

Jurek Becker

am Strand  
von Bochum ist  
allerhand los

Postkarten

SUHRKAMP



SV



Jurek Becker

»on the beach  
at Bochum there's  
a lot going on«

Postcards

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Abb. S. 321: Larry Towell, The Sydenham River, Ontario, Canada 1975, © Larry Towell/Magnum Photos/Agentur Focus. Abb. S. 358: George Brassai, Kiki und ihr Akkordeonspieler im »Cabaret des Fleurs«, 1932, © bpk/RMN – Grand Palais/Estate Brassai. Abb. S. 370: Joan Miró, Le sourire des ailes flamboyantes, 1953, © Successió Miró/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2018.

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»on the beach at Bochum there's a lot going on«



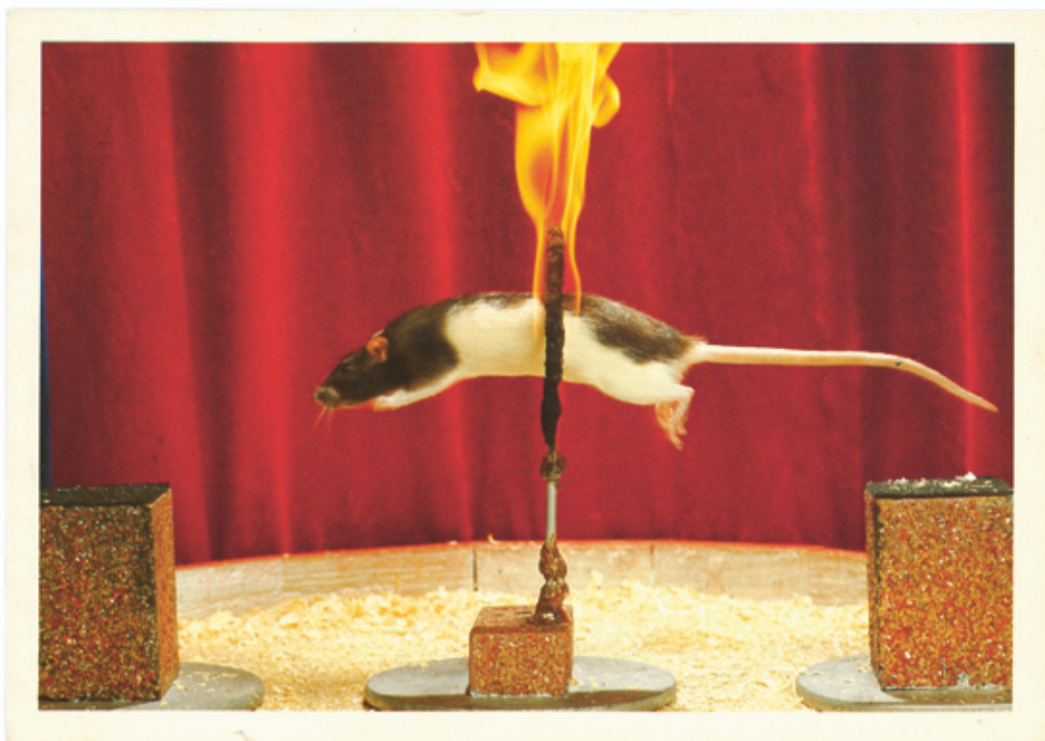


To: Christine Becker, Berlin [West]

9. 12. 1986 [Berlin]

My Little Pantofle,  
you're afraid of those  
animals<sup>1</sup>? When I  
imagine how cute it's become  
under our bathtub,  
it makes me  
sad that all the hustle and  
bustle is over.  
Now you're all I have left.  
Your hero

- 1 In the flat in Kreuzberg rats had made  
a nest in the bathroom. With various  
grating, the problem was solved.



