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Balladen aus dem Schauspiel «Die Mutter»

Lob des Lernens

Bequeme 1 (1. Aufl. 1921)

rit: tempo 1.1

5

Ler-ne das einfa-chste, für die da-sein Zeit ge-kommen ist, ist es nie zu spät!

Ler-ne das A B C, es ge-nügt nicht, a-ber ler-ne es! Laß es dich nicht ver-.

10 Poco pesante

die-ßen, fang an! Du mußt al-le-s wis-sen! Du mußt die fäh-ri-gung ü-ber-

15 f

neh-men! Du mußt die fäh-ri-gung ü-ber-neh-men! Ler-ne, Mann im A-.

INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY COMMUNICATIONS

Volume 18

July 1989

Number 2

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See the inside back cover for information on subscriptions and membership; membership in the IBS includes subscriptions to both COMMUNICATIONS and The Brecht Yearbook.

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Cover: First page of the Brecht-Eisler song "Lob des Lernens" ["Du mußt die Führung übernehmen"] as published by Editions du Carrefour (Paris), 1934; the song is referred to by Wolf Biermann in the interview on pp. 21-34 of this issue.

2 Communications

Editor's Note

There are several things I'd like to bring to the attention of COMMUNICATIONS readers:

- Note the provisional announcement for the 8th IBS International Symposium (Augsburg, West Germany, December 1991) on p. 6.
- This issue includes a directory of all paid-up individual members as of July 1, 1989 (p. 75), of which there are but 120 ... (as of that date, a mere 27 institutions had paid 1989 dues, although a larger number continue to receive COMMUNICATIONS. As noted on p. 75, address corrections and updates are requested (BITTE!).
- A detailed announcement concerning the status of the Brecht Yearbook will be sent to the membership sometime in the late summer or early fall.
- It is by no means too early to begin scouting around for the next editor of COMMUNICATIONS. Persons interested in the job (reinste Ideali-stenarbeit!) or who know of a likely, qualified candidate should contact me as soon as possible.
- Please note the BITNET electronic mail address and FAX number on the inside cover; they are the fastest and cheapest way to communicate!

Finally--a special word of gratitude to my student-aide Catherine A. Turner for her competent assistance this past year.

--Michael Gilbert

Letters & Inquiries

Dear Editor,

Two pieces of information in Vol. 18/1 of COMMUNICATIONS, January 1989, need correction.

Page 55: In her paper, "The Role of the Scientist: A Fall from Grace," Maria P. Alter states that Heinar Kipphardt left the GDR in 1950 for "the West and began to write plays ..." Kipphardt merely left his position as a physician with the East Berlin hospital Charité in 1950, when he joined the staff of the Deutsches Theater as Dramaturg. He served with the theater until 1959 and then returned to Düsseldorf where he had received his M.D. Two of his plays were produced at the Deutsches Theater in the fifties: the satire Shakespeare dringend gesucht (1952), and the tragi-comedy Der staunenswerte Aufstieg des Alois Piontek (1956); he received the National Prize of the GDR in 1953. In relation to the paper it is important to know that Kipphardt had frequent contact with Brecht during those years.

Page 72: The announced Menahem Golan movie of The Threepenny Opera is not the first new film version since Pabst's production of 1930. There was a not very successful Threepenny-film produced in West Berlin in 1959, with Curd Juergens as Macheath and Sammy Davis, Jr. as the ballad singer.

Carl Weber
Department of Drama
Stanford University

* * * * *

Composer JOANNE FORMAN is currently preparing a new, original score for Brecht's The Exception and the Rule. The composer of more than seventy works, including six one-act operas, orchestral, choral and chamber music, Ms. Forman is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Composer's Fellowship as well as numerous other awards and honors.

Anyone interested in the possibility of mounting The Exception and the Rule should contact the composer directly at P.O. Box 1101, Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico 87557 USA; (message) telephone (505) 758-2241.

—————

Dear IBS,

Bertolt Brecht, in an admonition dear to my heart, taught us never to operate on an apparatus without changing it. That typically uncompromising Brechtian dictum is certainly worthy of emulation because if one is committed, principled and in tune with socio-political realities, the status-quo must always and inevitably be subjected to unrelenting criticism.

However, what method of attack/approach should be employed if the apparatus in question is a stonewall, an immovable object, a bastion of anti-Brechtian bias? Of course, the clearly unveiled reference is directed against the indigenous brand or variety of art (culture?) presently taking center stage in the USA, where serious drama faces innumerable obstacles, as light-headed comedies have become de rigueur. Anglo-North America occasionally overrides the prevailing sentiment, as Toronto did in its well-received and highly successful conference/theater festival "Brecht--Thirty Years After" in 1986. Nonetheless, the English-speaking theatre world--perhaps reacting in part to the international acclaim accorded Brecht--is steadfast in its rejection of Brechtiana. How else does one explain the fact that Chicago has yet to mount a professional production of Saint Joan of the Stockyards, or that the Reagan government refused admittance to the Berliner Ensemble on political grounds, or that the West End congratulated itself when Arturo Ui failed to garner box office support in 1987?

If evidence exists to suggest a less than positive attitude toward Brecht, where are the prospects for aspiring playwrights who identify themselves as Brechtians and write in the English language? Since I believe I

fit the aforementioned description, I feel I possess enough experience to comment without reservation: the chances are not good. Recognizing that fact has led me to your doorstep because perhaps other Brechtians can direct an uninitiated, though serious dramatist into the company of theatres, directors, or producers, who appreciate the great contributions made by Brecht. Therefore, if my request can be regarded as a desperate cry for assistance rather than as an imposition, I am forwarding a detailed synopsis of my play <below> for evaluation. If you are able to respond to my letter of inquiry and synopsis, please be so kind as to contact me at the address indicated below.

May I thank you in advance for your professional attention to my material. I can assure you it is truly generously appreciated.

Ronald V. Neal
JAF, Box 7745
New York, NY 10116

SYNOPSIS: *The Eagle Flies On Friday*

It's the turbulent 70's in CHICAGO, amid the turmoil of the war in Vietnam, ethnic unrest, college protests, and rank-and-file dissent, that confronts the aspirations of OSSIE ROBOTHAM, a Jamaican émigré. OSSIE ROBOTHAM, an apprentice pipefitter in an affirmative action program, discovers America the *immigrant way*—on the job (where he faces racial and labor strife), at home (where he challenges the Pan-African philosophy of his cousin MTOOLY MBAAH), and at play (where he learns that payday is playday). In his encounters with the very real characters of the USA—from the one-eyed Polish radical CITIZEN KOSCIUSKO to MELISSA, the feminist intellectual—OSSIE ROBOTHAM, though seemingly unpolished and rural in origin, remains true to his analytical nature, refusing to accept without struggle the 'givens' of his status, nor the consequences that inevitably ensue.

Act I immerses us in the rough underbelly of CHICAGO: an old-line union hall with all the trappings of bluster and bloodletting. JONATHAN NAKAMURA, business manager for A-OK Construction, addresses newcomers to the industry on the advantages of working with the company before giving way to labor leader "BIG BILL" BAILEY and his team (composed of IRA GREENE; SAM 'NBA JONES; and the ominous specter of THE ENFORCER). "BIG BILL" BAILEY, under the guidance of advisor/consultant IRA GREENE, lectures the apprentices—largely recruited from un(der) employed ethnic minorities and women—on the value of playing the game and thus furthering the social peace program of management and the labor bosses. Orientation, as it were, proceeds according to plan until the unscheduled appearance of the enigmatic CITIZEN KOSCIUSKO, who disrupts the gathering by accusing both management and labor of blatantly disregarding safety standards. He then engages the RANK-AND-FILE DISSIDENT in a lively, though unfocused, debate on the burning social issues of the day: trade unionism, speed-up, martyrdom, Black Power, the media, WASP rule, working stiffs, special interest groups, and "the people." OSSIE ROBOTHAM, a West Indian participant in the building trades, offers his perspective as an outsider looking in, but CITIZEN KOSCIUSKO, hellbent on mayhem and oblivious to reason, launches a tirade against everything in sight, concluding the scene by ripping to shreds the image (in the form of an oversized poster) and the legacy of Samuel Gompers.

When Act II opens, we have been transported from the chaos and confusion along Ashland Avenue to the relative serenity of a college campus (which, according to popular legend, is a great place "for finding out what *other* people don't know"). MTOOLY MBAAH, a part-time student whose full-time ambition is to lead a Back-to-Africa movement, embraces our attention as he performs an elaborate ritual designed to enrapture his flock of 'true believers'. Unobserved, OSSIE ROBOTHAM, distant cousin to MTOOLY MBAAH, enters, then stands in the shadows and spars—verbally—with the precepts, half-baked truths and denunciations of The Big Black Book. Ultimately, MTOOLY MBAAH, bedecked in a dashiki and carrying an ivory cane, awakens from his trancelike state to behold OSSIE ROBOTHAM and the two vow to renew the ties of kinship and friendship.

Scene II of Act II provides a second glimpse of university living—with the additional accoutrements of a water bed, SONY stereo, color television and *modern* couple. MELISSA, blonde and chic in the New York vogue, expects to receive a Ph.D. in the social sciences, which she will use to advance the cause of feminism; her live-in boyfriend, RICHARD OLNEY TALMAN III, is pursuing a Master's degree in Business Administration, after having rejected a career in physics (the hard sciences) for his true love in life: money (the more, the merrier is his motto). Their relationship—tenuous, at best—revolves around the mutual disrespect they have for each other's careers. Just as another argument is about to erupt on Friday night, M'TOOLY MBAAH arrives to introduce OSSIE ROBOTHAM, enabling MELISSA and RICHARD OLNEY TALMAN III to put aside their differences so that a foreign visitor may be properly entertained. And our foursome spends the evening partaking in mock-serious battles, provocative conversation, and assorted fun and games before realizing that their collective cups are empty; in other words, the party's over.

By the beginning of the third and last act, the curtains have been drawn for the tragic denouement. CITIZEN KOSCIUSKO strikes a self-pitying pose in Scene I of Act III, as he recounts his personal life to the best friend of the working class ('good ole Jack Daniels'). However, the Polish radical is forced to take cover when he overhears IRA GREENE and "BIG BILL" BAILEY plotting to eliminate undesirables and malcontents. On the other side of town, OSSIE ROBOTHAM is giddy with joy over the paycheck in his pocket; immediately, he heads for the streets and a taste of Chicago's nightlife. Bright lights, high-flying banners, and TV cameras command center stage in Scene III of Act III, as local politicians, the media, and A-OK Construction Company personnel are scheduled to appear at a ceremony honoring the successful apprentices. MELISSA, M'TOOLY MBAAH, and RICHARD OLNEY TALMAN III join the celebration on behalf of OSSIE ROBOTHAM, who beams with pride. But the aura of optimism and euphoria is short-lived: the Senator fails to materialize; CITIZEN KOSCIUSKO and the RANK-AND-FILE DISSIDENT slip through a security net; and the MASS MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE expresses disappointment at the lack of "action." It doesn't take long for doom—in the form of an industrial accident—to descend. The explosion that occurs blinds OSSIE ROBOTHAM and kills a second worker, leaving the audience dumbstruck. As a kaleidoscope shines on each character, individual versions (and scapegoats) for the events that transpired are offered. In the background we listen attentively to The Temptations singing about how "the eagle flies on Friday," as the MASS MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE puts the death-knell on the festivities with the ironic remark, "And that's our lead story for tonight!"

Dear Colleagues,

As you may know, <IBS member> Herbert Lederer is planning to retire shortly from his position as Professor of German at the University of Connecticut. Because he has served the profession so well and because he has meant so much to many of us, we have prepared a collection of essays on German-language drama in his honor.

We invite you to subscribe to the volume now and to be included in the tabula congratulatoria. For further information, please contact either:

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or

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Storrs, CT 06269 USA
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IBS Officers' Reports

Provisional Announcement:

8TH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

"Brecht und Weimar--Rethinking Brecht"

Augsburg, West Germany
December 9-13, 1991

In light of the full support offered to the IBS by both the city and University of Augsburg, FRG for the next International Symposium, it has been decided to make a provisional announcement at this time. The bilingual theme chosen for the symposium has two parts which, in the words of IBS President Antony Tatlow, "may but need not be related to each other." The detailed organization of the symposium will be handled by Dr. Bernd Mahl, Tübingen, with local support from Prof. Helmut Koopman of the Universität Augsburg. A call for papers will be issued later this year.

