which refers to purification and prayer to God. The soldier is purified by the Christian leaders for the war service, as if war has something holy about it, a sacrifice of good odour before God. Thus, the Christian leaders try as best they can to persuade the soldier that war is God's will: “Sie trösteten, segneten und predigten die Schlacht” (Drobinski, 2015, p.12). The soldier is thus driven to patriotism. This is why Brecht recalls the colours of the German national flag: “Durch das Bild des patriotischen Leichentuchs als Fahne zerstört Brecht ihren Mythos und legt bloß, was sich in Wirklichkeit dahinter verbirgt: der Tod” (Knopf, 2001, p. 53). The soldier is called to a patriotism behind which there is certainly death. For Brecht, calling on someone to die for their country is nothing more than utilitarian propaganda. After writing newspaper articles enthusiastic about the war in 1914 and 1915, Brecht was asked to write an essay on *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* during a high school class in 1915. This led to a well-known scandal. As reported by a former student in 1949, he wrote something like the following about the pope:

Der Ausspruch, daß es süß und ehrenvoll sei, für das Vaterland zu sterben, kann nur als Zweck- propaganda gewertet werden. Der Abschied vom Leben fällt immer schwer, im Bett wie auf dem Schlachtfeld, am meisten gewiß jungen Menschen in der Blüte ihrer Jahre. Nur Hohlköpfe können die Eitelkeit so weit treiben, von einem leichten Sprung durch das dunkle Tor zu reden, und auch dies nur, solange sie sich weitab von der letzten Stunde glauben. Tritt der Knochenmann aber an sie selbst

heran, dann nehmen sie den Schild auf den Rücken und entwetzen, wie des
Imperators feister Hofnarr bei Philippi, der diesen Spruch ersann.

Hecht (1978: 20)

Emperor, military commission and priest therefore form an “unholy alliance” consisting respectively of “bourgeoisie, military and church” (Achille, 1986: 78). This is called an “unholy alliance”, because the soldier is sacrificed for their interests. Faced with this almost mechanical dedication of the soldier, Brecht comes to think that heroic death is senseless: “Und wenn sie durch die Dörfer ziehn / Kommt’s, daß ihn keiner sah (Brecht, 1999: 137). This heroic death is really unnecessary, because for Brecht the soldier receives no real recognition, especially as he appears unnoticed: “Man konnte ihn einzig von oben noch sehn / Und da sind nur Sterne da” (Brecht, 1999: 137). The word “stern” used in verse refers of course to well-known public figures who are commonly called stars. Brecht would simply like to say that in the situation, unfortunately, the stars are not the soldiers who sacrifice their lives, but rather the authorities to whom the glory belongs. The soldier at the front who does not care about his life stands in their shadow. These stars are truly absent from the scene of hostilities: „Die Sterne sind nicht immer da“ (Brecht, 1999: 140). In “Morgenrot” (red sky in the morning) (Brecht, 1999:140) the soldier is on the battlefield, alone in the face of his fate: death. His name and his toil could remain unknown. "Brechts Legende steht nicht nur am Ende der Hauspostille, sondern beschließt auch eine Reihe von Kriegsgedichten, insbesondere solche, die sich mit dem Problem des Heldentods auseinandersetzen" (Knopf, 2001:51). All in all, Brecht does not only deal with the problem of the death of soldiers, but also with the abuses of which they are victims, from their recruitment to their so-called “heroic death”. The soldier becomes an instrument in the hands of the authorities with the connivance of other institutions like the church. On the whole, Brecht is opposed to "die Vereinnahmung des Einzelnen, [gegen] dessen Absorbierung durch gesellschaftliche Strukturen und Apparate" (Hillesheim, 2013:39). For Brecht, it is not a question of the soldier obeying blindly and no longer allowing himself to be misled by the authorities, but of taking "eine vernünftige und richtige Entscheidung“ (Brecht cited by Knopf, 2001, p. 65). Because of the message contained in this poem and the criticism of the authorities, Brecht's poem appears to be the most virulent anti-war poem in German poetry as stated by Knopf: "In der deutschen Literatur gibt es kein schärferes Anti-Kriegsgedicht als Brechts „Legende vom toten Soldaten“ (2001: 56). However, this poem is not the only one to criticize the political sphere. Other poems touch on realities intrinsic to political practice, such as the poem “Liturgie vom Hauch”, which deals with the political repression.

