



BERTOLT BRECHT

Hollywood Elegies

CALIFORNIA POEMS, GERMAN TEXTS, AND TRANSLATIONS

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

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BERTOLT BRECHT

Hollywood Elegies

California poems, German texts, and English translations

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Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

Los Angeles · 2026

EDITION STATEMENT

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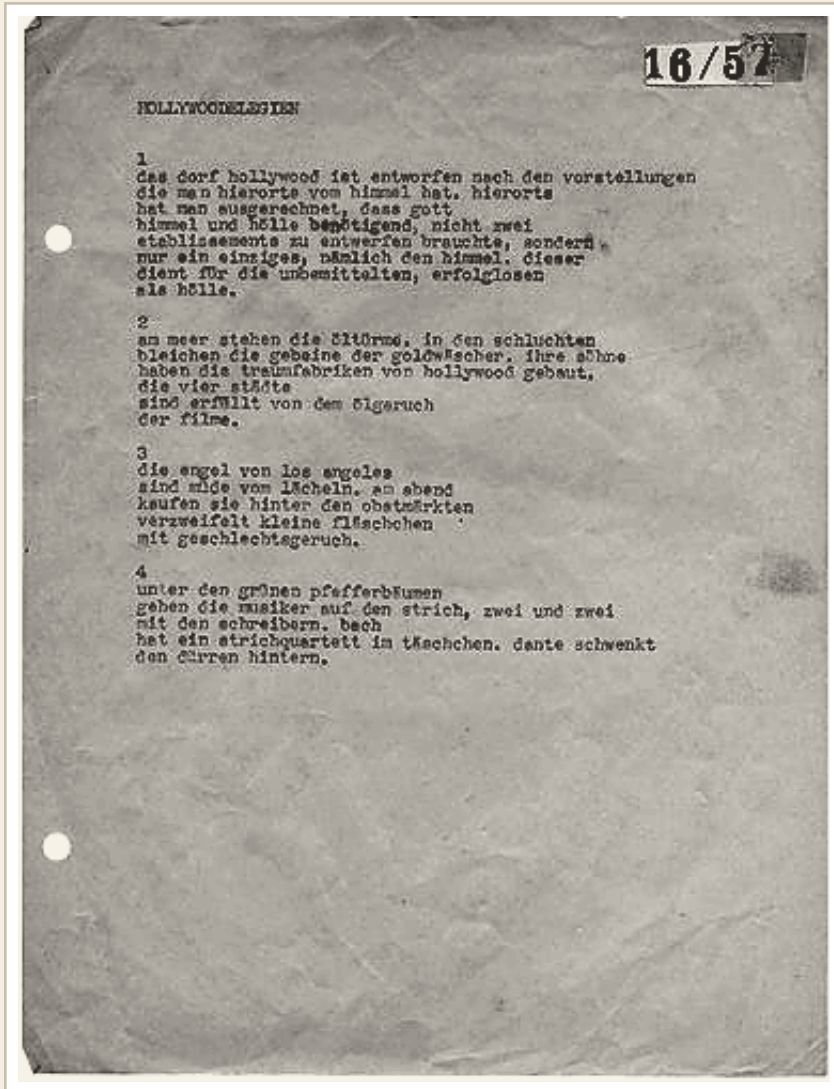
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ARCHIVAL IMAGES

Three documentary witnesses from the California and exile record



Brecht's typescript for Hollywood-Elegien, 1942. Akademie der Künste, Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv, BBA 16/57; reproduced in the project archive from the institutional Arts in Exile exhibition.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-10204-2132
Foto: v. Ang. 121. März 1950

Hanns Eisler and Bertolt Brecht, Berlin, May 21, 1950. Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst—Zentralbild, Bild 183-19204-2132; crop from the project's archived East of Borneo article.



Venice oil fields, circa 1930. USC Libraries Special Collections; crop from the project's archived East of Borneo article. The derricks and their smell enter the second of Brecht's Hollywood-Elegien.