In addition to the symposium sessions, the program will feature theater productions in Augsburg and Munich, other performances (songs/poetry), and several tours of interest to IBS members: "Auf den Spuren des jungen Brecht in Augsburg" with Wolfgang Höper (Staatstheater Stuttgart) and personnel of the Augsburger Verkehrsverein; an exhibition, "Frankreich im Werk Bertolt Brechts," with tours conducted by representatives of the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv (Berlin/GDR); and an excursion, "Auf den Spuren Brechts in München," with Wolfgang Höper and Bernd Mahl, which will include a visit to the Karl-Valentin-Museum. Professor Mahl strongly recommends the following reading in preparation for the Augsburg symposium:

Walter Brecht, Unser Leben in Augsburg, damals. Erinnerungen (Suhrkamp)

Werner Frisch and K.W. Obermeier, eds., Brecht in Augsburg. Erinnerungen, Texte, Fotos (Suhrkamp)

and

Manfred Voigts, ed., 100 Texte zu Brecht. Materialien aus der Weimarer Republik (Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München)

Inquiries concerning the 8th IBS International Symposium should be directed to: Bernd and Sylvia Mahl, Hainbuchenweg 23, D-7400 Tübingen 1, FRG, Tel. 07071/66132. The next issue of COMMUNICATIONS (January 1990) will contain further details on the program and other arrangements.

IBS FINANCIAL REPORT
(as of May 31, 1989)

September 30, 1988	May 31, 1989
	receipts: \$2554.95
	disbursements: \$1274.70
balance: \$3169.84	<u>balance</u> : \$4450.09
additional funds*: DM 860,49	DM 937,90
(*Deutsche Bank Düsseldorf, Konto Nr. 76-74146)	

VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT
John Rouse

I have two urgent requests concerning our convention programming. We have the possibility of a new affiliation but problems loom with our old one. First, the problems. Last December, the MLA Program Committee proposed changes in the guidelines governing allied organizations that would directly--and adversely--impact the IBS. Fortunately, the MLA Delegate Assembly voted to return these proposals to the Executive Council for reconsideration with the recommendation that broader input from the membership be solicited before making a final decision. The Council appointed an ad hoc committee to receive the Program Committee's comments which is to report to the Delegate Assembly in December 1989 (the proposed changes are reprinted below from the May 1988 issue of PHLA). I urge you to write your divisional and/or regional executive committee members to express your concern in this matter; send a copy to Phyllis Franklin, editor of the MLA Newsletter. A copy of my own letter is included below. You may feel more strongly than I that allied organizations like the IBS be allowed to schedule two panels every year. Also, please write to your own regional representative so we can get good geographical spread; names and addresses can be found in the MLA Directory (see the September 1988 issue of PHLA). It would be best if the representative had your input by the end of August.

Meanwhile, the IBS application for associate membership with the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) is still pending. The ATHE Board of Governors and THEatre FORUM met in January 1989. Composed of representatives of the ATHE "focus groups" (roughly comparable to MLA divisions),

the FORUM apportions panels at ATHE conventions and advises the ATHE Board of Governors. The Board and FORUM decided not to admit any new associate members until the FORUM has finished working out a policy for admission and review of FORUM members. The FORUM has not needed a formal policy up to now, but applications from small organizations like the IBS have raised issues of finance and representation. The FORUM hopes to finish work on its policy at the August ATHE convention. The IBS's application for affiliation will be reconsidered at this time. However, we have been permitted to hold a business meeting in August (to test the waters for new members among the ATHE) and to co-sponsor a panel with Theory and Criticism, one of the FORUM focus groups. We may be able to gain affiliation in August, or to gain the more or less constant right to co-sponsor programming with existing focus groups like Theory/Criticism or Theatre and Social Change. Our chances will be greatly increased if any of you who are interested join the ATHE. To join, write ATHE, c/o Theatre Service, P.O. Box 15282, Evansville, IN 47716 and request a membership application. Membership is \$50.00 a year regular, \$30. a year for full-time students and retirees, and \$75.00 a year for organizations. Get your department to join! The ATHE Convention is usually held during the second week in August; This year the convention will be August 3-5 in New York City. The 1990 convention will be in Chicago. If you join ATHE, please drop me a postcard and let me know!

* * * * *

Recommendations concerning allied organizations as approved by the MLA Executive Council (from PMLA 103/3, May 1988); sections pertinent to the situation of the IBS have been marked. The current (summer) issue of the MLA Newsletter contains further information on these and other proposed changes affecting MLA convention programming.

3. *Allied Organizations.* Acting on a recommendation from the Program Committee, the council approved several revisions in the policies and procedures governing allied organizations. The current policies and procedures are printed on pages 456-57 of the September 1987 issue of *PMLA*. The revised policies and procedures approved by the council are printed below, with changes in boldface. These revisions will be presented to the Delegate Assembly for its approval in December 1988. If approved by the assembly, the revised guidelines will go into effect upon their publication in the September 1989 issue of *PMLA*.

6. Allied Organization Meetings

Learned societies and professional associations with purposes and activities closely allied to those of the MLA are welcome to propose arranging meetings at the MLA convention. Often the size of these organizations and the highly specialized interests of their members mean that holding a convention on their own is not possible or desirable. Since most of their members may also be MLA members, holding sessions during the MLA convention helps attract the maximum number of persons who share

the organizations' interests. Further, these programs enrich the range and diversity of the convention offerings.

Requests for allied organization status. Allied organizations must be membership organizations that are learned societies or professional organizations whose interests encompass disciplines represented by the MLA and whose purposes and activities are closely allied to the MLA's. Qualifying organizations that would like to arrange meetings at the convention should submit a written request to the Program Committee in order to initiate a two-year application process before their consideration for approval by the Executive Council upon the recommendation of the Program Committee. Before the initial request is made organizations must (1) be in existence for at least three years, (2) have in effect for at least three years a constitution or a set of bylaws that allows all members to participate in the governance of the organization, (3) have at least 100 dues-paying members, fifty percent of whom are MLA members. (Exceptions may be made for organizations involved in less commonly taught languages, for large teaching organizations that include substantial numbers of elementary and secondary school teachers, and for organizations that have large numbers of scholars in other academic disciplines.) Before final consideration by the Executive Council, the organization must have arranged three special sessions at three different conventions.

Initial requests should include (1) a statement of the organization's purpose, the date the organization was founded, and its reasons for wishing to arrange meetings at the MLA convention; (2) a copy of the organization's constitution or bylaws showing the date of adoption; (3) a current membership list with MLA members indicated and a sample membership application; and (4) samples of all the organization's printed communications to members over the past year. To be considered, requests must be received by 1 February of the year in which the two-year application process will begin. During the two-year period, samples of all printed communications the organization sends to its members and annually updated membership lists must be sent to the allied organization liaison in the MLA convention office. After two years, the Program Committee will consider the scholarly nature of the organization's materials, publications, and activities and will make recommendations to the MLA Executive Council. Allied organization status will be reviewed for each organization every seven years by the Program Committee; organizations that are due to be reviewed will be notified and requested to send updated materials.

Arranging allied organization meetings. Approved allied organizations may arrange one program meeting and one closed meeting at the convention. (A meeting lasts one hour and fifteen minutes.) Organizations that have more than 250 MLA members on the membership rolls may arrange a second program

meeting; organizations with fewer than 250 MLA members must use the special-session process to arrange a second meeting. As an alternative to regular program meetings, allied organizations may propose a forum (see sec. 5), perhaps in conjunction with another approved allied organization, a division, or a discussion group.

Allied organizations are also encouraged to arrange informal social gatherings during the convention—luncheons, dinners, or cash bars for cocktails or nightcaps.

An allied organization that plans to arrange a meeting must indicate its intention in writing before 1 March, briefly describing the topic and listing the names of the tentative panelists. Calls for papers may be announced in the *MLA Newsletter*, the Winter and Spring issues being the most useful for soliciting participants. After 1 March, an organizer should confirm with panelists their intention to participate in the session and reiterate what is expected of them. Organizers are responsible for returning the appropriate Program copy forms by a deadline announced in the calendar prepared for the year.

Like speakers and panelists for all other meetings at the MLA convention, those who are on allied organization programs must be MLA members (unless the membership requirement has been waived; see sec. 1). Allied organization meetings and social functions that are listed in the body of the Program are open to all persons registered at the convention.

Vice-President John Rouse's letter to:

Phyllis Franklin, Editor, MLA Newsletter

Siegfried News (Univ. of North Carolina-Chapel Hill), Regional Representative, SAMLA

Elin Diamond (Rutgers University), Drama Division Exec. Committee

Marilyn Sibley Fries (Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Twentieth Century German Literature Division Exec. Committee

Dear :

As an individual MLA member I share the Executive Council's desire to allow members reasonable access to the convention program through special sessions, even though this requires reconsidering the balance between special session and allied organization programming. However, as the officer in charge of MLA programming for one such organization, the International Brecht Society, I am concerned lest the Council strike this "balance" at the expense of the allied organizations and through the imposition of onerous and unfair procedures.

First of all, I do not think that changes in the current arrangements need to become effective until programming by the divisions and discussion groups and by the allied organizations accounts for 60% of total programming. It does not seem unfair to me to limit members' totally open access to programming to 40% when they also have access through the divisions and allied organizations. The divisions have existed for a long time, but let us not begin to consider them as "special interest groups." They represent a broad spectrum of membership interest by genre and period, surely broad

enough to accomodate fresh critical perspectives, and changing focus on individual authors and issues; competition for programming within the divisions surely provides some modicum of quality control. The allied organizations also provide some form of quality control. And they are not necessarily as narrowly focused as a 1980 convention office report implies: My own society is a "single author" society, but our panels have considered a broad range of issues in contemporary theatre theory and history, as well as questions of contemporary German literature. Our programming does not appeal only to Brecht experts--as the attendance at our two panels would seem to indicate.

I recognize that the 60% boundary I've suggested will shortly be reached, that changes will be necessary, and that they should be agreed upon now. I would urge the Council to consider as the first change enlarging the overall size of the convention by a half day's worth of sessions, to be won either by starting earlier on the first day or programming into the evening of the last day. I recognize that this would mean an extra night's hotel stay for some members, but I wonder how many would in fact be affected; if necessary, the membership could be polled on this issue.

The Program Committee's suggestion that organizations with fewer than 250 MLA members be forced to use the special session process to arrange a second program does not strike me as unfair--as long as we have the same chance as any other members. It would, however, be unfair to base the decision on such an application in any way on consideration of the fact that the it comes from an allied organization which already has the right to arrange one session. And I am uncertain how such unfairness could be avoided.

The recommendation that only organizations with 100 or more dues-paying members **50% of whom are also MLA members** be granted allied organization status is grossly unfair, as is the recommendation that each organization's status be reviewed every seven years. In the first place, these recommendations smack of the top-down organizational style that I find one of the MLA's least appealing characteristics; and I'm sure I'm not alone in this feeling. More importantly, these restrictions would result in the demise of a number of small but worthy organizations, either immediately or over the course of several renewal periods. Participation in the MLA is vital for the IBS: we hold our annual business meeting at the convention and test new ideas through panels. We could not survive without this annual activity. And we hold international symposia of our own every 4-5 years and meet the 100+ membership criterion. We also keep relatively clean and updated records. I shudder to think what would happen to smaller--not necessarily less healthy, but smaller---organizations. At the very least, the minimum membership number should be halved and the review period eliminated or extended to ten years. Otherwise, the MLA may find itself in the business of stifling scholarly activity, particularly activity that falls between the extremes of individual effort (special sessions) and relatively large-scale organizations (100-250 members). I don't think that's the business we want to be in.

Sincerely,

John Rouse
Vice-President, International Brecht Society

MLA Report

1988 MLA CONVENTION/NEW ORLEANS

Session I: Brecht and his Biographers

Presiding: Siegfried Mews, Univ. of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

Abstracts of Papers Presented:

"Notizen zu Brechts Liebesleben"/Reinhold Grimm, Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison

Bertolt Brecht's attitude toward, and portrayal of, women has been a bone of contention for quite a while. Recently, two monographs--Dorothea Haffad's Amour et société dans l'oeuvre de Brecht (Algiers, 1983) and Sabine Kebir's Ein akzeptabler Mann? Streit um Bertolt Brechts Partnerbeziehungen (Berlin/GDR, 1987)--claim to offer definitive solutions. What is the relationship of "love and society" in Brecht's writings? And was he "an acceptable man," after all, as Kebir claims? These and similar questions were discussed in biographical context.

* * *

"Now You See Them, Now You Don't: The Marginalized Mitarbeiter in a Life of Brecht"/John Fuegi, University of Maryland-College Park

Documentary materials were presented showing the actual living conditions of several of those women who contributed most to the creation of what we call in shorthand-form "Brecht's work." The documents are contained in my forthcoming biography of the Brecht circle entitled Nothing Immoral (Simon & Schuster/Penguin/Hachette-Fayard, 1990).

* * *

"Epic Theory and Aristotelian Biography: Werner Mittenzwei's Leben des Bertolt Brecht"/James K. Lyon, University of California-San Diego

Mittenzwei's long-awaited, supposedly definitive biography of Brecht gives the most complete account of his life to date, but its mode of presentation and ideological bias are disappointing to those who had expected to find here a standard work on his life.