2.2. *Liturgie vom Hauch: Criticism of political repression*

This is not “Liturgy” in the Christian sense, since Brecht's Hauspostille is a counterfactual of the religious form. Brecht's *Liturgie vom Hauch* is a poem that is critical of politics. It was written in 1924 and is a revolutionary or resistance poem. In addition to the criticism of political repression, Brecht questions the social conditions of life in this poem. It tells of the death of an old woman from hunger:

Einst kam ein altes Weib einher,
Die hatte kein Brot zum Essen mehr.

[...]
 Da fiel sie in die Goss', die war kalte
 Da hatte sie keinen Hunger mehr (Brecht, 1999: 28)

A doctor issues a death certificate, but in doing so he only confirms her claim to the certificate, not the claim to a better life:

Da kam einmal ein Totenarzt einher
 Der sagte: Die Alte besteht auf ihrem Schein.
 Da grub man die hungrige Alte ein
 [...]
 Nur der Arzt lachte noch über die Alte. (Brecht, 1999: 28)

A friend of the old woman comes to formulate the universal human right to food, he is beaten to death by a commissioner who wants to prevent any further trouble: "Da kam einmal ein Kommissar daher / Der hatte einen Gummiknüppel dabei / Der zerklopfte dem Mann seinen Hinterkopf zu Brei" (Brecht, 1999, p. 28). Three bearded men, who may represent a society's intelligentsia, intervene, but are also killed. Many "red men" lead the resistance and demonstrate, but there are not enough of them and they are therefore repressed by the military: "Die wollten einmal reden mit dem Militär / Doch das Militär redete mit dem Maschinengewehr" (Brecht, 1999: 28). The poem is a critique of the political repression that preceded the socialist takeover of Russia in 1917 and the color red evoked by the poet is a representation of this. The First World War brought famine to the Russian people. In Russia, demonstrations - similar to those held in the cities of other warring states - are organized in the third year of the First World War by desperate people who, starving and increasingly in a hurry, demand bread and peace. The starving people are represented in the "Liturgie vom Hauch" by the old woman. The following verses testify to the fact that the economy of the Russian people is put at the service of the army, or rather the war, while the people starve: "Einst kam ein altes Weib einher / Die hatte kein Brot zum Essen mehr / Das Brot, das fraß das Militär" (Brecht, 1999: 29). The demands of the people for bread and peace are not taken into consideration by the regime of the time. On the contrary, they responded with violence. The Emperor „Zar Nikolaus II. [erteilte] den Kosaken, militärisch organisierte Reiterverbände, den Befehl, gewaltsam gegen die Demonstrierenden vorzugehen“ (Pipper, 2018). This is illustrated in the poem by responding to the protest attempts with "Gummiknüppel"(rubber truncheon), "Maschinengewehr" (Brecht, 1999: 29). One of them is the insensitivity of the political authorities to the plight of the people. Brecht's stance on the repression and sarcasm of politicians can be seen in the refrain of this poem:

Darauf schwiegen die Vögelein im Walde
 Über allen Wipfeln ist Ruh
 In allen Gipfeln spürest du
 Kaum ein Hauch. (Brecht, 1999: 28)

This refrain offers the reader two possibilities of interpretation that reveal Brecht's thinking. The first possibility is that this refrain is a parody of a stanza from Goethe's poem "Wanderers Nachtlied". So the assessment of Brecht's "Liturgy of the Breath" depends on

how one interprets the relationship of early Brecht to German classicism and nature poetry. In this way, Brecht finds himself in the spirit of the German cliché, for whom nature becomes a means of social protest, as Nobert Mecklenburg points out:

