

Conditio Judaica 12

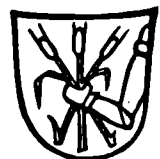
Studien und Quellen zur deutsch-jüdischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte

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Dramatic Metaphors of Fascism and Antifascism

Max Niemeyer Verlag
Tübingen 1996



Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Hadomi, Leah: Dramatic metaphors of fascism and antifascism / Leah Hadomi. – Tübingen : Niemeyer, 1996

(Conditio Judaica ; 12)

NE: Conditio Judaica

ISBN 3-484-65112-1 ISSN 0941-5866

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Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier.

Druck: Weihert-Druck GmbH, Darmstadt

Einband: Hugo Nädele, Nehren

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Preface: Attitudes

Fascism and Antifascism - "keep watch over absent meaning"¹

"Yet the dark places are the centre" claims George Steiner in *In Bluebird's Castle* (1974:32). Any attempt to analyze rationally the predominating barbaric phenomenon of the Twentieth Century, namely the Holocaust and its Fascist background, challenges the limits of human understanding. The phenomenon of the Holocaust is a consequence of these "dark places" where again in Steiner's words "we have passed out of the major order and symmetries of Western civilization" (48). A final understanding of the theme is beyond the limits of rationality and may also be viewed in the light of Adorno's 'no poetry after Auschwitz'. Nevertheless, the need to attempt reflective and creative "work" on this topic continues. It is becoming even more relevant in view of the latest developments in Europe and other parts of the world, some of which are again interspersed with dangerous Fascist elements. The "dark places" and their Fascist background, expressed metaphorically in drama, are the theme of this book. The impetus to learn from the past makes further theoretical formation, even if limited in scope, essential: "keep watch over absent meaning."

¹ Blanchot, M. (1986:42).

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to my students for joining and contributing on the way to "the dark places" - leading to this book.

Thanks are due to Mrs. Barbara Cowell of Oxford for help in editing the manuscript and for translating quotations not otherwise available in English (as indicated in the bibliography). I also thank Mr. Till Schicketanz for his patience in preparing the work for publication and above all Prof. Dr. Hans Otto Horch deserves my gratitude for accepting the book as part of the series "Conditio Judaica".

Leah Hadomi

Chapter I: Introduction

Fascism and Antifascism as Postulated by Drama - "Myth would seem to be the radicalization of a hypothesis"¹

The aim of this work is to study the relationship between ideology and myth as they function diversely in Fascist and Antifascist drama. The term Fascism is used here as an overall concept which includes the German version. Fascism and National-socialism cannot be considered identical. Nazism is not 'a mere variant' of Fascism, the main difference being that it over-emphasizes the racial element as well as its implementation in the machinery of state. However, as the discussion here is principally concerned with subjective attitudes towards Fascism and National-socialism and not with political distinctions between them, we remain aware of the conceptual differences but concentrate on metaphorical expressions. It is hoped that the following extensive introduction, while appearing daunting, might assist the subsequent discussion of the dramatic text. The dramas analysed employ both mythological and ideological elements. But the Fascist and Antifascist dramas to be examined relate differently to the thought that: "Myth would seem to be the radicalization of a hypothesis".

National-socialist Fascism - A Political Agenda as Dramatic Form

The following discussion is based on a metonymic approach to myth and ideology followed by a comparative textual analysis of 20th century German drama. A preliminary short summary of the mainstream of National-socialist ideology will be followed by a discussion of its relation to mythological elements and their discursive formation in Fascist and Antifascist drama.² The many theories concerning the background and context of Fascism can only be included here insofar as they are relevant to our discussion.

¹ Blanchot, M. (1986:86).

² Foucault, M. (1972:38): "Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (and order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation." - Variations on this term like 'discursive strategy' will also serve as operative terms.