Disappointment derives in part from its unsuccessful attempt to impose a non-Aristotelian form on the genre "biography." Imitating epic theory, Mittenzwei follows a non-chronological, episodic pattern similar to what Brecht does in his plays. In a biography like this, however, a non-linear presentation generates more confusion than clarity. Like Brecht, he also repeats himself incessantly to emphasize certain points about his subject's life. Moreover, like Brecht, he omits much that does not fit his particular orientation. He also uses the epic device of a dialectic alternating between

critique and justification, but he weighs it so heavily toward justifying his subject's every action that the work comes closer to hagiography than dialectical biography. In addition, his extensive discourses on global socio-political circumstances, also an epic device, extend some periods to disproportionate lengths, but slight others. The last fifteen years of Brecht's life, for example, receive as much space as the first forty-three.

This attempt to follow Brecht's theories of epic theater causes problems by sometimes failing to put events in context and by making it difficult to follow certain developments in Brecht's life and thought, e.g., his movement toward Marxism. Many omissions and factual errors also raise questions about the author's attention to detail, while the Cold-War mentality evident in his fierce anti-Americanism produces similar concerns about the breadth of his focus. From his excessive glorification of Brecht emerges the picture of a man who could do almost no wrong.

Instead of leaving his readers to deal with the tantalizing contradictions that marked his subject, the author attempts to resolve them by justifying, explaining, giving answers, and bringing to closure a life that resists such attempts. Though filled with information, this book fails to fulfill its promise as the definitive work on Brecht's life.

(Note: The complete text of Prof. Lyon's paper appears in the article section of this issue of COMMUNICATIONS.)

Session II: Brecht and the Other Theatres of the South

Presiding: John Rouse, Tulane University

Abstract:

"All that Jazz about Brecht-*Todo eso jazz sobre Brecht*"/Joseph Rosenberg, Texas A & I University, Founder/Director, Bilingual Theatre/La Compania Teatro Bilingue

To the critic trained by the criteria of European theater, it would appear that many Latin American theatre pieces show the influence of Brecht, particularly in regard to the Verfremdungseffekt, but also in terms of epic form. These similarities are, for the most part, deceptive. The influence in those directions seem to have been primarily indigenous. Examples are offered from Latin American plays I have directed, such as Historias para ser contadas/Stories for the Theater by Osvaldo Dragun, La Pancarta/The Placard by Jorge Diaz, and others.

Other Participants/Topics:

"Brechtian Influences in the Work of Southern Black Theaters"/John O'Neill, New Orleans, Louisiana

Manuel Martin-Rodriguez, University of California-Santa Barbara

Summation of Panel
(John Rouse)

The panel on "Brecht and the Other Theatres of the South" moved geographically from East to West. John O'Neill talked primarily about the early years of the Free Southern Theatre. He felt that the Free Southern and other theatres like it did not directly copy any of Brecht's techniques or devices, but did profit from the ethos of Brecht's theatre and, to single out one element, its dramaturgic use of music and song. Joe Rosenberg also declined to point to direct influence from Brecht's writings on three Hispanic plays he directed for the Bilingual Theatre Company in Texas, but showed how the playwright working towards a new Hispanic theatre developed ideas and techniques remarkably comparable to Brecht's, sometimes by accident. Manuel Martin-Rodriguez compared the narrative technique of the El Teatro de la Esperanza's Ted's Final Spin to Brecht's notion of fable and distanciation, showing how Brecht's theoretical concepts could be used to illuminate this theatre's practical work.

UPDATE: 1989 MLA/WASHINGTON, D.C.

Session I: Is There a Brechtian Semiology?

Chair: Janelle Reinelt, California State University, Sacramento

Speakers/Topics:

"Describing the 'Scenic' in Scenic Writing"/James Carmody,
University of California-San Diego

"Brecht's Gestus: The Body in Recess"/Renate Voris, University of
Virginia

"The Politics of Theatrical Form"/John Rouse, Tulane University

Session II: Brecht in Latin America II/co-sponsored by the IBS and ATINT
(Asociacion de Tabajadores e Investigadores del Nuevo Teatro)

Chair: Marina Pianca, SUNY-Albany

Speakers/Topics:

"Freire and Brecht in Brazil"/Leslie Damasceno, Princeton
University

"Brecht and Freire in Latin American Theatre"
Gerardo Luzuriaga, UCLA

Darko Suvin, McGill University

Consult the MLA Convention Program (November 1989 PMLA) for times and places as well as the scheduling for the annual IBS business meeting.

1989 ATHE CONVENTION/NEW YORK CITY

Panel co-sponsored by the IBS and the Theory & Criticism Focus Group of the
ATHE: "Brecht and the Art of Scenic Writing"
Chair: John Rouse, Tulane University

Participants: James Carmody, Univ. of California-San Diego
Frantisek Deak, Univ. of California-San Diego

Time & Place: Roosevelt Hotel, NYC, August 5, 1989, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

1990 MLA/CHICAGO

Call for Papers:
International Brecht Society
MLA Convention, Chicago, December 1990

"Brecht and Media"

Please send proposals for papers or media presentations (250-word description) on any topics which relate Bertolt Brecht's theatre practice and/or aesthetic theory to the media (radio, film, television) to: Marc Silberman, German Department, University of Wisconsin, 818 Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706. Deadline January 5, 1990. We are particularly interested in proposals/presentations from individuals or groups who have practical experience in trying to adapt or implement Brechtian principles or Brecht's texts in the media. Anyone who wishes to participate must either become a member of the Modern Language Association or have the IBS petition for a special membership waiver.

(Note: IBS members interested in proposing a second session for the 1990 MLA should contact Vice-President John Rouse as soon as possible.)



Conferences & Symposia

KENTUCKY FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONFERENCE

April 27-29, 1989

Two papers involving Brecht's work were presented in the framework of the annual Kentucky Foreign Language Conference at the University of Kentucky, Lexington. (Professor Paulsell's complete paper appears in the article section of this issue of COMMUNICATIONS.)

Abstracts:

"Play-ful Theory: Teaching with Bertolt Brecht"/Sabine Gross, University of California-Santa Barbara

Teaching Brecht plays through theory in order to improve foreign language proficiency may sound suspiciously like an attempt to kill three birds with one stone. My aim is to show that the three pedagogical goals are not only compatible, but actually reinforce each other.

The foreign language classroom and theater stage share certain features. In both, language can be in danger of being reduced from discourse to mere words. Brecht's theater theory and communication-oriented language instruction both work against this tendency, and have a lot in common: the emphasis on the situational and interactive dimension of language, an awareness of language as expressing and dealing with social reality, as a means to an end in social settings--in short, the realization that language use is a system of strategies rather than a knowledge of rules (of grammar or prosody, respectively) and moreover, that it constantly demands considerable extralinguistic knowledge. *Gestus* combines "gesture" and "attitude" in a way of acting that is based on and promotes an awareness of the social dimension of language and behavior.

Brecht's brief "practice scenes for actors," composed as parallel or intercalary scenes to famous plays (Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" and "Macbeth," Schiller's "Maria Stuart"), highlight the underlying *Gestus* and were originally used to acquaint actors with the principles and practice of "epic theater." These short scenes have been little noted in spite of their pedagogical potential. In a "report from the classroom", I wanted to demonstrate that they are eminently suitable and valuable in teaching intermediate (in this case, second-year) German and acquainting students with Brecht's views on theatre.

Typically, over a period of two weeks (during which a portion of every class will be used, leaving sufficient time for other activities), the class will get acquainted with the text and perform the scene in a number of different ways in small groups and in this way develop a practical understanding of "epic theater." In working with the text, students work with the concept of *Gestus*; they focus on underlying attitudes, the situational complexity and interactivity of language. Being confronted with the challenge of a

text (some vocabulary glosses are provided) that is really a skeleton of action and interaction, students are encouraged to extrapolate from the utterances the circumstances and attitudes that prompt them. One characteristic stage of the work is, for instance, replacing each utterance in the text with a number of alternatives in "normal" German ("How would you put this"/ "What would you say in that situation?"), after the *gestus* has been determined (or, in fact, as a way of determining it, depending on where the teacher's goals lie). Thus, the emphasis is shifted quickly from reproducing a written text to actually producing utterances. After initial prompting by the teacher, the focus of the classroom is transferred from teacher to the students, who can draw upon their own resources and knowledge. As further illustration of the non-"culinary" and anti-illusionist aspect of Brechtian theater, the restrictions of the classroom are turned into advantages: props will be improvised, and transitions (between scenes, positions, and roles) remain visible. With some directing from the teacher (whose role can otherwise be largely confined to that of resource person during most stages of the work), it is possible to highlight contradictions and use seemingly inadequate props for defamiliarization effects.

When everybody is familiar with the text and the Brechtian "ground rules" for dealing with it have been established, students will be split up into small groups to perform the playlet in a variety of ways (adhering to the written text or improvising, switching roles, introducing variations and most of all, trying out different possibilities). Ideally, discussions and mini-performances provide students with ample opportunity for largely unself-conscious and topic-centered interaction in the target language, as well as make them aware of the interdependence of emotional state, physical expression, and speech as a task-oriented and meaningful activity. In the process of mastering short scenes, students practise a wide variety of language skills.

The diversity of different interpretations is encouraged--it shows students that there is no single correct interpretation of the text (or, in general terms, that language use is very much dependent on context and goals). Finally, the emphasis on critical reasoning, sharing insights, and productive experimenting leads to a democratization of classroom activity that is conducive to language acquisition while illustrating a "Brechtian" way of directing.

* * *

"The Machine Gun as Symbol in Brecht's Mann ist Mann: Social Implications of the Technology of War"/Patricia R. Paulsell, Michigan State University

In his book Bertolt Brecht: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung (1985), Klaus-Detlef Müller devotes a few pages of the introduction to a methodological problem in the analysis of twentieth century literary works. The problem lies in the fact that we ourselves are still part of the process of development of the twentieth century, a process rooted in certain epoch-making events and ideas of the nineteenth century. Because of our role in that process we, on the one hand, may overlook potentially important, major differences between epochs in our own century in many areas of human endeavor, and, on the other, may actually reject taking a closer look at those differences because

we feel we don't yet have the "necessary critical distance" to make judgments about the significance of those events to the "big picture," however the latter may be defined. Thus, for example, because Brecht is an author many of whose concerns overlap with our own, and whose works portray particularly twentieth century cries of anguish, we are tempted to read the works with somewhat less attention to the historical, social, and political realities of Brecht's own world than, say, if we were reading a work from the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.

In this paper, Brecht's Mann ist Mann is reviewed from the new perspective of the social impact of "war machinery," as reflected particularly in Brecht's choice of the machine gun as symbol in the play. Much has been written about industrialization and the dawning of the machine age, loss of individual identity/the role of the army, and the transformations of Galy Gay and Bloody Five as major themes of this play. But, to date, no one seems to have given serious attention to the revolutionary changes in the technology of war and the impact of these changes on social history which were of great importance not only for Brecht's post-World War I Germany, but for the world as a whole. These changes and this impact are intentionally reflected in the play through Brecht's choice of a machine gun detail of four soldiers serving in a somewhat obscurely described, but nonetheless obviously British colonial venue. Most literary scholars have referred to Brecht's handling of the locale for the play as a method of creating distance so that the themes could be viewed in a more abstract way. If, however, one studies the social history of the machine gun, one will find that, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, it was an archetypal symbol of racist imperialism, for it had been used as the principle instrument to suppress the resistance of unwilling natives caught up in imperialist designs all over the world, by the Germans, as well as the British and others.

This symbol fits very well into Brecht's Einstellung in the play and adds significant depth to the interpretation. Whereas the machine gun as a symbol in this sense would probably not occur to the more casual reader of the play today, it must have been unmistakable to Brecht's post-World War I German audience, where the machine gun as a symbol had taken on additional sinister connotations. These connotations are explored in the context of the entire play, adding, thus, new dimensions to our understanding of this early Brecht work.

The Theatre of
Eric Bentley:
A Celebration
April 1 and 2, 1988
University of Maryland
at College Park

Bentley

THE THEATRE OF ERIC BENTLEY: A CELEBRATION

April 1-2, 1989
University of Maryland-College Park

The second annual University of Maryland Drama Conference, organized by the University of Maryland-College Park Drama Affinity Group, was devoted to "The Theatre of Eric Bentley" in recognition and celebration of Mr. Bentley's contributions to theatre throughout the world. The panels and performances at the conference were designed to reflect and honor the many facets of Eric Bentley's contribution to world theatre.

Excerpts from the conference program:

(April 1)

Welcoming Talk: "Eric Bentley: A Retrospective"

Michael Bertin, editor, The Play and its Critic: Essays for Eric Bentley

Excerpts from Eric Bentley's Translation of Bertolt Brecht's Edward II
Kryztov Lindquist, Director

Panel: "Bertolt Brecht in the 1980's"

Moderator: John Fuegi, University of Maryland-College Park

Panelists: Albert Bermel, Professor of Theatre, Lehman College & Graduate Center, CUNY

Kryztov Lindquist, actor/director, Washington, D.C.