Natur wurde zunächst zum Emanzipationsbegriff, zur kritischen Waffe, mit der die aufsteigende bürgerliche Klasse die spätf feudale Gesellschaftsordnung theoretisch bekämpfte. Sie war die Norm, die moralische Instanz, von der aus sich jene verurteilen ließ. Zugleich verstand man unter ihr, als „äußere Natur“, die gesetzmäßig zusammenhängende Totalität der Erscheinungen und das, als „innere“, das Wesen, die Bedürfnisstruktur des Menschen. [...] Als Negation der bestehenden gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit konnte sie als Ursprung wie Ziel gedacht werden. Emanzipation hieß Herausgang aus unnatürlichen, gleichwohl „naturwüchsigen“ Verhältnissen hin zu natürlichen, d.h. der „Natur“ des Menschen gemäß vernünftig geordneten. (1977: 16)

The poem “Liturgie vom Hauch” can thus be interpreted as a productive negation of the traditional bourgeois nature poem; the form of Brecht's confrontation with bourgeois nature ideology leads to a political re-functioning of the nature (Wende, 1995: 339). The other possible interpretation of this poem is that the little bird can symbolize the political authorities who show total indifference to the suffering of the people and use all oppressive means to muzzle them. For Brecht, this situation cannot continue, because a revolution will bring order to society. For this reason the author lets a red bear appear at the end of his poem:

Da kam einmal ein großer roter Bär einher,
Der wußte nichts von den Bräuchen hier, das brauchte er nicht als Bär
Doch er war nicht von gestern und ging nicht auf jeden Teer
Und der fraß die Vöglein im Walde. (Brecht, 1999: 28)

The red bear appearing at the end of the poem poses as an advocate of a more just social world order. He eats the insensitive, unjust little birds, that is, the rulers of the time. The red bear refers to the coming to power of the socialist republic, which proposes “den Krieg führenden Staaten sofortige Friedensverhandlungen” (Pipper, 2018). But it is what the people have been striving for ever since. Its demands are only taken into consideration with the socialist regime. Its demands are only taken into consideration with the socialist regime. It is precisely this desire to see the advent of a society that places the human being at the center of its concerns that leads Brecht to pillory certain deviations in society.

3. Socially oriented poetry of the *Hauspostille*

Human relationships are not only elements of social reality. They can constitute paths in the existential struggle in the pursuit and strengthening of social groups. It is therefore necessary to analyze them in order to bring about real social change. Brecht understood this, because for him it is not just a matter of writing a poem to transform society. These poems must reflect the social atmosphere. This is what Brecht achieves through his poems, two of which will be studied in their relationship to society.

3.1. *Apfelböck oder die Lilie auf dem Felde or the reign of social apathy*

The majority of Bertolt Brecht's poems in *Hauspostille* are socially oriented. Social relations are highlighted and analyzed. It is above all a socially critical analysis, taking figures like Apfelböck as a model. Apfelböck achieved sad notoriety in post-revolutionary Munich in 1919 because at the age of 16 he shot his father and mother with a small-calibre pistol, apparently without motive, and lived with his dead parents in their flat in the Haidhausen district for three weeks. This act shocked the public as it was committed without prior signs and without subsequent remorse. Under the impression of the events, the young Bertolt Brecht wrote his ballad *Apfelböck oder die Lilie auf dem Felde* (Apfelböck or the Lily in the Field). In contrast to what actually happened, however, Brecht changes some facts (Bachmann, 2012). It is not about the fate of an individual, but about society as a whole. In this way, Brecht points out to the reader that man should be conscious of his sociality (Hillesheim, 2013, p. 20). That is why Brecht describes the absence of sociality as a cold condition: "Auf die Erde voller kaltem Wind / Kamt ihr [...] / Von der Erde voller kaltem Wind / Geht ihr [...]" (Brecht, 1999, p. 15). Society lacks this warmth that one needs. In an apathetic society, i.e. a society without real human relations, one lives from birth to death without any recognition. One becomes a victim of such a cold society, as we see in Apfelböck. Because of this situation, he becomes a „Mörder wider Willen“ (murderer against his will) (Hillesheim, 2013: 53):

In mildem Lichte Jakob Apfelböck
Erschlug den Vater und die Mutter sein
Und schloß sie beide in den Wäscheschrank
Und blieb im Hause übrig, er allein. (Brecht, 1999: 15)