Theories indicating bourgeois sexual repression or the isolation of the individual and his fear of freedom are currents underlying the subjective background of Fascism, while others stress historical and cultural background.³ Horkheimer, in the course of his theories concerning roles and needs resulting from social and economic deprivation, points to the family and the authoritarian personality as the background to the rise of Fascism.⁴ Mommsen states that the worldview of Nationalsocialism as ideology and movement,

was neither consistent nor particularly original: rather it was an eclectic conglomeration of *völkisch* concepts indistinguishable from the programs of out-and-out nationalist organisations and parties of the imperialist period, or from the ideas of the right-wing bourgeois parties during the Weimar period.⁵

Theories along these lines which point to socio-historical origins of Fascism, in its nationalistic form can thus be traced in German history and cultural background, even as far back as elements in the postulates of Luther, the German irrationalism of the Nineteenth Century, the literature of the Weimar period, Expressionism and elements of inwardness (*Innerlichkeit*).⁶

The principles of Nationalsocialism reinforced, appropriated and manipulated the above-mentioned elements. These principles did not operate in any systematic discursive space and thus are somewhat resistant to any comprehensive theoretical contemplation. The Nationalsocialist manifesto was not a coherent and calculated system but was based mainly on racism and the '*völkisch*' myth. Imposed as a political and military program, it was posited as the only appropriate answer to contemporary national requirements. As such, it presented itself as self-evident and thus beyond the need for verification. The main postulate operating consistently throughout the manifesto, for example in *Mein Kampf*, was the total negation of opposing attitudes (modern, democratic, Marxist) and an antagonism towards divergent social, political or ethnic groups (intellectuals, Communists, Jews). National homogeneity was revered, uniting or eliminating any division:

Instead of the class, it was the nation now that was going to set the course of history as the agent of progress and civilisation: and this was the change of ideas which made the change from left to right so easy, for on every point the far left

³ Reich, W. (1975) - As to socialpsychological methods, according to which social conflicts are rooted in the psyche and then again shifted from the subjective to the political, the most influential theory is that of Reich. Two of his main postulates are relevant to this analysis: that attitudes are based on repression of sexuality and that fascism and totalitarianism are the expression of irrational characteristics of the *Massenmenschen*. See also: Horkheimer, M. (1964); Löwenstein, R. M. (1968) and Fromm, E. (1942:74-99).

⁴ Horkheimer, M. (Ed.) (1936).

⁵ Mommsen, H. (1988:180); see also: Behrens, M. (1980).

⁶ Mosse, G. L. (1966).

and revolutionary socialists, and the radicalists and nationalists of the new right, had already met and agreed.⁷

Thus, the resurgence of German nationalism was based on a substantive opposition to anything which, and anyone who did not comply with the corpus of the credo as a totality.⁸

'Race' (*Rasse*) summed up the totality of this worldview and constituted the basis of man's biological endowment in nature. Nature, significant in German discourse of the past, was by now superseded by elements of racism based on the myth of the ancient origin and the wished-for return to the Nordic Germanic.⁹ Race, as a late and distorted expression of Nineteenth Century Darwinism, was a dominant antecedent to the Nationalsocialist myth. The 'Aryan race' and the 'Nordic man' were considered to be the embodiment of all natural, positive and admirable attributes; fitness and beauty of the body as well as honor, bravery, loyalty and strength of will were worshipped. Every individual was obliged to aspire to this manifestation of the forces of nature and to its imperatives. The positive existence of these traits in members of the super-race established their actual as well as fictional characteristics as self-evident. The 'superior' Nordic race was encouraged to keep itself free from any defilement or danger from Liberalism, Bolshevism and, most importantly, world-Judaism. Jewish Capitalism and Jewish Marxism ceased to be contradictory, as they had been in the context of former Antisemitic attitudes, and were considered to be some vaguely united force constituting a world Jewish conspiracy.¹⁰

'Nation/folk' (*Volk*) was a more compact unit of the Germanic racial entity and, as such, was supposed to preserve its pure, Nordic racial origin. A smaller organic unit of the 'völkisch' myth was the natural/racial 'community', termed 'Gemeinschaft'. Race, *Volk* and 'Gemeinschaft' and their application to historical circumstances became an ideology imbued with irrational

⁷ Sternhell, Z. (1988:335).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 337: "'Total' was a word of which all Fascist writers were extremely fond, and it was one of the key terms in their vocabulary."

⁹ Bausinger, H. (1968:224-275) discusses some Nationalsocialist ideologems which derived from German 'Volks poesie' of the past. Originating in German Volksdrama and Volkslied, 'tied' to 'Stammliches' oder 'Nationales', they became important in the discourse of the Third Reich. - For the emphasis on Fascist ideologems in literature see many examples in: Wulf, J. (1966: esp. 257). For a short comparison of propagandistic aspects in Fascist and Antifascist literature see: Kristen, M. S. (1983); Hermand, J. (1992:183), relating to concepts after 1933, states that the majority of them were utopian or pseudo-utopian, based on phrases concerning blood and race.