Leon Major, Professor of Music, Univ. of Maryland-College Park; theatre and opera director

(This session commenced with an excerpt from the staged reading of Eric Bentley's translation of Brecht's Edward II.)

Performance: Unholy Trinity

The Hedgerow Theatre, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Unholy Trinity is a 90-minute cabaret-style mixture of comedy and drama borrowing scenes and songs from three of Eric Bentley's plays: The Memoirs of Pontius Pilate, The Recantation of Galileo Galilei, and Lord Alfred's Lover.

(April 2)

Panel: "Theatre Journalism"

Moderator: Erika Munk, critic, Village Voice; formerly Editor, TDR

Panelists: Brian Johnston, Professor of Theater, Carnegie-Mellon University; Editor, Theatre 3

Jim O'Quinn, Editor, American Theatre; composer and arranger
Don Rubin, Professor of Theatre, York University; founder and former editor, Canadian Theatre Review
Joel Schechter, Assoc. Prof. of Dramatic Criticism, Yale University; Editor, Theatre

Panel: "Alternative Theatre"

Moderator: Gordon Rogoff, Professor of Theatre, Brooklyn College, CUNY; author, Theater is Not Safe; critic, Village Voice

Panelists: Judith Malina, co-founder/-artistic director, The Living Theatre, New York City

Hanon Reznikov, co-artistic director, The Living Theatre, NYC

James Schevill, Professor of English, Brown University; poet and playwright

Panel: "Literature, Theatre and Music--Some Relationships"

Moderator: Eric Bentley

Panelists: H. Robert Cohen, Chair, Music Department, University of Maryland-College Park

Saul Elkin, Chair, Theatre Dept., SUNY-Buffalo

Patti Gillespie, Chair, Communication Arts & Theatre, Univ. of Maryland-College Park

Reed Whittlemore, Prof. of English, University of Maryland-College Park; Editor, Delos

Performance: Excerpts from the American University production of Eric Bentley and Michael Rice's musical adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's The Good Woman of Setzuan (see the "Production Reports" section of this issue of COMMUNICATIONS).

* * *

Conference Announcement:

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON KURT WEILL
in Celebration of his 90th Birthday

March 23-25, 1990, Duisburg, FRG

An international Kurt Weill Festival organized under the aegis of the Minister-Präsident of Nordrhein-Westfalen will include a conference with the general theme "Kurt Weill and the Lost Fatherland." Presentations will assess the ramifications of Weill's emigration from musicological, theatrical, historical, and cultural viewpoints. Sponsorship of the symposium is by The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York; the Salomon-Ludwig-Steinheim Institut für deutsch-jüdische Geschichte, Duisburg; the Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Nordrhein-Westfalen; the city of Düsseldorf; and the State of Nordrhein-Westfalen. Further information is available from: Symposium Program Committee, The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., 7 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003-1106, tel. (212) 505-5240.

11. BRECHT-TAGE, BERLIN/DDR:
"Die theoretischen Schriften Brechts"

February 8-10, 1989

From the program:

"Neues oder nur neu verpackt? Probleme der Edition der Schriften"
Werner Hecht (Diskussion: Klaus-Detlef Müller)

"Provokationen für den Tag und fürs Leben--Brechts Anteil an der aktuellen Diskussion 1927"
Werner Hecht (Diskussion: Jürgen Schebera)

"Vergeßlicher Aufklärer und Fälscher im Dienst der Wahrheit? Zur Komplexität des Denkens in den Exilschriften"
Inge Gellert (Diskussion: Bärbel Schrader)

"Versuch über Brechts 'alternatives' Kunstkonzept 1951--Fortsetzung der Formalismusediskussion"
Barbara Wallburg (Diskussion: Gudrun Klatt)

"Ein Werk der Veränderung in Veränderung--Anmerkungen zu Mahagonny"
Peter Kraft (Diskussion: Jan Knopf)

^z
Katgraben-Soiree. Filmdokumente der Inszenierung Brechts mit einer
^ Lesung von Notaten.
Erwin Geschonneck, Ekkehard Schall, Willi Schwabe, Doris Thalmer

"Grund der Empörung über eine 'ganz unerträgliche Behandlung'--Brechts Stanislawski-Studien 1953
Werner Hecht (Diskussion: Dieter Hoffmeier)

A detailed report on the 1989 Brecht-Tage is contained in notate 12/2 (April 1989).

CALL FOR PAPERS

NEMLA, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
April 6-8, 1990

Twentieth Century Literature Division:
"The 80's--Meager Years?"

The objective of this session is a critical assessment of the last decade in German literature by analyzing general trends, works of new talents or works of already established writers, etc. Please send one-page abstracts or complete papers to: Prof. Helga Schreckenberger, Dept. of German & Russian, Waterman Building, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405 USA. Deadline: September 15, 1989.

BIERMANN ON EISLER:
AN INTERVIEW WITH WOLF BIERMANN

Jim Miller, Cleveland, Ohio

Introduction

Wolf Biermann, probably the most prominent political singer-songwriter-poet of contemporary Germany, reveals in this interview the deep connection he feels with Hanns Eisler, the composer who in Brecht's generation pioneered a new music infused with the class struggle of the 1920's and 30's.

Hanns Eisler (1898-1962) suffered the effects of the Cold War, pre-Gorbachev division of Europe and European culture more than perhaps any artist of the first half of this century. While Brecht's renown has grown and deepened over the years, Eisler's reputation seems to remain imprisoned under the ideological rubble of the Stalinist era.

Scholars and musicians in the GDR have put considerable effort into performing, studying, publishing and recording Eisler's music. The Hanns-Eisler-Archiv in East Berlin is in the midst of preparing a critical edition of his works, including his pungent writings; similarly, Deutsche Schallplatten has issued dozens of recordings which have begun to document systematically his more than six-hundred compositions. These are honest and irreplaceable efforts, but it is a paradox that such Herculean efforts by the cultural apparatus of the GDR only set Eisler's music further into the amber. This prodigiously inventive composer, after Alban Berg and Anton von Webern Arnold Schönberg's prize pioneer in twelve-tone composition, becomes fixed as a boringly provincial "East German" composer, the confector of the GDR national anthem. Kurt Weill scholar Kim Kowalke can thus offhandedly liken him to Carl Friedrich Zelter, an obscure composer of the last century whose claim to fame is as a footnote in the life of Goethe.

A younger generation of musicians in the FRG, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom have begun the process of freeing Eisler's immense and passionate output, the equivalent of Brecht's production in poetry and drama, from its timeworn straitjacket, but in North America itself the process can hardly begin since the very memory of his years there--before he was expelled by the House UnAmerican Activities Committee--has been erased. In North America he has virtually no reputation. His music is free of its baggage because the music itself is nonexistent.

When, in October 1983, I gained the opportunity to speak with Wolf Biermann through the good offices of Helen Fehervary of Ohio State University, I hoped he would be able to speak about Hanns Eisler's life and music in a fresh and provocative way which would be appealing to a young and radical audience in the United States. As someone with a fervent but somewhat lonely interest in Eisler, I knew that Eisler had inoculated his music against easy acceptance in the bourgeois concert hall. Eisler's revolutionary outlook was too tightly interwoven in his work to permit someone who

>>Biermann on Eisler

wished to promote his music to pass it off as "classical" music, beautifully written despite his Marxist ways. Eisler insists on being eaten whole, or not at all. Biermann, as a musician, revolutionary, and scathing critic of existing socialism, and as someone, still active, who knew Eisler, was uniquely suited to the process of "rehabilitating" Eisler without prettying him up for the music appreciation crowd.

Wolf Biermann was born in Hamburg in 1946. His father Dagobert, a Communist, died in Auschwitz in 1943. Biermann moved to East Germany in 1953, at the age of seventeen. He was expelled from the Socialist Unity Party in 1963. Two years later he was forbidden to publish, record songs, or sing publicly. In 1972, following a concert in Cologne he was stripped of his GDR citizenship and exiled after West German television broadcast one of his performances. Today he lives in the Federal Republic, performing and recording regularly.

Learning that Biermann was in Ohio, I wrote to him in Columbus from my home in Cleveland asking if I could interview him about Eisler. I believed--wrongly--that he had studied a short time with Eisler. Within a few days, my phone rang and I heard a man say in passable English, "I am that German you wrote to." He explained that he wanted to talk about Eisler, and that he had a desire to explore an industrial city in the U.S. heartland--and the only time he could come was the next day. Thinking quickly, I decided that my job as a community organizer in a blue collar suburb of Cleveland could be put on hold for a day.

Biermann and I then spent the better part of two days zigzagging through Cleveland neighborhoods, with me doing my best to introduce him to the realities of class and racial politics and culture in my much maligned city. He seemed fascinated by our rusty, down-at-the-heels ways which must have seemed properly Brechtian to him. In high, good humor he proceeded to interrogate me. Struck by just how often I returned to the centrality of racial issues, he began to make loud, satirical pronouncements about the crazy American preoccupation with race. Nervously I tried to hush him up, since there was no way of knowing how the people around us would take his sharp statements. Nevertheless, I realized that after a while he had succeeded in building a map of the city in his mind, with class and racial boundaries inked in. We ate dinner that evening with friends at a little Polish restaurant in Slavic Village on the southside.

By the time we sat down to tape the interview, then, he had taken my measure. He knew I was no scholar, but I believe he trusted my political instincts and the sincerity of my commitment to Eisler's unknown music. With a friend interpreting, he virtually dictated his account, ignoring my attempts to interview him. Nevertheless, he was talking to me, and in Cleveland, and I think it is possible he wouldn't have given quite the same account under other circumstances. Indeed, he remarked that he had never spoken about Eisler for public consumption before.

--Jim Miller

>>Biermann on Eisler

I

JM: When did you first hear about Hanns Eisler? It must have been pretty early in your life, correct?

WB: Yes. The first Eisler I heard was from my mother, because a few of his songs--for example, the "Solidaritätslied" (Solidarity Song)--had already made their way into the working class before the Nazi period. Then, when I was seventeen, I went to the GDR from West Germany; that was in 1953. And two years later, after my Abitur, I went to East Berlin, the capital of the GDR, and came into contact with the most famous theater of the world at this time, the theater of Brecht. I was enthusiastic about Brecht--I became a so-called "Brecht-fan"--and, of course, that also meant a fan of Hanns Eisler, as Eisler is the most significant composer in relation to Brecht's work. When Brecht was young and sassy he had Kurt Weill; when he was older and sometimes had attacks of weakness he had Paul Dessau.

But Eisler. Above all others, Eisler. And I entered his great house through the small door of the agit-prop songs he had written for Die Mutter, a play which, with respect to the music as well as the text, was both the culmination and end of the agit-prop movement. In this play, with this music the agit-prop movement of the 1920's was preserved (aufgehoben), in the Hegelian sense of the word. I then came to the Berliner Ensemble as a production assistant, a year after Brecht's death (1957). And immediately I found myself in the midst of the leadership and succession struggles among the heirs--the Diadochenkämpfe. At this time I worked on the new production of Die Mutter at the BE, when Helene Weigel was still playing the lead role, though Ernst Busch was no longer available for these songs which through him had become famous, just as he'd become famous through them. Ever since that time I have been especially fond of these "coarse" songs by Eisler, which, upon closer examination prove to be extremely sophisticated and well-crafted. For even in the case of these songs, everything Eisler had learned from Schoenberg and classical (musical) literature is invested.

JM: So you studied with him after this time?

WB: No, I was never a pupil of his. After that I worked at the Berliner Ensemble for two years (1957-59), where I came into close contact with Eisler's music but not with him personally. Then I made a change and went back to the Humboldt University, my second period of study (in philosophy and mathematics), but I didn't want to leave the theater entirely. I wanted to study more in order to get a running start so that I could jump into theater more deeply. Because, while at the BE, I had learned, among other things, that I still had something to learn. In spite of my studies, I founded on the side a small ensemble for the purpose of doing some sort-of modern, political agit-prop.

>>Biermann on Eisler

JM: Satirical stuff?

WB: No, not satirical. Agit-prop is not so satirical, it's not cabaret. To a certain extent it's even the opposite of cabaret. Cabaret makes its effect with cotton balls, while agit-prop does it with a sledge hammer. Which, however, was used by Eisler like a fencing foil. In order to fence with a sledge hammer, you have to have a lot of strength. Eisler had that; you can hear it in all of these songs, which he also composed to texts by Majakowski. At this time I wrote an agit-prop piece after I had been sent out into the countryside along with all the other philosophy students to convince the farmers of the merits of socialist agriculture.

JM: Cooperatives ...

WB: Yes, the LPG's (Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften). And perhaps you know that in 1960 all of them were 100% convinced, just like that! I was one of the little idiots who hammered socialism into the agricultural economy with unsocialist methods. When I returned from this revolutionary act of heroism, I wrote an agit-prop play in order to process intellectually that which we had done wrong in practice.