In the course of the poem, the poet expresses society's apathy towards this act: "Es bringt die Milchfrau noch die Milch ins Haus / [...] / Es bringt der Zeitungsmann die Zeitung noch (Brecht, 1999: 16). After Apfelböck's crime, the milkwoman and the newspaper man behave as usual, as if nothing had happened: the newspaper man continues to bring the newspaper and the milk woman the milk. This shows a society that continues its normal course even though some people experience bad situations. Such indifference of society leads to the eclipse and ruin of human life. What is striking about his murder is that Jacob does not know why he did it („warum er's getan“). There is an interpretation that links this lack of motivation with the shift of the event into the bourgeois milieu (milkwoman and newspaper man) through the deed, Jacob wanted to free himself from his father, i.e. to emancipate himself. In this way, the deed exposes the terror of the bourgeois order of life. „Das Ereignis bricht über Apfelböck [...] hinein, als sei er das Opfer. Er ist dem Geschehen und seinen Folgen nicht gewachsen, desorientiert [...] und kennt keinen Grund für sein Handeln“ (Knopf, 2001: 64). Apfelböck knows neither the reasons for his deed nor its consequences. That is why he is compared to a lily. A lily is indeed a symbol of innocence in the evening culture. So Apfelböck comes forward as an innocent man. He did not want to commit the crime:

Und als sie einstens in den Schrank ihm sahn
Stand Jakob Apfelböck in mildem Licht
Und als sie fragten, warum er's getan
Sprach Jakob Apfelböck: Ich weiß es nicht. (Brecht, 1999: 17)

He was not satisfied with that either and expressed regret:

Und als die Leichen rochen durch das Haus
 Da weinte Jakob und ward krank davon.
 Und Jakob Apfelböck zog weinend aus
 Und schlief von nun an nur auf dem Balkon. (Brecht, 1999: 16)

He is just a child who is “disoriented” by society. According to Brecht, society is therefore to blame for Apfelböck's deed:

Die Milchfrau aber sprach am Tag danach:
 Ob wohl das Kind einmal, früh oder spät
 Ob Jakob Apfelböck wohl einmal noch
 Zum Grabe seiner armen Eltern geht? (Brecht, 1999: 16)

Through this poetic transformation of this event, Brecht clearly points to a certain normality of horror in a mendacious society that seems to show a certain indifference towards more cruel facts. This condition could have its roots in the villainy which reigns in the society. For this reason, the poet mentions this in one of his poems.

2.2. *Von der Kindesmörderin Marie Farrar or the reign of the villainy*

Hillesheim says the following about this poem: „Wie im Falle der Apfelböck-Ballade führt Brecht ein Exempel vor, dessen Allgemeingültigkeit erkannt werden soll“ (2013, p. 58). This ballad is about Marie Farrar, who gives birth to a son and then murders him. Like Apfelböck, Marie Farrar is not aware of what she has done. Readers actually learn little about Marie Farrar: she is an orphan, finds herself not particularly pretty, is quite alone and presumably finally feels desired by her seducer, so she gives in to temptation. Finally desired by her seducer, so she gives in to temptation. The possibility of pregnancy does not seem to have occurred to her, but after she discovers that she is that she is expecting a child, she does everything she can to abort it. However, when the child arrives, she does not seem to have expected to kill it immediately, for she only kills it by beating it to death only by beating it when the screaming becomes too much for her:

Marie Farrar, geboren im April
 Unmündig, merkmallos, rachitisch, Waise
 Bislang angeblich unbescholten, will
 Ein Kind ermordet haben in der Weise:
 Sie sagt, sie habe schon im zweiten Monat
 Bei einer Frau in einem Kellerhaus
 Versucht, es abzutreiben mit zwei Spritzen
 angeblich schmerzhaft, doch ging's nicht heraus
 Doch ihr, ich bitte euch, wollt nicht in Zorn verfallen
 Denn alle Kreatur braucht Hilf von allen
 Brecht (1999, p. 20)