To: Christine Becker, Berlin

16. 7. 1990 [Berlin]

You old Soft Pretzel You,  
What did I tell you –  
you're going to have a kid, and  
now you have one<sup>1</sup>. To be honest,  
it took a little while  
to get this one  
going, but you can't  
deny that our many  
attempts also had their rather  
pleasant sides.  
Either way, my friends and  
I shall sing you a serenade and  
together shout: Well done, you  
old fried herring! We all send you  
a kiss, me in particular. Jurek

1 Jonathan was born in June 1990.



To: Christine Becker, Berlin

18. 4. 1991 [Berlin]

You old Velcro Strap You,  
that's more or less how I imagine  
France to be<sup>1</sup>, naturally not  
together with a blond kid, but  
with you, and not behind me  
but in front of me, and not lying  
on top of me, but sitting in  
front of me, across from me, at a  
table, in a swanky  
(if you like expensive) restaurant,  
you in a black blazer,  
I know, forbidden dreams. And yet  
some dreams come true,  
who'd know that more than  
Your Jurek

<sup>1</sup> This refers to a planned summer holiday  
in France.





To: Christine Becker, Berlin

18. 7. 1991 [Sieseby]

You Old Sugar Bead You,  
do you remember how we'd laid down  
on that promenade or  
at least somewhere close by? And how  
the whole time you said: say  
nine-thirty? And how I didn't understand  
what you meant until it became clear  
that that was the key to your heart?  
The fact that you change the key so often  
is a considerable problem for,  
having just found one, in no time  
at all you need a new one.  
But I won't give up, you can count  
on that, I'm as tough as a GDR Schnitzel.  
In L., Your Heartkeysmith  
Jurek



To: Christine Becker, Berlin

21. 9. 1992 [Bochum]

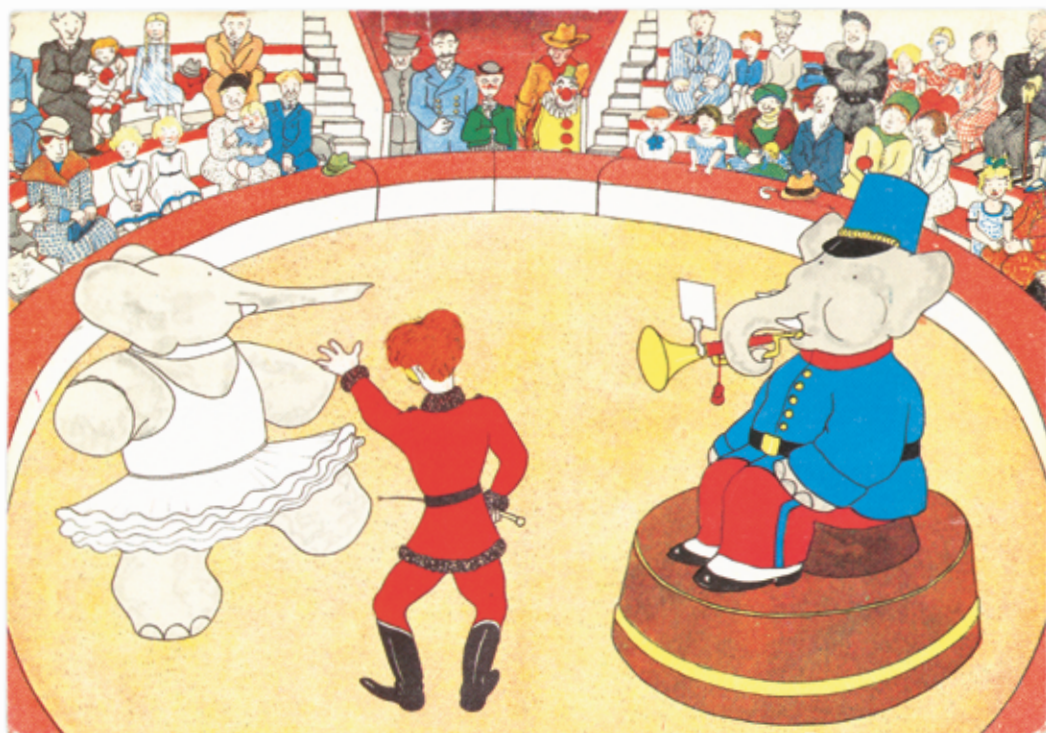
You old Organic Carrot You,  
here on the beach at Bochum there's  
a lot going on. One always imagines  
that beaches in the Ruhrgebiet are  
gritty and the water  
dirty – nonsense. No waves,  
hardly any wind, the beach isn't overrun,  
every few metres a free  
beach umbrella. The only thing is that  
there're a lot of jellyfish, but I don't want  
to start complaining:  
you could find fault even with seaside  
resorts like Berlin, Acapulco  
or Honolulu.  
Kisses J.