Then some interesting cultural-political interference took place. Part of the prevailing Stalinist cultural bureaucracy had sought to establish continuity in proletarian-socialist cultural policy simply by trying to pick up again where things left off in 1933, when the agit-prop movement was abruptly ended by Hitler. But they had failed to understand something: that when Hitler ended the agit-prop movement it had already ended historically, also in cultural-historical terms. Then came the long years of Fascism. And it was, of course, childish to just pick up where things had left off in 1933. But it was somehow understandable, too, because the Nazis had stolen this time from our lives. We really wanted to assert our continuity. Brecht himself at this time had provided the impulse to reconnect with the agit-prop movement, although he had changed during the years of emigration; he had moved a considerable distance from the artistic level of Die Mutter and far away from what we today would have to call dogmatic, Stalinist pieces like Die Maßnahme. In the meantime he had written Galilei, Mutter Courage, and Lukullus--which the cultural functionaries didn't like--and Eisler had attempted to process the Faust-story on his own terms.

JM: And written his Hollywood Songbook.

WB: But: I didn't know much about all of that, and in 1960 I wrote songs in the style of Brecht-Eisler's Die Mutter. For a play in which I defended the "socialist transformation of agriculture," as it was referred to officially. And now, since I had become a student again at the Humboldt Universität, this agit-prop play was supposed to be performed there, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the University's founding. And it was to be supposed to be performed by the Ernst-Hermann-Meyer Ensemble, a song and dance group modeled after Soviet song and dance troupes, which quite justifiably

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carried the bad name of Ernst Hermann Meyer, a composer who was, so-to-speak, the favorite composer of the Stalinist bureaucracy, just as Johannes R. Becher was their favorite poet. The bureaucrats regarded Brecht and Eisler with suspicion; they enjoyed them with reluctance. And that suspicion was justified.

Anyway, this Soviet-oriented ensemble was supposed to perform my agit-prop play, and there was a rebellion. They didn't want to do this Politscheiße; that was another tradition. Along come all of these players who were used to this pseudo-popular Soviet kitsch--the cultural extension of the great patriotic war--and clashed with this more political, class-struggle oriented art. The party leadership, which had the final say in all cultural matters, found themselves in a difficult position. "To learn from the USSR means to learn to be victorious" went the slogan. On the other side was the proletarian tradition, which, however (I didn't realize at the time) was already a corpse, half beaten to death by Hitler, half deceased from old age. And, because I took all of this so seriously, I had given this corpse mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and written songs in this old-fashioned style. Since these Ernst Hermann Meyer people didn't want to do this, I had to put together a new ensemble. I did; but those responsible for cultural affairs at the Humboldt Universität were outraged that I was strutting around with this agit-prop sh-- at the University. They were also Ernst Hermann Meyer people and didn't like Eisler. The matter was only complicated ideologically because Eisler had written the GDR national anthem and he was "the great composer" in spite of the opposition. And they tried to forbid my agit-prop songs. But they made a wonderful mistake. There is a text by Brecht from the time of his first honeymoon with Marxism that isn't so well-known, a very dogmatic text about the party:

Der Einzelne hat zwei Augen
Die Partei hat tausend Augen.
Die Partei sieht sieben Staaten
Der Einzelne sieht eine Stadt (...)
Der Einzelne kann vernichtet werden
Aber die Partei kann nicht vernichtet werden ...

JH: Yes, that's from Die Maßnahme.

WB: And it goes on and on like that ... a boring text, ja? I found that so nice, and wanted to integrate it into my agit-prop play. And my cultural superiors, these Ernst Hermann Meyer fans, said: if it is performed at all, then not with Eisler's music, but rather in the setting by Meyer (he'd also set it to music). And that was stupid. Eisler had set it just as Stalinist as it was. In fifths. (Biermann sings a few lines.) You get hit over the head constantly with an ideological hammer, right? But it was, of course, consistent with the text, and when a genius like Eisler writes something bad, then it's genially bad. And more interesting than when some ass---- like Ernst Hermann Meyer writes something good.

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JM: But there's some power in it, right?

WB: OK, I liked it. And they prohibited it. That was good. I called up Hanns Eisler.

JM: What year was this?

WB: 1960.

JM: You called Hanns Eisler ...

WB: and said: "Dear Mr. Eisler, I'm a young man at the University, I've studied at the BE, now I want to put on an agit-prop piece about the socialist transformation of agriculture and would like to use your song "Du mußt die Führung übernehmen" (a very good song) as well as this song "Die Partei hat tausend Augen" ("Lob der Partei"). And they won't let me do it; they want me to use the setting by Ernst Hermann Meyer." Eisler was also just a human being, you understand, and this didn't make sense to him at all--questions of party loyalty aside. And he got all upset. "Das ist doch unerhört!" (Biermann imitating Eisler: "that's outrageous!"). And then I said: "In addition, I've written all sorts of other songs for this Polit-Show and they are not to be performed because they're considered unworthy of representing the Humboldt Universität." And Eisler said: "Well, young man, we'll see about that." There were about fifty people in my ensemble--the best jazz band in the GDR at that time, which with considerable effort had pushed through New Orleans jazz in face of opposition from the cultural authorities. I had seduced them, good jazz musicians, into playing Eisler's songs. It went beautifully. They played the parts from Die Mutter with real precision, and with a little more drive, but without jazzing things up too much.

JM: Because it's not jazz.

WB: Right. It worked quite well. We were enthusiastic, we were young, we weren't these pensioned revolutionaries. And we played his songs as fresh as the morning dew. And he came to a rehearsal to which all of these high-level musical officials from the University were invited, the Musikwissenschaftler, the professors, etc.--who preferred the music of Ernst Hermann Meyer. And now, Eisler, a heavy man, gasped his way up the stairs (he was already pretty sick by this time), and all of these professors and cultural functionaries came as well. First we played him his songs, and he was enthused. He was happy, and had reason to be.

JM: Because his songs were living again.

WB: I mean, if you misunderstand this song "Du mußt die Führung übernehmen" in the right way, then, under Stalinist conditions, it is an extremely productive, good song! And that was precisely our position. We didn't want to split for the West; we wanted to stay in the GDR and assume the leadership, "die Führung übernehmen," whatever that means. I mean, we certainly didn't want to become ... Generalstaatsanwälte! But we wanted to do our own thing.

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And then we played my songs, which, of course, were very "Eisler-ish"--just as Bob Dylan in the beginning sounded like Woody Guthrie. You can't always be inventing the wheel for the first time. You're standing on other peoples' shoulders, otherwise you can't get anywhere. So I "eislered" away like crazy and it pleased him greatly. But because I was, first of all, much less intelligent than he was and understood a lot less about music (I'd had no academic training) ...

JM: You hadn't studied with Schönberg!

WB: and, secondly, because I was younger and influenced by different music than he, there were occasional harmonic elements in my music which arose from a combination of ignorance and the influence of a later time. And these professors cried out to Eisler: "Don't you hear that? Herr Professor! You can't do that! What is this? Look how he gets to B-major! There are still laws in music! (etc.)" But this entire reaction was expressed in a tone of extremely devoted, obsequious irritation. Because Eisler was, at the same time, the great man. They hated him and they kissed up to him. And when they made the remark about B-major, he cut them off and said, in his asthmatic manner of speaking (just as you can hear on recordings): "Be quiet! You don't understand a thing! These rules, these norms of which you speak: Do you have any idea how old they are? Two hundred years? Three hundred perhaps? They're no older than that! Leave!" It was a political orgasm. All of the young people who had sung, the jazz musicians who had disciplined themselves to play his music, and I with my songs: we were so happy. This important man had wiped out all of these cockroaches! It was a splendid victory. That was my first encounter with Hanns Eisler and really has nothing to do with my later ties to him. We did the performance. He had prepared the way for us, and no one was allowed to harass us further; we were successful with our "political sh--."

II

Then came the building of the wall in 1961. We founded a theater; we didn't want to disband after we had produced this political play. It was the best pantomime troupe in the GDR at that time. Plus this popular jazz ensemble. All of these people--young artists from the BE, actors, the chief scenic designer from the Comic Opera (Walter Felsentein's opera), who didn't feel like serving up whip cream for him all the time, a young man who wanted to do something different.

JM: Who was that?

WB: Zimmerman. He became our stage designer. All of these people, as well as factory workers, for example, from the Josef-Stalin electric works, the Berlin brake works, big factories. Artists, workers, students: we worked together without money and turned an abandoned movie theater in a working

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class district (Prenzlauer Berg), right in the midst of the big apartment houses of the workers, into a theater. We had cooperative ties with some seventy VEB's, and we didn't have a single penny, but we pulled off a project worth millions. We were supported on all sides--it was like a Lehrstück taken out of the socialist children's book. And, of course, the cultural functionaries were suspicious. In part they were enthusiastic that that which they had always preached had finally happened. Percentage-wise, let's say they were 49% supportive and 51% afraid of what we were doing. Because they had no economic leverage with which to manipulate us (since we had no funding). So, of course, there were difficulties--and Eisler helped us. He came to our theater and supported us with his big name. Later, the theater was shut-down for reasons which even Eisler's clout wasn't sufficient to prevent. But in this way I had gotten to know him.

During this time I had also begun to write songs which were very different from these agit-prop songs. I played guitar and did what one calls Lieder, which had more to do with other traditions than with agit-prop; if it had anything to do with Eisler, then at most in relation to other things he had composed. And after I had written perhaps thirty or forty of these songs (which I only performed for my friends), I summoned up the courage one day to impose on the great master and asked him for an audience so I could play my latest songs for him. He remembered me quite well and invited me to his house, a small villa on Pfeilstraße in Hohenschönhausen, a section of East Berlin. No, it was Niederschönhausen, for as the nasty saying goes: "In Niederschönhausen, wo die Hohen schön hausen!" (where the big shots live well). And there I visited him with my guitar. And that is then the second, more important part of my story.

JM: So you visited him ...

WB: You want to hear more?

JM: Yes. What did he say? What did he think of your songs?

WB: Well. I came to his house on Pfeilstraße, he was there, and was very friendly. I brought my guitar along, and he sat down to listen to my latest heroic deeds (i.e., the songs) by his young friend from the University. And of course, for my first song I chose one which I thought he would like. Although I wasn't exactly suffering from an excess of modesty, I nevertheless knew where god lived and then as now Hanns Eisler was for me the great master. This first song was a ballad about a long-distance truck driver who has an accident and has to stay overnight in a small town while the truck is being repaired. And in this run-down hotel he sees a young woman at the table next to him, drinking tea, and he sits there over a beer and keeps wondering whether or not he should invite her over and somehow "get friendly" with her. But he doesn't, and the next morning, as he wants to continue his trip, he hears the innkeeper say that the girl died and hadn't paid her bill. So he pays it for her and doesn't know why and drives on. And just as he passes by Rostock he thinks suddenly to himself, "if I had done something with her, certainly she wouldn't have died." That was the ballad, and Eisler

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sat in his armchair and looked at though he'd been forced to eat sh--. During the first stanza he reserved judgment; during the second he was already squirming, and when the song was finally over he snapped harshly: "Das ist ja Dreck" ("that's trash.") And asked: "What did she die of?" And I, by now a bit defiant, because I was intimidated, said, in a snottier way than I really intended: "Weiß ich doch nicht." ("how should I know?") And I didn't feel like explaining to him at length that what she had died of was totally irrelevant; the important thing was that his young guy had convinced himself that she wouldn't have died if he'd done something with her. But he said: "that's an uncultured adolescent song." He was certainly in a position to judge, and I had no courage left with which to argue with him. I didn't feel particularly good about things.

I was about to put my guitar away when he asked in a somewhat bored and agitated tone of voice: "Do you have another song?" "Sure, of course." "Alright then, sing another one." But he said it as though he really meant: "Please don't sing any more." I don't know why, but I did another song for him anyway. His facial expression relaxed a bit, he leaned back in his chair, and when the song was over, he said: "Well, that's not so bad. Do you have another?" "Yes." "Go ahead." So I sang a third one, and he listened with interest and said: "That's pretty good. Have another?" "Sure." It went on like this, and after the fifth or sixth song he called out: "Stephi!" (his wife's name), "come in here, there's something to hear." She came in, his attractive second wife, along with her beautiful daughter. That put some wind in my sails, and now he presented me to the women as his product and I had to sing one song after another. He became more and more enthused and when I was finished he ordered me to come back in a week. He said that in the meantime he wanted to invite all the people in the GDR responsible for mass media: in the first and second place his own brother, Gerhart, the head of the radio committee, who also had a say in TV policy; also, the director of the Deutsches Theater, Wolfgang Langhoff, an anti-fascist, one of the authors of the famous "Moorsoldaten" (bog-soldier) song. And his sister-in-law, Hilda Eisler, who edited a magazine, the most widely read publication in the GDR because both naked women and the naked truth were occasionally presented in it. He wanted to invite all of these people and I was supposed to come back and sing my songs for them. He wanted to promote me. He was as happy as a kid and, in an exaggerated manner, now found everything I'd done as wonderful as he'd found it awful at first. He called my songs genial, which in Viennese usage doesn't mean a great deal. But in any case he was delighted, and I was delighted by his delight. And--this might shed some light on his personality--what probably pleased him most was not only that there was someone in Germany who wrote such lively songs, but that we, the GDR, had produced him, not the Klassenfeind in the West. He enjoyed it politically, that something like this was growing on GDR soil.