¹⁰ Stern, J. P. (1975:198-224): "In this image Jewish Capitalism and Jewish Marxism cease to be contradictories, as they have been in all previous anti-Semitic doctrines, for both are seen to possess a fundamental unity of attitude, means, and goal." - The goal was "world domination" (200).

factors and supercharged with emotionality.¹¹ These ideological concepts of original godfathers, like other historical and symbolic motifs selected from the past, were combined into a twisted version and dictated the Nationalsocialist racist credo. Hannah Arendt claims that there is a clear link between racism and the rationale "of irrationality":

Racism, as distinguished from race, is not a fact of life, but an ideology, and the deeds it leads to are not reflex actions, but deliberate acts based on pseudo-scientific theories. Violence in interracial struggle is always murderous, but it is not 'irrational'; it is the logical and rational consequence of racism, by which I do not mean some rather vague prejudices on either side, but an explicit ideological system.¹²

The hallmark of Nationalsocialism was, on the one hand, its raising of racism and its politics of power to an irrational religious faith and credo, and on the other hand, its entirely wordly application of those beliefs to a political and military system.¹³ One of the central aspects of Nationalsocialist ideology was that the State as a constitutional authority was identified with Volk and was conceived and exercised as a single entity.

'Nature', the source of the Race and Volk credo, also promoted 'Vitality' (Vitalismus/Wille) as another central component of Fascism in its Nationalsocialist version. Vitalism, originating in nature and thus in man, could not be replaced by any other characteristic.¹⁴ Vitality and dynamism, as extensions of the nature postulate and their expression in the individual and collective will, were considered to be most important attributes of the German Volk. The natural laws of vigorous survival were raised above all other norms and humanistic values.¹⁵ The projection of morality on to nature resulted in an evasion of moral responsibility since morality was conceived to be related to a natural, predestined biological system. This constant element, namely racially generated vitality, was discursively embodied in the primacy of 'combat' (Kampf) and of 'war' (Krieg/Schlacht). It encouraged willing submission of the individual to the racially informed imperative of the super race. Since

¹¹ Petersen, J. (1934:61). - Wetzels, W. D. (Ed.) (1973:1-14) emphasises that "to revive old or invent new Myths as the driving force behind all reality, to reinstate the old gods and their worship into our times, so as to fashion our lives according to archaic forms, has proved at best to be nothing more than the nostalgic triviality of escapism from the labors of reason. At its worst it has led in recent German history to the barbaric messianism which, perverting an honorable tradition of testing the limits of rationality, succeeded in all but destroying what fragile tradition of reason and humanism there was" (12-13).

¹² Arendt, H. (1973:137).

¹³ Sternhell, Z. (1988:350): "This mystical and irrational aspect of fascism, with its romanticism and emotionalism, was however, only one side of the coin. The other was the fascism of 'planning' - technocratic and managerial fascism, one might call it." - See also: Mosse, G. L. (1980:33,135).

¹⁴ Rosenberg, A. (1935:628,681-684,690).

¹⁵ Nolte, E. (1963:494).

the individual originated in a vital race whose members behaved and acted according to their inborn, natural, positive traits, any tension between him and the 'Gemeinschaft' was eliminated.¹⁶ Everyman was a 'racially-determined type' (Rassetypus) and his uniqueness consisted in the embodiment of 'Volkstum', which entailed the expression of his individual vitality in heroic deeds.¹⁷ Here, as in the case of other issues, every potential contradiction or tension was overridden by the prospect of a self-evident and self-sufficient repetitive pattern. To be alive as an individual and as a 'Gemeinschaft' meant vigorous participation in life, which might entail the necessity for sacrifice (Opfer) in death. The surrender to sacrifice was seen as a natural expression of racial origin not to be questioned or disputed under any circumstances.