To: Johnny Becker, Berlin

28. 10. 1992 [Regensburg]

You old Beanie,  
did you already know that Babar  
can also play the trumpet?  
In any event, the sound's not all that  
great. I asked him if he might  
learn to play better. But  
Babar answered that he wasn't  
interested, elephants that could  
play trumpet would be  
pretty stupid indeed. What do you think –  
is he on to something?  
Your Popycockpapa





To: Christine Becker, Becker

28.10.1992 [Regensburg]

You old Secondary Agreement You,  
here in Regensburg, where I am  
unhappily residing, I don't like  
my hotel room – no  
cable TV. I talked with  
Strohmaier<sup>1</sup> about it, but  
no other room was to be had.  
I asked for some kind  
of compensation, and he  
offered to go to the zoo  
with Johnny before too long.  
I accepted.  
Your Skilled Negotiator  
J.



- <sup>1</sup> Between 1962 and 2016 Fred Strohmaier was the owner of the Atlantis Bookshop in Regensburg.



To: Christine Becker, Berlin

9. II. 1992 [Saarbrücken]

Du alte Inflationsrate,  
dies ist zur Abwechslung eine sehr  
ernste Karte. Genaugenommen ist es  
keine Karte, sondern eine Art Gutschein:  
Hiermit verpflichte ich mich, für die  
nächsten 30 Jahre jede Art von Jam-  
mern von Dir entgegenzunehmen,  
und zwar ohne ein Zeichen von  
Ungeduld und mit ÄUSSERSTEM  
Verständnis. Die Verpflichtung  
erlischt erst an dem Tag, an dem  
mir ein Amtsarzt Depressionen  
bescheinigt, vermutlich also nie.  
Deine Frohnatur  
J.





To: Christine Becker, Berlin

12. II. 1992 [Stuttgart]

You old Double Whopper You,  
Stuttgart, nothing else  
to say. I'm sitting in the café  
and see I'm no longer on the *Stern*-  
Bestseller list. Can you imagine – simply  
gone! How can  
people do something like that to  
others? Isn't that something  
for AI<sup>1</sup>? By all means I'm going to  
talk about it tonight at  
my reading, and that only.  
We shall overcome!  
J.



1 The human rights organisation  
Amnesty International.



To: Christine Becker, Berlin

16. II. 1992 [Heidelberg]

You old Rent Index You,  
Heidelberg's an odd place. At first  
I couldn't find it, then  
I couldn't find my hotel.  
Then they sent me to a  
car park which I couldn't  
find and then out of revenge I  
lost my hotel key. Maybe  
the people at the reading  
are expecting Günter Grass, but  
it doesn't matter – I'll just  
grit my teeth and  
read Homo Faber<sup>1</sup>.  
Your Late Homecomer  
J.



1 Novel by Max Frisch.



To: Christine Becker, Berlin

8. 9. 1993 [Göteborg<sup>1</sup>]

You old Relationship You,  
that among the 16 cable channels  
there wasn't a single one on which I could  
watch the US-Open<sup>2</sup>, I've already told you,  
and this is the most important thing,  
what there is to say about Göteborg. As I  
don't have a single book with me either,  
I take this opportunity to  
listen deeply within myself. And  
what bottomless pits sound,  
my God, what bottomless pits!  
Your Idolizinginnerone  
Jurek



- 1 Invited by the Ausstellungs- und Messe-GmbH of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association J. B. travelled to the Bok & Bibliotek book fair in Göteborg. The occasion was the Swedish translation of *Heartless Amanda*. The Goethe-Institut was also involved.
- 2 United States Open Tennis Championship, The United States Open Tennis Championship, the complete title of the Tennis championship.



»Jurek Becker's singular sense of humour was present everywhere: in his literary works as in his private correspondence. But that sense of humour and levity which arise from his communication were for Becker no less a job than the works with which he made his living – as a writer his day never ended, not even when he was only writing a postcard to his son.«

*Letters Move the World*