JH: You gave him some hope, perhaps.

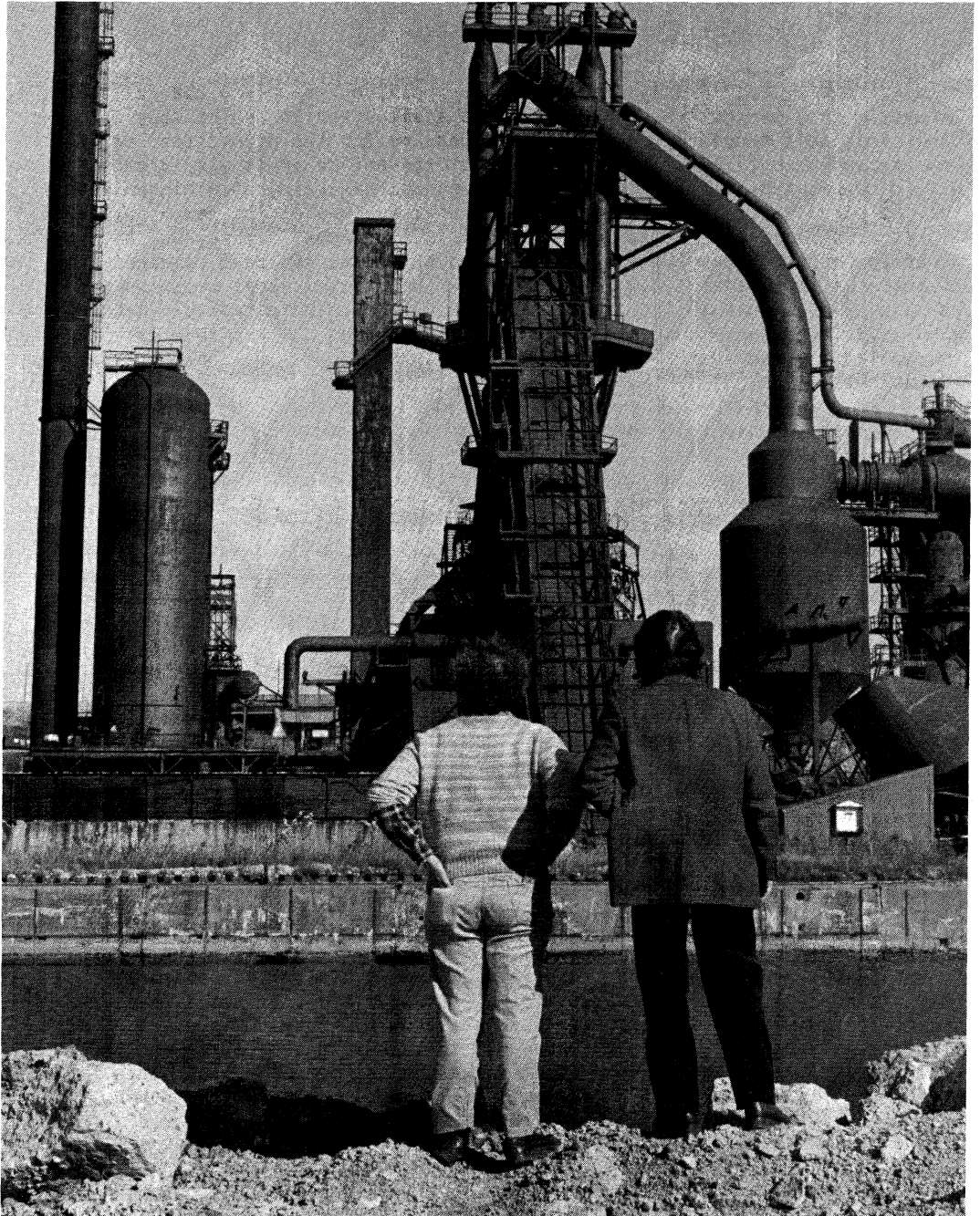
WB: And that wasn't entirely false. I came out of there as though I were drunk following this "sauna treatment" and in all felt very encouraged. A week later I came back just as I was supposed to and the little Pfeilstraße

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was full of big cars. Indeed, he'd kept his word and everybody was there. I rang the front door bell, the automatic lock buzzed. I saw him by the back door as he pressed the button, and he came down the stairs toward me, to the garden path, took me aside and said: "OK, they're all there. You sing them your songs. I'll say which ones you're singing. You have a list of the songs, ja? And before you begin, quickly, I'd like to say something important to you." I have to make a correction: he did not say genial at our first meeting. It was at this point that he said: "You know, this song about the truck driver ..." And I thought, oh, no, here he goes again. "Genial!" In spite of the fact that in Viennese usage this word doesn't mean that much, I think it showed how carefully he dealt with me. He had evidently re-wound the tape he had of me in his mind and in light of his subsequent impressions had heard the first song again, with an ear that no longer expected agit-prop songs, which is where he knew me from. That is to say, he was obviously disappointed at first in false expectation. There was no connection between the first experience he'd had with me and this one. He took such care in dealing with me, a young person, so as not to confuse my standards of judgment. Because for me, this first song was a good song, and still is a good song today. He was just completely misguided in his expectations at first. Now that that had been set straight, we went into the house and there he presented me as his "work." I did my thing and everyone was enthusiastic, just as they were supposed to be.

Incidentally, there is a tape recording of this evening which Hans Bunge made. This tape is both annoying and amusing, because you can hear how all of these people who are responsible for the mass media in the GDR--the party paper Neues Deutschland, the radio, TV, etc.--are discussing who should present me first. I was supposed to do a matinee at the Deutsches Theater, then someone was supposed to write about me, then I was supposed to be promoted on TV, and so on. But after all of this came relatively little. There was an article in Hilda Eisler's magazine in which I was introduced as the "troubadour of Berlin." But other than that not much happened. The cultural bureaucracy in all of its stupidity nevertheless had a good nose, and it smelled something. Although I was still a kid at that point and much too modest, they smelled the odor of impudence, rebelliousness, a rock-the-boat attitude. Then began the difficult struggles over which songs I was allowed to sing and where. I performed publicly, many things happened, which then culminated in my Verbot in 1965. But unfortunately Eisler had already died in late 1962, so I no longer had this strong ally who could have helped me against my external enemies and internal ignorance.

Eisler and I had talked about whether it wouldn't be a good idea for me to obtain a formal musical education; my lousy guitar playing especially bothered him. Since then, at least compared with that time, I've made substantial progress in my technique. But Eisler nevertheless came to the conclusion that it would be too dangerous to train me formally in music. He had been around a while and knew that when one leaves this land of original, creative innocence through education, when one bites into the apple of knowledge, then it normally occurs that one gets the obligatory kick out of paradise. In the process, most lose the apple from which they'd eaten and never



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find it again. They'd only nibbled on the apple, but received the full punishment; they had gotten themselves into a situation in which they'd lost their original innocence--an innocence necessary for the production of art and which one only gets back if one eats the entire apple mit Stumpf und Stiel, worms and all. Then you have a chance of returning on a higher level to the paradise of original innocence. Eisler was one of the few people who had accomplished that. Most remain stuck in the second phase, and he was probably worried that the same thing could happen to me. So I remained "ignorant" in this regard (i.e., with respect to formal musical training), and as long as I work in the small, relatively modest and manageable genre of song, it is perhaps enough. And in the end perhaps better than if I had become totally stupid through somewhat more intelligence. Or, rather: more education.

JM: So that was Eisler's advice.

WB: Yes. Now I've gone too far already in this direction and have gotten too old to consider seriously whether or not I should get a formal musical education. Sometimes I play around with the idea, because I sense that I'm not on the same level technically as my own musical imagination. But since I also write poetry, do concerts, make records, i.e., "masquerade" as a singer, I have plenty of projects to accomplish, for which I barely have enough energy. With respect to the problem of biting into the apple, I find myself in a divided situation vis-à-vis my output as a whole. In everything having to do with words I'm not in this condition of "original innocence" because a lot was invested into my training in this area. But in music I'm a layperson, and that is perhaps good for my songs, because that gives them both a certain "knowing" sophistication and a raw, powerful directness.

III

WB: That Hanns Eisler himself was at least as contradictory as the times in which he lived isn't really surprising in his case. If one knows what kind of family he came from and how drastically the historical conflicts were reflected within his own family, then it's self-evident that Eisler belonged to those who were deeply torn. His father (Rudolf Eisler) was the editor of this famous neo-Kantian philosophical dictionary; his siblings were just as genial as he--Ruth Fischer, with her well-known, tragic story, and his brother Gerhart, who was one of those who in 1928 tried to alter the KPD's orientation toward Stalinism. Ernst Thälmann had been coopted into the leadership as a "proletarian ornament" and then he became Stalin's man, the man of the Comintern, who, true to the Comintern's maxims, led the KPD in a direction which paved the way for the Fascists.

A lot has been written about this, but few know that Hanns Eisler's brother was one of the few who recognized this danger early on and tried to bring Thälmann down. It suited him well that Thälmann was involved in an embezzlement affair at this point. To be more precise, it was Thälmann's

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brother-in-law who had embezzled party funds. Thälmann certainly knew about this and covered it up--I suspect, on account of the party's reputation, i.e., for noble reasons, and not because of the money. In any case, it was an advantageous opportunity to bring Thälmann down; he lost his position as chairman of the KPD, was thrown out of the leadership and was supposed to be excluded from the party altogether. In reality it wasn't a matter of his person but of the politics he represented, which led to a situation in which the KPD, shortly before the Fascist takeover in 1933, was chiefly preoccupied with struggling against its SPD comrades who were labeled "social fascists." Thus, the power of the workers' movement was split--leading to such obscene historical events as the transit workers' strike in November 1932, when the Communists marched together with the Fascists against the Social Democrats. So, in 1928 Thälmann had been thrown out of the saddle; he had fallen on his face. But a short time later, with the aid of Moscow's long arms, he was put back in charge.

And those who had brought about his fall were sent into the desert: Gerhart Eisler, as a small-time Comintern agent, to China, where such people were occasionally eaten up. One of them, a doctor, was sent to Argentina and played into the hands of the Fascists who put out three-hundred cigarettes on his body and thereby drove him insane. Gerhart Eisler struggled his way through the world in despair, beaten and misused by his comrades, but at the same time with a sacred conviction that he had to do something for the world revolution no matter where he was. Whether he was right or not. It was in this complicated time that he came to the United States, and was eventually called to testify before HUAC (the House Unamerican Activities Committee hearings in which Brecht played a minor role). Gerhart Eisler escaped in an adventurous and delightfully impudent way. He slipped passed his American guards and armed with a large bouquet of flowers went boldly onto a Polish ship, managed to get up on deck, lay down in a deck chair, and only once the ship was well underway did anyone realize what kind of passenger they had on board. The ship was enroute to England; in England there are English laws, and he was lucky. He got to Poland; but now where was he supposed to go? In the Western world he had no chance, and in East Germany a man had come to power in the meantime, one of the few who had stuck by Thälmann in 1928. Walter Ulbricht. You can just imagine the novel-like complications arising from this constellation. Gerhart Eisler fled forwards and became the most rabid apologist for he Ulbricht regime. And he did it with such exaggerated vehemence, with so much venom, with such a shrill voice, that he accomplished an impossible feat: he became even more hated than Ulbricht among the people. Maybe that was the best thing he could do for Ulbricht.

And his brother Hanns saw through all of this clearly, or, rather, let's say: he saw it with one eye and it couldn't have pleased him. But with the other he saw what no one else knew: why everything had happened this way. And, as a bourgeois intellectual who had been converted to Marxism, i.e., in the case of a man as radical as Eisler, who believed in more-or-less strict discipline in relation to the political organizations of the working class--he also understood his brother, and was ashamed that his brother, in this political division of labor, had assumed the less grateful

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role. His brother did the dirty work and in the process got dirty. And he wrote those fine Kampflieder, and, in his better hours, twelve-tone music. I had the impression that he loved his brother very much, with open eyes but also with an open heart. He knew too much to despise his brother. He knew that those nice lines from Brecht's "An die Nachgeborenen" applied to him:

Zufällig bin ich verschont. (Wenn mein Glück aussetzt
bin ich verloren.)