INTRODUCTION

Life, work, exile, and the California poems

Bertolt Brecht arrived in Southern California after eight years of flight and found a landscape that looked like paradise while Europe burned. In Santa Monica he lived among other German-speaking exiles, tried to sell stories to the studios, worked with Fritz Lang and Charles Laughton, and renewed his partnership with the composer Hanns Eisler. The short poems he called *Hollywood-Elegien* turn oil derricks, swimming pools, screenwriters, actresses, fighter planes, and the hard commerce of the dream factory into a single, acid picture of American abundance. Their jokes are fast, but the exile's unease never leaves them. Brecht's California years also produced poems about expensive gardens, news from the Soviet front, the fear of eviction, and friends sinking under the pressure of displacement. This edition resets the six-poem German sequence and John Willett's complete English translation, then gathers Adam Kirsch's five later versions and four related California and exile poems. It distinguishes Brecht's manuscript sequence from Eisler's reordered song cycle, credits every English translator, and restores lineation and stanza breaks from the best available witnesses. A short archival section places the poems beside Brecht's typescript, his collaboration with Eisler, and the Venice oil fields that entered the verse.

Biography

Augsburg, family, and the First World War

Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht was born in Augsburg, Bavaria, on February 10, 1898. His father, Berthold Friedrich Brecht, rose from clerk to director in a paper mill; his mother, Sophie Brezing Brecht, came from a Protestant family and suffered chronic ill health. The household was materially secure and religiously mixed, with a Catholic father and Protestant mother. Brecht attended the Augsburg Realgymnasium, wrote poems and stories as a schoolboy, and learned guitar songs, hymns, ballads, and popular performance forms that would remain audible in his verse. During the First World War he resisted patriotic rhetoric in an essay on Horace's maxim that it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country, nearly provoking his expulsion.

In 1917 Brecht enrolled at the University of Munich to study medicine and natural science, though theater, poetry, and Munich's literary life increasingly occupied him. Conscripted in 1918, he served as a medical orderly in an Augsburg military hospital and witnessed the bodily cost of the war at close range. In the revolution that followed the imperial collapse he participated in a soldiers' council. The combination of bourgeois upbringing, medical training, wartime experience, and revolutionary politics gave his early work its abrasive mixture of anatomy, song, comedy, and social anger. His first son, Frank Banholzer, was born in 1919 to Paula Banholzer; Frank later served in the German army and was killed on the Eastern Front in 1943.

Munich plays and the move to Berlin

Brecht drafted *Baal* in 1918 and wrote *Drums in the Night* in the aftermath of the German Revolution. The latter's 1922 Munich premiere brought national attention, and critic Herbert Ihering secured for him the Kleist Prize. Brecht married the opera singer Marianne Zoff that year; their daughter Hanne was born in 1923. The marriage ended in divorce in 1927. By then Brecht had also formed the central personal and artistic partnership of his life with the Viennese actress Helene Weigel. Their son Stefan was born in 1924, Brecht and Weigel married in 1929, and their daughter Barbara followed in 1930.

Brecht moved decisively into Berlin theater in 1924, working as a dramaturg at Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater alongside Carl Zuckmayer. The

crowded cultural world of Weimar Berlin sharpened his interest in boxing, cabaret, film, popular music, modern technology, and the economic machinery of entertainment. Plays including *In the Jungle of Cities* and *Man Equals Man* abandoned psychological realism for montage, interruption, song, and visible theatrical construction. The poetry of the same years gathered street ballads, biblical rhythms, criminal legends, urban scenes, and parodic devotions in *Manual of Piety*, usually known in English by its German title *Hauspostille*.

Collaboration, Marxism, and epic theater

Brecht's authorship developed through workshops and partnerships rather than solitary composition. Elisabeth Hauptmann, who began working with him in the mid-1920s, translated, researched, drafted, edited, and helped shape major projects. Kurt Weill, Hanns Eisler, Paul Dessau, Erwin Piscator, Caspar Neher, Margarete Steffin, Ruth Berlau, Helene Weigel, and many others contributed music, design, performance, documentation, translation, and writing. Later scholarship has rightly challenged the habit of treating these collaborators—especially Hauptmann, Steffin, Berlau, and Weigel—as merely assistants or muses. The record shows an unusually collective practice, even when publication and fame accumulated under Brecht's name.