So wie Apfelböck ist Marie Farrar ihrer Tat nicht bewusst. She "wisse weder, warum sie ein Kind zur Welt bringe, noch weshalb sie es töte“ (Hillesheim, 2013:55). The fact that she got as far as murdering her newborn child is the result of social reality. From

her pregnancy to the birth of her child, she gets no help at all, even from Saint Marie: „Sie habe zu Marie gebetet, viel erhofft.“ (Brecht, 1999: 18). Although her body was visibly swollen and very painful (Brecht, 1999: 18), no one noticed her suffering: „Man holte sie noch einmal, als sie lag: /Schnee war gefallen, und sie musste kehren“ (Brecht, 1999: 20). Brecht exposes the manifestation of a certain hypocrisy contained in societal and even religious principles. Both advocate assistance in times of difficulty, which is said to be the result of a certain love for one's neighbour. But in reality, man is left to his own devices. Instead of receiving help, Marie Farrar does more and more work. And she gives birth alone, without anyone's help: „Erst in der Nacht konnt sie in Ruhe gebären. /Und sie gebar, so sagt sie, einen Sohn“ (Brecht, 1999: 18). She was not like other mothers, but she was young, an orphan, helpless and disoriented (Brecht, 1999:18). If someone had looked after her, she would not have killed the newborn child. She knew nothing and received no advice. Therefore, society is guilty of Marie Farrar's crime. Through the ballad, Brecht presents the social history of a helpless, exploited, miserable creature [Marie Farrar] who is denied all help (Knopf, 2001, p. III). The poetic subject finally formulates his plea to the addressees in the refrain by saying: "ihr, ich bitte euch" (Brecht, 1999: 18) It is offended by the sufferings of a human being in society, behaves irrationally and ultimately passively in futile attack passive and deprives the misunderstood reality even more of its cognition. Through his plea, the poetic subject wants to give society another chance to do good. She has already failed in this mission once, so that the Marie Farrar became a child murderer and died in prison. Now she is asked again for the help she refused earlier, "denn alle Kreatur braucht Hilfe von allen" (Brecht, 1999:18). Their deed should "not bring one into wrath but call one to compassion. Brecht is, through this ballad, the defender of those who cannot give birth "in clean beds of weeks":

Ihr, die ihr gut gebärt in saubern Wochenbetten
 Und nennt „gesegnet“ euren schwangeren Schoß
 Wollt nicht verdammen die verworfnen Schwachen
 Denn ihre Sünd war schwer, doch ihr Leid groß.

Brecht (1999:22)

Society should feel compassion for those who give birth in bad circumstances. Their deeds should not be merely judged. Rather, the reasons and conditions of the act should be considered. Brecht clearly undermines the Manichean principle in society, which is based on the antagonism between good and evil. This principle is "unbrauchbar, um sich [dem ‚Fall Marie Farrar‘ und Apfelböck] zu nähern" (Knopf, 2001: 64). The norms of good and evil should not apply to people like Marie Farrar and Apfelböck. They cannot be held as good, evil or bad people. Society has in fact had a part in their deeds as well. In this way, Brecht opposes already established social norms and demands compassion from society towards fellow human beings. Not the girl, at least not the girl alone is to blame for her situation. She is not inhuman, but the bourgeois society around her. She is a victim of the social constraints, the expectations, the obligations that have made her situation seem hopeless seem hopeless. Brecht protests here through the technique of reversal against a society in which a fate like that of Marie Farrar is possible, but he (still) leaves the protest

as such and does not supplement it with a call to action against the accused society (Pietzcker, 1974: 186).

Conclusion:

Driven by the desire for change in society, Bertolt Brecht formulated his criticism in a new poetic form of parody. Using the form of the religious postilion, he pilloried the forms of injustice in the political and social management. Moreover, in order to make his criticism very realistic, he drew inspiration from real historical and social facts to give life to the poems that were the object of study. This attitude shows that the poet is firmly anchored in the political and social sphere. The poet is caught up in the meanders of social and political relations. His intention is clear: these poems are not intended for the interpretation of socio-political realities, but should serve for change. Brecht is oriented towards social criticism, i.e. his focus is on the disadvantaged and socially weak. For Brecht, poetry has nothing to do with feeling, it must be factual. With Brecht, the poet is no longer a spectator, but his poetic expression becomes par excellence political and social. It is therefore not surprising that the real poet's work is directly linked to the struggle for freedom.

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