The postulates above already indicate the connection between this National-socialist ideology and the perception of history. All these ideologems functioned as 'splitting' or 'binding' the glorification of nature and the predominance of technology, mother-bonding and father-bonding, the trans-historical and the political/historical position.¹⁸ History was perceived as a constant phenomenon, unchanging with time. The rhetorical method in which this perception was embodied was both a retrospective and a prospective ideology. The constant element in this ahistoricised 'historical' outlook endorsed the final outcome of confrontation not only between past and future, but also between north and south: a constant combat between the Nordic race and the 'Völkerchaos' of the south. The definitive victory of the north did not depend on historical antagonistic circumstances but was biologically determined as the triumph of the more vital and thus superior race.¹⁹ It was an outcome of a predestined natural phenomenon. This constituted an ahistorical approach to any ideological diversity, to racial origin and superiority, class differences, past and present, as well as other varying postulates. Fascist ideology was summarized by Sternhell as follows:

This was where, in the Fascist's own view, the originality of their movement lay; as an alternative to the economic man of liberal and Marxist materialism, they offered a brand of neo-idealism that put the spiritual above the material; in place of the liberal and the pacific bourgeois and the city shopkeeper, they offered the barbarian and the knight of the Middle Ages; as an alternative to the product of European rationalism they offered the cult of feeling, emotion and violence; and in place of the degenerate man of a stay-at-home civilisation to which

¹⁶ Mosse, G. L. (1980:133-149). - The 'Neue Mensch' was rooted in the 19th century concepts of nationality: "Er setzte sich aus männlicher Stärke und Schönheit, Aggressivität und élan vital zusammen." (142)

¹⁷ Rosenberg, A. (1935:134).

¹⁸ Kaplan, A. Y. (1986:24-25).

¹⁹ Hermand, J. (1973:103-126). - An important influential source for Nordification ideology was the book *Germania* by Tacitus (and *De L'Allemagne* 1810-1812 by Madame de Staël) which strengthened the neo-Teutonic element in German Fascism. See also: Nolte, E. (1963:494).

physical effort had become repugnant, they offered the cult of the body, health, and the outdoor life.²⁰

'Vitalism' was understood mainly as focusing on the centrality of 'life' and was typified by consequent admiration of a vigorous and forceful change of 'life-style'. The concept of 'life' was diffused and thus to be understood as an enthusiastic affirmation of energy opposed to positivistic and materialistic views and to the banality of everyday life.²¹ The eschatological version stressed the coming of a new age and the activist demand for its realization. Vitalism was demonstrated, both in social and political life and in manifestations of cultural life as a constant dynamism, and mobility was opposed to the static and to stagnation. The Darwinist imperative of evolutionary change was never-ending and thus a subjective dynamism was postulated which included social, philosophical and cultural discourse leading into and led by Fascism. This type of vitalism, as one of the main sources of Fascism, may be interpreted as a central element derived from Expressionism.

The influence of some aspects of Expressionism on the Nationalsocialist movement is difficult to trace because of the overlapping as well as the divergence of cultural and political discourse. Lukács finds much evidence of the influences of Expressionism in the work of writers who later affiliated themselves with the regime, who "led into Fascism and whose role as ideological forerunners is neither greater nor smaller than that of many another contemporary movement."²² Muschg pinpoints the message of the 'New man', originating in Expressionism, as a preparation for the future Führer cult.²³ In Hohendahl's discussion of the sociological premises of Expressionism he views them as opposed to 'Bürgerlichkeit'. He stresses the strong connection between its social criticism of bourgeois norms and its affirmation of the vita-

²⁰ Sternhell, Z. (1988:339).

²¹ Eykman, C. (1974:26) comments that there is a contradiction between the uplifted 'Geist' which retreats from 'low' politics and the belief in the fusion between 'Geist' and 'Macht'. See also: Hohendahl, P. U. (1967:51-61).

²² Lukács, G. (1971:121): "die später im Faschismus münden, und seine ideologische Vorbereitungsrolle ist nicht größer aber auch nicht kleiner als die mancher anderen gleichzeitigen Strömung." - He views Expressionism as one of the ideological trends which influenced Fascism and its role was not less influential than the role of other conventions. - See also Samuel, R./R. H. Thomas (1939:183-186) who compare Expressionism with Nationalsocialism. Common to both movements are the following aspects: communal way of life, partial rejection of past history, belief in radical methods and a 'highly rhapsodic style' in art, emphasised in drama. According to them, the difference between Expressionism and Nationalsocialism is that the first applies mainly to the individual but Nationalsocialism aims at the German nation as a whole. - See also Sokel, W. (1959).

²³ Muschg, W. (1961). - The prophecy of the 'Neue Mensch' was a forerunner of the cult of the Führer. Kolinsky, E. (1970:68-79) also sees the figuration of the artist and his extension into the role of the Führer as a carrier of the 'inner' revival originating in Expressionism. - See also: Lehrert, H. (1983).