The spectacular success of *The Threepenny Opera* in 1928, with music by Weill and a foundation in Hauptmann's translation of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, made Brecht internationally famous. The subsequent *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, the didactic plays, *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, and the film *Kuhle Wampe* joined formal experiment to increasingly explicit Marxist analysis. Brecht studied political economy without becoming a conventionally disciplined party intellectual. His theater sought to interrupt absorption, expose social relations as changeable, and make audiences compare what they saw with the world outside the theater. The familiar phrase "alienation effect" names only one device within a larger practice of quotation, song, direct address, historicization, contradiction, and the actor's simultaneous presentation of character and judgment.

Flight from Germany and Scandinavian exile

After the Reichstag fire in February 1933, Brecht, Weigel, their children, and close collaborators left Germany. His books were burned by the Nazis that spring, and the regime stripped him of German citizenship in 1935. The family moved through Prague, Vienna, Zurich, and Paris before settling near Svendborg on the Danish island of Funen. Denmark became the longest station of the first exile. There Brecht wrote poetry later associated with the *Svendborg Poems* and developed such works as *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, *The Life of Galileo*, and *Mother Courage and Her Children* with extensive help from Steffin and others. His house became a working center for refugees, visiting artists, political debate, and constant correspondence with publishers and theaters.

The German occupation of neighboring countries forced the household onward: to Sweden in 1939 and Finland in 1940, where the writer Hella Wuolijoki provided refuge and material that contributed to *Mr Puntila and His Man Matti*. Ruth Berlau, a Danish writer, actor, photographer, and organizer, had joined Brecht's collaborative circle; her photographs and later model books would become essential records of his theater practice. Margarete Steffin, already gravely ill with tuberculosis, traveled with the group as far as Moscow. She died there in June 1941 while the others continued east. Her death devastated Brecht personally and removed one of his most important linguistic and dramatic collaborators.

The Pacific crossing and Santa Monica

In 1941 Brecht and his family crossed the Soviet Union by train to Vladivostok and sailed across the Pacific, reaching San Pedro in July. They rented a house at 1063 Twenty-Sixth Street in Santa Monica, close enough to the ocean, the studios, and a dispersed community of European refugees. Southern California offered safety, food, sunlight, and extraordinary company, but also linguistic isolation and dependence on an industry Brecht distrusted. The exile network included Lion Feuchtwanger, Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Arnold Schoenberg, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Salka Viertel, Fritz Lang, Peter Lorre, and Hanns Eisler. Brecht also met Charlie Chaplin, whose physical comedy he admired.

Money came irregularly from projects, translations, supporters, and attempted film work. Brecht sold the original story that became Fritz Lang's anti-Nazi film *Hangmen Also Die!* and worked on the screenplay, but disputes over credit and changes to the script deepened his contempt for studio practice. His most sustained American theatrical project was an English-language *Life of Galileo* developed with the actor Charles Laughton. Their method combined performance, paraphrase, and revision rather than literal translation. The play opened at the Coronet Theatre in Beverly Hills in July 1947 and later moved to New York.

The California poems and Hanns Eisler

California did not silence Brecht's poetry. It gave him a new set of emblems: pepper trees, oil wells, canyon roads, irrigated gardens, swimming pools, movie labor, wealthy villas, and the Pacific sky crossed by military aircraft. In September 1942 he recorded that Hans Winge had read some of the *Hollywood Elegies* written for Eisler and found them detached, "as if they had been written from Mars." Brecht answered that the detachment belonged to the city itself. The cycle's brevity turns observation into epigram: paradise and hell occupy the same address, culture goes "on the street" for money, and the four cities smell of film, oil, greed, and poverty.