He was fortunate. He was the artist. But, on the other hand, as an artist, in the realm of art, he was not so fortunate. Although he is perhaps the most significant composer of this century, the semi-official art world, and that's still for the most part the Western one, fails to acknowledge him. To the ones in power in the East he smells as badly as Brecht; in his music is too much modernity, too much impudence, a free spirit, too much of a subversive dialectic. And for the Western art market, he's both too high and too low. They consider him guilty for writing the GDR national anthem; his classic pieces for the workers' struggle are of no interest to the bourgeois art market; his "Fourteen Ways of Describing the Rain" don't interest those who live from selling cardboard roofing. He sat down between all of the chairs; no one in America knows him, but in West Germany there are more and more people who are interested in him. The leftist movement, the peace movement, the Greens--or let's say, at any rate, the more intelligent people among these groups, those with greater historical consciousness, who grasp increasingly that Eisler is part of the most precious legacy which they must appropriate. And if I can contribute something to that, by telling people here (in America) about Eisler--from my very limited perspective, of course--then it's a good thing and I'm happy about it. Ja.

* * * *

The interpreter for the interview was Leslie Adelson of Ohio State University, Columbus. The interview text was transcribed, translated, and edited for publication by Communications editor Michael Gilbert. Jim Miller (the interviewer) makes his living as a probation officer in Cleveland, Ohio.

(Editor's note: In order to preserve the "full flavor" of Wolf Biermann's remarks, it was decided to retain--andeutungsweise--certain non-decorous expressions occurring in the course of the interview. The indulgence of the readership in this regard is appreciated.)

From the German Information Center:

Hölderlin-Preis für Biermann

Der mit 15.000 Mark dotierte Friedrich-Hölderlin-Preis der Stadt Bad Homburg (Hessen) geht in diesem Jahr an den Lyriker und Liedermacher Wolf Biermann. Die Jury begründete ihre Entscheidung mit der Formenvielfalt und Musikalität der Lyrik Biermanns, heißt es in einer Mitteilung der Stadt vom 2.2. Der aus der DDR ausgebürgerte Künstler "vereine in seinem Leiden an Deutschland das Erbe Hölderlins und Heines". Der Preis wird am Todestag Friedrich Hölderlins, dem 7. Juni, in Bad Homburg verliehen.

KUNERTS LANGER ABSCHIED VON BRECHT

Jay Rosellini, Purdue University

Wer etwas über die persönliche und intellektuelle Beziehung des 1929 in Berlin geborenen Lyrikers, Prosaisten und Essayisten Günter Kunert zu Bertolt Brecht in Erfahrung bringen will, muß mehrere Anläufe machen. In vielen bekannten Brecht-Monographien (z.B., bei Ewen, Hayman, Ley, Mittenzwei, Schoeps, Schuhmacher, Völker und Willett) kommt der Name Kunert nämlich kein einziges Mal vor. Der Leser von Knopfs Brecht-Handbüchern wird auch nicht fündig. In der Brecht-Chronik wird nebenbei erwähnt, Brecht, Kunert und andere hätten am 10. Mai 1952 bei Stephan Hermlin an einer Diskussion über eine geplante Literaturbeilage zum Neuen Deutschland teilgenommen (1). Reinhold Grimm verweist auf vier Arbeiten zum Thema Brecht/Kunert (2), kann aber im Rahmen seiner einführenden Arbeit nicht darauf eingehen. Martin Esslin rechnet Kunert zu den "besten Begabungen der jungen Generation," mit denen Brecht zusammengearbeitet habe. Er fügt hinzu, daß Kunert und andere junge Schriftsteller, die in den frühen fünfziger Jahren mit Brecht Kontakt hatten, damals "innerhalb der SED als zur Opposition gehörig betrachtet wurden" (3). Detailliertere Angaben macht Esslin aber auch nicht. In den verschiedenen Brecht-Ausgaben läßt sich auch nichts entdecken: vergebens sucht man im Arbeitsjournal, in den (veröffentlichten) Briefen oder im Band Tagebücher/Aufzeichnungen nach einem einzigen knappen Hinweis auf Kunert. Man muß sich also--von einer Ausnahme abgesehen--auf die eigenen Aussagen des "Nachgeborenen" sowie auf weitverstreute Spezialstudien verlassen.

Als Kunert 1981 in Frankfurt am Main Poetik-Vorlesungen hält, bekennt er: "Zwei deutsche Dichter haben in vielfacher Hinsicht mein Leben beeinflusst: Johannes R. Becher und Bertolt Brecht" (4). Als "junger, begabter Dichter" wird Kunert in Bechers Tagebuch 1950 charakterisiert (5). Brecht trifft sich Anfang der fünfziger Jahre mit dem Nachwuchs-Autor und liest dessen ersten Gedichtband Wegschilder und Mauerinschriften. Am 25. April 1952 schreibt er an den polnischen Regisseur Leon Schiller: "Ich schicke Ihnen einen der begabtesten jungen Lyriker, Günter Kunert ... " (6). Während Becher für Kunert einen Mentor und Förderer darstellt, mit dessen Werken er wenig anfangen kann, üben Brechts Erscheinung sowie seine Texte eine starke Wirkung aus. Auch drei Jahrzehnte nach den Begegnungen in der Trümmerstadt Berlin bleiben Überreste der damaligen Faszination übrig:

Es haben sich mir Sentenzen eingeprägt, die er so hinwarf, und unvergeßlich darum, weil man sie nicht unwidersprochen hinnehmen konnte. "Man muß den Deutschen den Sozialismus in den Arsch treten," hieß es ziemlich raunzig ... (VS, 66)

Im Sammelband Kunert lesen (7), der bisher umfangreichsten Veröffentlichung zu Kunerts Leben und Werk, wimmelt es von Hinweisen auf Brecht, der von verschiedenen Kritikern "Meister" (S. 14), "Lehrmeister" (S. 66) oder "Vorbild" (S. 107) genannt wird. Kunert gilt als "Adept" (S. 42), der sich "Brechtsche

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List" (S. 203) und Dialektik (S. 162) aneigne. Bei vielen Bezeichnungen und Formulierungen, die auf Kunert gemünzt sind, denkt der Leser des Sammelbands unwillkürlich an Brecht. Zum Beispiel: "Typ des skeptischen Aufklärers" (S. 8), "dieser hellsichtige Marxist" (S. 8), "<er> hat sich ziemlich zeitig allen äußeren Zwängen versagt" (S. 98), "leidenschaftliches Eintreten für soziale Gerechtigkeit" (S. 167), "ein Einzelgänger ... kein Zupackender, ... kein Aktivist" (S. 195), "leidenschaftliche Menschenfreundlichkeit" (S. 200) usf. (8).

Viele Beobachter haben darauf hingewiesen, daß der Lakonismus, die gestische Sprechweise, die Didaktik und die dialektische Schlußwende in manchen frühen Kunert-Gedichten mehr oder weniger direkt von Brecht übernommen wurden. (Klaus Schuhmann spricht z.B. vom "an der Brechtschen Epigrammatik geschulte(n) Kurzgedicht" (9).) Als Parade-beispiel wird oft "Über einige Davongekommene" angeführt (10):

Als der Mensch
unter den Trümmern
seines
bombardierten Hauses
hervorgezogen wurde,
schüttelte er sich
und sagte:
Nie wieder

Jedenfalls nicht gleich.

Hans Mayer schreibt bereits 1950 über Kunerts Erstlingswerk: "Es 'brechtelt' noch ziemlich in diesen Gedichten ..." (11). In diesem Fall liegt jedoch--laut Kunert--ein Irrtum vor: "Als ich meinen ersten Gedichtband schrieb, hatte ich schändlicherweise Brecht noch niemals gelesen" (12). Das ändert sich schlagartig, als Kunert Brecht kennenlernt. Der "Meister" verschafft ihm anscheinend Zugang zu Texten, die in den Buchhandlungen nicht zu finden sind, u.a. die Hauspostille und, etwas später, die "Buckower Elegien." Im Hinblick auf die fünfziger Jahre kann man wirklich von einem Schüler-Meister Verhältnis sprechen. Auf der Suche nach der eigenen poetischen Identität probiert der Jüngere die verschiedensten Techniken des Älteren aus. (Das ist natürlich durchaus legitim. Es ist viel weniger legitim, Kunert eine "sowohl falsch gehandhabte als auch falsch verstandene Brecht-Rezeption" vorzuwerfen, wie es der DDR-Kritiker Klaus Werner tut (13).) Es kommt z.B. vor, daß ein Brecht-Gedicht von Kunert "bearbeitet" wird, damit die Aussage deutlicher wird, was sich anhand von Brechts "Der Himmel dieses Sommers" und Kunerts "Die Sonne scheint" illustrieren läßt. Der erste Text entstand 1953 und gilt als einer der "Nachträge" zu den "Buckower Elegien" (14):

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Hoch über dem See fliegt ein Bomber.
 Von den Ruderbooten auf
 Schauen Kinder, Frauen, ein Greis. Von weitem
 Gleichen sie jungen Staren, die Schnäbel aufreißend
 Der Nahrung entgegen.

Kunerts Variante erschien 1955 in seinem zweiten Lyrikband Unter diesem Himmel (15). Da "Der Himmel dieses Sommers" erst 1965 gedruckt wurde (16), muß Kunert das unveröffentlichte Manuskript eingesehen haben. Während Brecht assoziativ vorgeht und auf eine direkte Belehrung verzichtet, hält sich der junge Kunert bei Vergleichen und Umwegen nicht lange auf:

Die Sonne scheint. Aus den Fenstern
 Des neuen Hauses schauen die Frauen
 Auf spielende Kinder. Über den
 Himmel fliegt ein Flugzeug, über
 Die Gesichter zieht ein Schatten.
 Sie erinnern sich.

(Es sei an dieser Stelle angemerkt, daß sich Kunert später bei jeder Gelegenheit von derartiger Didaktisierung bzw. Verdeutlichung distanziert.)

Manches wird einfach epigonal reproduziert. Das gilt z.B. für die Vierzeiler im 1961 erschienenen Gedichtband Tagwerke, die aus der Kriegsfibel stammen könnten (17):

EIN JEDER SCHUß AUF DEINEN BRUDER BRACHTE GELD,
 Doch Geld auch, traf dich sein Geschoß.
 So war es in der guten, alten Zeit bestellt:
 Für dich ein Erdloch. Und für Krupp ein Schloß.

(Kunert hat die Kriegsfibel übrigens 1955 mit herausgegeben.) Hinweise auf Brechtsche Bilder und Ausdrücke sind häufig anzutreffen. Das Gedicht "Vom Vergehen" erinnert einen z.B. an "Vom armen B.B." sowie an den Schluß vom "Offenen Brief an die deutschen Künstler und Schriftsteller" (1951) (18):

Was wird von uns bleiben, wenn wir
 Zugedeckt mit Sand im kargen Boden
 Sacht verrinnen?
 ...
 Es ist möglich,
 Die Erde bewohnbar zu machen für
 Menschen ...

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Kunert bezieht sich zweimal auf das berühmte "Gespräch über Bäume." In der "Legende von zwei Silben" spricht er von der "... Epoche in der/ Das tägliche Gespräch über alltägliche Verbrechen/ Schweigen über Bäume häuft" (19), und später--wohl kurz vor der Übersiedlung in den Westen--bezeichnet er seine Worte als "Wegbereiter/ dorthin wo das Gespräch über Bäume/ kein Schweigen mehr bindet ..." (20). Auch das von Brecht gern verwendete Partizip Präsens wird eingesetzt bzw. überstrapaziert:

Tot erklärt, doch lebend.

...

Mahnend und aufrüttelnd.

Selbst anpackend und zugreifend.

Auch lehrend.

Aufrichtend die Gebeugten, erklärend das Getriebe

Der Welt und deutend die Wissenschaft der

Klassiker.

...

Die Partei.

(aus: "Wo stehst Du? Vorn. Welches ist Dein Platz? Der erste."

UH, 51.)

Bei dieser Hommage fehlt eigentlich nur eines, nämlich der Versuch, Brecht selbst darzustellen. Angesichts der in den fünfziger und sechziger Jahren entstandenen Porträt-Gedichte (21) ist das etwas verwunderlich. Im Gespräch mit Kunert weist der DDR-Germanist Hans Richter 1974 auf diese "Lücke" hin, doch sein Interviewpartner äußert sich nicht dazu (22).