Eisler remembered telling Brecht that Hollywood was the ideal place to write elegies and receiving an envelope of roughly thirty poems. He quickly set several. Brecht's manuscript group and Eisler's musical group are related but not identical. The six-part *Hollywood-Elegien* begins with the village planned as heaven and ends with fighter planes circling above the four cities. Eisler's *Fünf Elegien* selects and reorders texts, including poems not present in Brecht's six-part sequence; the larger *Hollywooder Liederbuch* eventually encompassed forty-six or forty-seven songs, depending on the editorial accounting. Confusion increased when sixteen songs circulated in 1948 under the broad title *Hollywood Elegies*. This edition keeps the manuscript poem sequence distinct from the songbook history.

Brecht's other California poems complicate the familiar picture of pure disgust. "On Thinking about Hell" compares Los Angeles with Shelley's London, moving from opulent flowers and tasteless fruit to the shared fear of eviction. "Summer 1942" places fig trees, buyers of lies, chessmen, and reports of Soviet bloodshed within one field of vision. "The Swamp," translated by

Naomi Replansky and associated with Peter Lorre's addiction, watches a friend sink slowly while remembering earlier conversations about the danger. These poems belong to a larger California body that also includes garden poems, household poems, war epigrams, journal passages, and work connected with Eisler's songs.

Surveillance, HUAC, and departure

Brecht's anti-fascism, Marxism, and work with communist artists made him a target as American politics shifted from wartime alliance to Cold War investigation. The FBI monitored him and assembled files while federal officials considered his petition for permanent residence. The House Committee on Un-American Activities subpoenaed him with other screenwriters and directors in 1947. Unlike the Hollywood Ten, Brecht chose to testify. On October 30 he answered the committee in accented English, denied membership in the Communist Party, explained or deflected questions about poems and plays, and performed the role of a cooperative foreign writer without surrendering control of the exchange. The surviving recording and transcript preserve the comedy, evasions, misunderstandings, and menace of the hearing.

Brecht left the United States on October 31, the day after his testimony. The timing was dramatic but not improvised: he had already planned to return to Europe. He traveled first to Paris and then Switzerland, where he worked on productions and sought a place to settle. Without German citizenship and unable to establish the theater he wanted in the Western zones, he eventually accepted an invitation to Berlin. He retained a complicated relationship to the United States—hostile to its political and commercial systems, indebted to friendships and opportunities found there, and permanently marked by the California landscape in his late poetry.

Return to Berlin and the Berliner Ensemble

Brecht returned to Berlin in 1948 and settled in the Soviet sector with Weigel. In 1949 they founded the Berliner Ensemble, initially housed at the Deutsches Theater and later at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. Weigel served as artistic administrator and leading actor, turning the company into a durable institution. Brecht directed, revised, rehearsed, documented, and trained performers; model books recorded productions through photographs and annotations so that staging decisions could be studied and challenged. The company's versions of *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and other works gave international audiences a concrete experience of techniques that had previously circulated mostly as theory.

Brecht became an Austrian citizen in 1950 and a member, later vice-president, of the East German Academy of Arts. His position in the German Democratic Republic was privileged but not simple. He accepted state support, defended socialist reconstruction, and received major honors, while resisting bureaucratic demands and maintaining his own company's artistic authority. After the workers' uprising of June 1953, the government publicized only the supportive final sentence of a more critical letter he sent to Walter Ulbricht. Brecht's private and poetic responses, including "The Solution," exposed the distance between official claims and workers' anger.

Final years, death, and archive

International recognition accelerated in the 1950s. The Berliner Ensemble's 1954 Paris appearance with *Mother Courage and Her Children* was a landmark, and Brecht received the Stalin Peace Prize in Moscow in 1955. His health, however, had long been fragile. He died in East Berlin on August 14, 1956, after heart trouble and was buried in the Dorotheenstadt Cemetery near the house he shared with Weigel. Weigel continued to lead the Berliner Ensemble until her death in 1971 and established the Bertolt Brecht Archive in December 1956.

The archive, now at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, holds more than a million documents: work manuscripts, diaries, notebooks, correspondence, production materials, photographs, and the surviving libraries of Brecht, Weigel, and parts of Hauptmann's collection. Its scale reflects Brecht's habit of revision and his collective method. It also makes attribution, sequence, and

textual status unusually complex. Brecht left one of the twentieth century's most influential bodies of drama, poetry, criticism, and performance practice, but that body is inseparable from exile, translation, music, institutional memory, and the often under-credited labor of collaborators. The California poems offer a concentrated view of all those forces: a German writer in an American city, writing for a composer, observing a film economy, and making displacement itself into form.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Scope, sequence, lineation, and translation history

This is a reset reading edition, not a facsimile. It centers on Brecht's Southern California poems and therefore does not claim to replace a complete edition of his poetry. The six German *Hollywood-Elegien* follow the sequence printed in the German collected poems: "Das Dorf Hollywood...", "Am Meer stehen die Öltürme...", "Die Stadt ist nach den Engeln genannt," "Unter den grünen Pfefferbäumen," "Die Engel von Los Angeles," and "Über den vier Städten..." The first poem was also checked against the 1942 typescript in the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv (BBA 16/57).

John Willett's six English poems are printed as a complete translation of that manuscript sequence. Adam Kirsch's five 2011 versions are kept in a separate section because they freely recast Brecht in rhyme and meter and draw partly on the texts Eisler selected for *Fünf Elegien*. They are not silently substituted for Willett's sequence. "On Thinking about Hell," "Summer 1942," "The Swamp," and "On the Term of Exile" are included as related California or exile poems with their translators named.

Each source line remains one verse line unless it is too long for the six-by-nine page; an automatic visual wrap is not treated as a new poetic line. Source-page hanging wraps have been rejoined. Stanza spaces are retained. Capitalization follows the cited print witness rather than the all-lowercase typescript, except that German nouns retain normal orthography. No translator has been inferred where the source does not identify one.

SOURCES

Primary texts and selected biographical and critical resources

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HOLLYWOOD-ELEGIEN

The six-poem German sequence | Santa Monica, 1942

I

Das Dorf Hollywood ist entworfen nach den Vorstellungen
Die man hierorts vom Himmel hat. Hierorts
Hat man ausgerechnet, daß Gott
Himmel und Hölle benötigend, nicht zwei
Etablissements zu entwerfen brauchte, sondern
Nur ein einziges, nämlich den Himmel. Dieser
Dient für die Unbemittelten, Erfolglosen
Als Hölle.

Publication. *Hollywood-Elegien* (1942), no. 1. Text checked against Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv typescript BBA 16/57 and the Suhrkamp collected-poems reading recorded by LiederNet, p. 849.

II

Am Meer stehen die Öltürme. In den Schluchten
Bleichen die Gebeine der Goldwäscher. Ihre Söhne
Haben die Traumfabriken von Hollywood gebaut.
Die vier Städte
Sind erfüllt von dem Ölgeruch
Der Filme.

Publication. *Hollywood-Elegien* (1942), no. 2. Suhrkamp collected-poems reading recorded by LiederNet, p. 849.

III

Die Stadt ist nach den Engeln genannt
Und man begegnet allenthalben Engeln.
Sie riechen nach Öl und tragen goldene Pessare
Und mit blauen Ringen um die Augen
Füttern sie allmorgendlich die Schreiber in ihren Schwimmpfählen.

Publication. *Hollywood-Elegien* (1942), no. 3. Text checked against the archived German sequence.
“Schwimmpfählen” is Brecht’s word, not OCR damage.

IV

Unter den grünen Pfefferbäumen
Gehen die Musiker auf den Strich, zwei und zwei
Mit den Schreibern. Bach
Hat ein Strichquartett im Täschen. Dante schwenkt
Den dürren Hintern.

Publication. *Hollywood-Elegien* (1942), no. 4. Suhrkamp collected-poems reading recorded by LiederNet, p. 850.

V

Die Engel von Los Angeles
Sind müde vom Lächeln. Am Abend
Kaufen sie hinter den Obstmärkten
Verzweifelt kleine Fläschchen
Mit Geschlechtsgeruch.

Publication. *Hollywood-Elegien* (1942), no. 5. Text collated with the German sequence in the project archive and *Die Gedichte von Bertolt Brecht in einem Band*, p. 850.

VI

Über den vier Städten kreisen die Jagdflieger
Der Verteidigung in großer Höhe
Damit der Gestank der Gier und des Elends
Nicht bis zu ihnen heraufdringt.

Publication. *Hollywood-Elegien* (1942), no. 6. Suhrkamp collected-poems reading recorded by LiederNet, p. 850.

HOLLYWOOD ELEGIES

Translated from the German by John Willett

I

The village of Hollywood was planned according to the notion
People in these parts have of heaven. In these parts
They have come to the conclusion that God
Requiring a heaven and a hell, didn't need to
Plan two establishments but
Just the one: heaven. It
Serves the unprosperous, unsuccessful
As hell.

Publication. *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913–1956*, edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim (London: Methuen, 1976), p. 380. Translated by John Willett.

II

By the sea stand the oil derricks. Up the canyons
The gold prospectors' bones lie bleaching. Their sons
Built the dream factories of Hollywood.
The four cities
Are filled with the oily smell
Of films.

Publication. *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913–1956* (Methuen, 1976), p. 380. Translated by John Willett.

III

The city is named after the angels
And you meet angels on every hand.
They smell of oil and wear golden pessaries
And, with blue rings round their eyes
Feed the writers in their swimming pools every morning.

Publication. *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913–1956* (Methuen, 1976), p. 380. Translated by John Willett.

IV

Beneath the green pepper trees
The musicians play the whore, two by two
With the writers. Bach
Has written a Strumpet Voluntary. Dante wriggles
His shrivelled bottom.

Publication. *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913–1956* (Methuen, 1976), pp. 380–81. Translated by John Willett.

V

The angels of Los Angeles
Are tired out with smiling. Desperately
Behind the fruit stalls of an evening
They buy little bottles
Containing sex odours.

Publication. *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913–1956* (Methuen, 1976), p. 381. Translated by John Willett.

VI

Above the four cities the fighter planes
Of the Defense Department circle at a great height
So that the stink of greed and poverty
Shall not reach them.

Publication. *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913–1956* (Methuen, 1976), p. 381. Translated by John Willett.

FIVE HOLLYWOOD ELEGIES

Versions by Adam Kirsch | Poetry, June 2011

I

Under the long green hair of pepper trees,
The writers and composers work the street.
Bach's new score is crumpled in his pocket,
Dante sways his ass-cheeks to the beat.

Publication. *Poetry* 198, no. 3 (June 2011), p. 247. Translated from the German by Adam Kirsch.

II

The city is named for the angels,
And its angels are easy to find.
They give off a lubricant odor,
Their eyes are mascara-lined;
At night you can see them inserting
Gold-plated diaphragms;
For breakfast they gather at poolside
Where screenwriters feed and swim.

Publication. *Poetry* 198, no. 3 (June 2011), p. 247. Translated from the German by Adam Kirsch.

III

Every day, I go to earn my bread
In the exchange where lies are marketed,
Hoping my own lies will attract a bid.

Publication. *Poetry* 198, no. 3 (June 2011), p. 248. Translated from the German by Adam Kirsch.

IV

It's Hell, it's Heaven: the amount you earn
Determines if you play the harp or burn.

Publication. *Poetry* 198, no. 3 (June 2011), p. 248. Translated from the German by Adam Kirsch.

V

Gold in their mountains,
Oil on their coast;
Dreaming in celluloid
Profits them most.

Publication. *Poetry* 198, no. 3 (June 2011), p. 248. Translated from the German by Adam Kirsch.

CALIFORNIA AND EXILE POEMS

Related poems, 1941–1942

Nachdenkend über die Hölle

Los Angeles, 1942

Nachdenkend, wie ich höre, über die Hölle
Fand mein Bruder Shelley, sie sei ein Ort
Gleichend ungefähr der Stadt London. Ich
Der ich nicht in London lebe, sondern in Los Angeles
Finde, nachdenkend über die Hölle, sie muß
Noch mehr Los Angeles gleichen.

Auch in der Hölle
Gibt es, zweifle nicht, diese üppigen Gärten
Mit den Blumen, so groß wie Bäume, freilich verwelkend
Ohne Aufschub, wenn nicht gewässert mit sehr teurem Wasser. Und
Obstmärkte
Mit ganzen Haufen von Früchten, die allerdings
Weder riechen noch schmecken. Und endlose Züge von Autos
Leichter als ihr eigener Schatten, schneller als
Törichte Gedanken, schimmernde Fahrzeuge, in denen
Rosige Leute, von nirgendher kommend, nirgendhin fahren.
Und Häuser, für Glückliche gebaut, daher leerstehend
Auch wenn bewohnt.

Auch die Häuser in der Hölle sind nicht alle häßlich.
Aber die Sorge, auf die Straße geworfen zu werden
Verzehrt die Bewohner der Villen nicht weniger als
Die Bewohner der Baracken.

Publication. Written in Los Angeles in 1942; collected in *Gedichte im Exil*, p. 52. German text checked against the project's archived teaching edition and the German collected-poems record.

On Thinking about Hell

Translated by Nicholas Jacobs

On thinking about Hell, I gather
My brother Shelley found it was a place
Much like the city of London. I
Who live in Los Angeles and not in London
Find, on thinking about Hell, that it must be
Still more like Los Angeles.

In Hell too
There are, I've no doubt, these luxuriant gardens
With flowers as big as trees, which of course wither
Unhesitatingly if not nourished with very expensive water. And fruit markets
With great heaps of fruit, albeit having
Neither smell nor taste. And endless processions of cars
Lighter than their own shadows, faster than
Mad thoughts, gleaming vehicles in which
Jolly-looking people come from nowhere and are nowhere bound.
And houses, built for happy people, therefore standing empty
Even when lived in.

The houses in Hell, too, are not all ugly.
But the fear of being thrown on the street
Wears down the inhabitants of the villas no less than
The inhabitants of the shanty towns.

Publication. *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913–1956* (Methuen, 1976), p. 367. Translated by Nicholas Jacobs.

Summer 1942

Translated by John Willett

Day after day
I see the fig trees in the garden
The rosy faces of the dealers who buy lies
The chessmen on the corner table
And the newspapers with their reports
Of bloodbaths in the Soviet Union.

Publication. *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913–1956* (Methuen, 1976), p. 379. Translated by John Willett.

The Swamp

Translated by Naomi Replansky

I saw many friends, and among them the friend I loved most
Helplessly sink into the swamp
I pass by daily.

And a drowning was not over
In a single morning. Often it took
Weeks; this made it more terrible.
And the memory of our long talks together
About the swamp, that already
Had claimed so many.

Helpless I watched him, leaning back
Covered with leeches
In the shimmering
Softly moving slime:
Upon the sinking face
The ghastly
Blissful smile.

Publication. *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913–1956* (Methuen, 1976), pp. 381–82. English text by Naomi Replansky after Brecht; later set by Hanns Eisler as *Hollywood-Elegie* Nr. 7.

On the Term of Exile

Translated by Adam Kirsch

No need to drive a nail into the wall
To hang your hat on;
When you come in, just drop it on the chair
No guest has sat on.

Don't worry about watering the flowers—
In fact, don't plant them.
You will have gone back home before they bloom,
And who will want them?

If mastering the language is too hard,
Only be patient;
The telegram imploring your return
Won't need translation.

Remember, when the ceiling sheds itself
In flakes of plaster,
The wall that keeps you out is crumbling too,
As fast or faster.

Publication. *Poetry* 198, no. 3 (June 2011), p. 249. Translated from the German by Adam Kirsch.

COLOPHON

Production record

Hollywood Elegies was reset for *Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry* from manuscript, book, periodical, and institutional witnesses preserved in the project archive. The edition was designed at six by nine inches in EB Garamond 12, with mirrored book margins and the Green series palette. Every poem begins on a new page and carries a source-specific publication note. The cover art was selected from the existing Brecht cover archive and recentered for the standard Green artwork panel.