Bis etwa 1960 sucht der Lyriker Kunert den Dialog mit dem Leser, den er als Mitstreiter beim Aufbau einer neuen Gesellschaft gewinnen will. Zu dieser Zeit glaubt er, "die Werkstätten mörderischen deutschen Bewußtseins würden anfangen, Vernunft zu erzeugen, sobald sie sozialisiert seien" (23). Von den "Erdbeben" der fünfziger Jahre (17. Juni, Ungarn, XX. Parteitag der KPdSU) wird dieser Glaube allmählich erschüttert. Über Wesen und Verlauf dieser Erschütterung läßt sich allerdings streiten. Während Dieter E. Zimmer von einer "zunehmenden Verfinsterung" spricht (24), stellt Gerhard Wolf fest, seit Beginn der sechziger Jahre vollziehe sich eine "Umkehrung bisher als Ideologie akzeptierter Werte ... einer kopernikanischen Wende vergleichbar ..." (25) Uwe Wittstock weist darüber hinaus auf Kunerts Anlehnung an Adornos "ästhetische und kulturkritische Theorien" seit dem Ende der siebziger Jahre hin (26). Es versteht sich von selbst, daß dieser tiefgreifende Wandel im Kunertschen Denken nicht zuletzt mit einem Abschied von der Sicht- und Schreibweise Brechts einhergeht. Dieser Abschied darf jedoch keineswegs als ein einmaliger Akt aufgefaßt werden; er ist vielmehr ein Prozeß, dessen Ende noch nicht abzusehen ist, wie ein Blick auf Kunerts Werke zeigt.

Fast möchte man von einem Bildersturm reden, bei dem Ikonen, die früher verehrt wurden, heruntergeholt und zerschmettert werden. Dieses Bild wäre

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aber irreführend, es sei denn, man könnte sich einen melancholischen Bilderstürmer vorstellen. Kunert schleudert die Bausteine des früheren Weltbildes nicht in die Ecke, sondern er legt sie kopfschüttelnd zu den anderen alten Klamotten, die nicht mehr passen. Zu diesen "Klamotten" gehören die teleologische Geschichtsauffassung, der Glaube an den Fortschritt (sowohl den gesellschaftlichen als auch den wissenschaftlich-technischen), die sozialistische Parteilichkeit und die Verwendung der Literatur als Waffe im Klassenkampf. Dabei fällt auf, daß Brecht--anders als etwa Marx oder Lenin--zunächst ungeschoren davonkommt. Das 1968 veröffentlichte kurze Prosastück "Erinnerung an Bertolt B." (SF, 215) enthält schon Kritisches, aber der Ton ist eher ironisch als aggressiv: "... Fortdauer nur der Veränderung gestattet dieser letzte Heilige des Zweifels, der asketische Sybarit und Verkünder der Wissenschaft der Kunst und der Kunst des Wissens." 1970 gibt Kunert beim Ostberliner Eulenspiegel-Verlag eine Auswahl von Brechts Liedern und Balladen heraus, und im Vorwort ("Einige Worte zu Brechts Liedern") spart er nicht mit Lob: Brecht sei "ein großer Streiter für Weite und Vielfalt" gewesen (27). Drei Jahre später fühlt sich Kunert sogar noch dazu verpflichtet, Brecht gegenüber den kulturpolitischen Erbeverwaltern in Schutz zu nehmen. Hörte man damit auf, die Texte des Verstorbenen kritisch zu lesen, "so würde Brecht, der sich niemals als solche empfand, zur Autorität wie jeder andere Klassiker auch ... Ein postumes Schicksal von bitterer Ironie" (28). 1974 distanziert sich Kunert bei einem Interview von Brechts "Gebrauchslyrik," aber er fügt hinzu, daß er diese Art von Lyrik immer noch als Produkt "einer bestimmten geschichtlichen Lage" akzeptieren könne (29). Kühl-abwägende, differenzierte Wertungen dieser Art sollten später schärferen Tönen weichen.

In den bewegten siebziger Jahren scheint der Dialog mit Brecht peripher zu werden. Auf das allzu kurze DDR-Tauwetter folgt 1976 die Ausbürgerung von Wolf Biermann, mit dem sich Kunert solidarisiert. Als einer der Erstunterzeichner der sogenannten "Biermann-Petition" wird Kunert endgültig zum unsicheren Kantonisten gestempelt. 1977 erfolgt die Streichung der SED-Mitgliedschaft. Zu einer Zeit, als man ihm Geschichtspessimismus vorwirft, befaßt er sich mit einem Schriftsteller, der seinerzeit gegen den Strom schwamm, nämlich Heinrich von Kleist. Es entstehen das "Pamphlet für K." (SF, 333f.; Abdruck auch in Sinn und Form, Heft 5, 1976), das Hörspiel "Ein anderer K." (30), und, nach der Übersiedlung in die BRD, der Aufsatz "Heinrich von Kleist--Ein Modell." Einerseits ist nicht zu übersehen, daß sich Kunert mit dem sensiblen Außenseiter identifiziert, doch andererseits kann er nicht umhin, die Grausamkeit von Kleists nationalistischen Versen zu geißeln. In diesem Zusammenhang fallen Sätze, die, in abgewandelter Gestalt, bald auf Brecht bezogen werden sollten (31):

... Vor allem eine Analogie ist von deutlicher Aktualität: der Schwund kritischer Wirklichkeitssicht durch Suche nach einem geistigen Halt, nach Stabilisierung unseres disparaten und durch die Verhältnisse zersplitterten Ichs. Wir, immer anlehnungsbedürftig an Ideale, an höhere Prinzipien, haben am eigenen Leibe, am eigenen Kopfe erfahren, welche Folgen eine ideologische Fixation und

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Abhängigkeit zeigt ... Zwischen die triste Realität und Kleist hat sich ein Verzerrer geschoben, ein Filter, ein Produkt des unbewußten Wollens, nur zu sehen, was man sehen möchte. Überblicken wir unser eigenes Leben, dann stoßen wir, falls wir ehrlich sind, darin auf Phasen gleichartiger Verblendung. Wo wir negative Erscheinungen, die mit unserem ideellen Weltbild kollidierten, einfach übersahen, hat es sich wahrhaftig um den bekannten blinden Fleck gehandelt und keineswegs um zynische Verleugnung unangenehmer Fakten. Damit entschuldige ich uns nicht, so wenig ich Kleist für unverantwortlich an seinen unsäglichen Reimereien erklären will.

Ehe ähnliche Worte über Brecht gesagt werden, veröffentlicht Kunert 1980 das Gedicht "Vom Dorotheenstädtischen Friedhof" (AV, 620), in dem beklagt wird, daß die toten Dichter, die sich nicht mehr wehren können, zwecks "der weiterwährenden Gebrauchsfähigkeit" dem Dienst der Macht anheimfallen. Nach dieser Elegie kommt es schließlich zu der Polemik, die schon längst vorprogrammiert war.

Diese Polemik geht natürlich nicht im luftleeren Raum vor sich: sie gehört zur allgemeinen Auseinandersetzung über die Aufklärung und ihre Folgen. Diese Debatte wird u.a. in der Veranstaltungsreihe "Der Traum der Vernunft. Vom Elend der Aufklärung" der Westberliner Akademie der Künste dokumentiert. Günter Grass eröffnete diese Reihe im Juli 1984. In seinem einleitenden Referat steht der Satz: "... alle bis heute wirksamen Ideologieentwürfe sind Träume aufklärer Vernunft und haben--hier als Verelendung produzierender Kapitalismus, dort als mit Zwang herrschender Kommunismus--ihre Ungeheuerlichkeit bewiesen" (32). Im selben Monat schrieb Fritz Raddatz in der Zeit: "Der radikalste Kündler vom Ende der Aufklärung--ja, von den Sünden der Aufklärung, ist Günter Kunert" (33). Vier Jahre später verteilte der Suhrkamp Verlag zahllose Hochglanzbroschüren, die die Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe der Werke und Briefe Brechts ankündigten (34). In einer Stellungnahme zu dieser Ausgabe zitierte der Kritiker Karl Corino den Leipziger Aphoristiker Horst Drescher: "Seit Brechts 'Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit' Pflichtlektüre in unseren Schullesebüchern geworden ist, sind es schätzungsweise zehn geworden" (35).

Eine der bereits erwähnten Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen, die man insgesamt als ein Plädoyer für die absolute Autonomie des Gedichts bzw. des Gedichtschreibers bezeichnen könnte, trägt den Titel "Brecht und Becher--pars pro toto." (Eine gekürzte Fassung dieses Textes wurde 1981 in der Zeit abgedruckt (36), wo eine eindeutige Überschrift zu lesen war: "Über das hartnäckige autoritäre Denken.") Brecht gilt hier als "Gefangener des 19. Jahrhunderts" (VS, 57), einer Epoche, die die Autorität verinnerlicht habe. Bei aller Rebellion, bei allem "Lob des Zweifels" (so der Titel eines Brecht-Gedichts, das Kunert äußerst problematisch findet) gehe es nicht "um eine Alternative menschlicher Selbstbestimmung" (ebd., 72). Beim Schreiben von Gedichten wie "Der große Oktober" (1937) habe Brecht sein Wissen um die Nachtseite des Sowjetsystems verdrängen müssen. Kunert fragt sich, ob

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Brechts Engagement für den Sozialismus, der im Grunde nichts als eine "Wunschprojektion" (ebd., 68) gewesen sei, letzten Endes das typische Verhalten des machtlosen Intellektuellen darstelle:

Symbolisch wird in den Gedichten der "Feind" getötet, symbolisch siegt das eigene Selbst, expansiv erweitert durch höhere, nahezu göttliche Mächte wie Volk, Arbeiterklasse, Partei. Heute frage ich mich, ob die Anfälligkeit Intellektueller für symbolträchtige Ideen und Systeme nicht überhaupt aus solchem Kompensationsverlangen herrührt. Das schwache und sich selber bezweifelnde Ich, welches die Fähigkeit errungen hat, die eigene Individualität in Frage zu stellen, sucht Halt und Ausgleich durch mächtige Schimären. Und die mangelnde Kenntnis der Sache, aus der man innere Kraft bezieht, ist geradezu die Grundvoraussetzung dafür, daß die Kompensation gelingt (ebd., 69).

Kunert will jedoch nicht als Richter auftreten, denn eine Entschuldigung lasse sich anführen: Brecht habe "aus den Hoffnungen und Sehnsüchten einer Epoche" geschöpft (ebd., 57). Diese Entschuldigung nimmt Kunert für sich selbst und seine Generationsgenossen nicht in Anspruch: "Wir hätten einsichtiger sein müssen" (ebd.).

Über Kunerts Brecht-Bild kann man streiten. Am Ende dieser Ausführungen soll jedoch nicht dieser Streit stehen, sondern die Frage nach dem Verhältnis zwischen diesem Brecht-Bild und Kunerts Selbstbild. Etwas präziser ausgedrückt: geht die Abrechnung mit der eigenen Vergangenheit genauso rücksichtslos vor wie das Aufspüren von vermeintlich autoritätshörigen Aspekten im Leben und Werk des Vorgängers? Kunert spricht, wie oben erwähnt, von "mangelnde(r) Kenntnis der Sache, aus der man innere Kraft bezieht." Diese Formulierung trifft allerdings meiner Meinung nach eher auf den jungen Kunert als auf Brecht zu. Während der Ältere im Grunde genommen wußte, worauf er sich einließ, war das bei Kunert, der eine Woche nach dem Reichstagsbrand erst vier Jahre alt wurde, nicht der Fall, ja, es konnte gar nicht der Fall sein.

Brecht war schon ein bekannter Schriftsteller, als er begann, sich intensiv mit dem Sozialismus zu beschäftigen. Im Jahre 1945 war der sechzehnjährige Kunert, der als Halbjude im Dritten Reich Schlimmes hatte erleben müssen, zwar das Produkt "einer zwangsweise antifaschistischen Familie und Umgebung" (37), doch er kannte das Sowjetsystem kaum. Er spürte eine starke "Hinneigung zu allem, was sich links nannte" (VS, 37), aber diese Hinneigung rührte von seinen traumatischen Erlebnissen her, war also eher emotional als intellektuell bedingt. Das Merkwürdige ist, daß Kunert bis heute nicht zugegeben hat, daß er in der Nachkriegszeit politisch naiv war. Im Gegenteil: er bestreitet diese Naivität sogar. (Der oben angeführte Passus aus "Heinrich von Kleist--Ein Modell" enthält zwar Selbstkritik, doch die Verwendung der wir-Form entlastet Kunert, da sein Verhalten als Normalfall--sprich: Mitläufertum!--erscheint.) Er spricht einerseits von der "Widersprüchlichkeit"

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seines "einstigen Lebensgefühls" ("Darin vermengten sich Nüchternheit und Skepsis mit Hoffnung und Zukunftsgläubigkeit ...") (38), andererseits betont er, von einer "kritiklosen Hingabe an den neuen Gott, nachdem eben erst gerade einer gestürzt worden war" (VS, 35), könne keine Rede sein. Soviel ich weiß, wird diese Behauptung von allen westlichen Kunert-Kommentatoren akzeptiert. Die Kunertsche Selbstdarstellung kommt jedoch demjenigen, der die-- heute kaum noch zugänglichen--ersten vier Gedichtbände kennt, äußerst fragwürdig vor. Da lassen sich nämlich Agitprop-Verse finden, die aus der Feder eines Fürnberg, Kuba oder Zimmering stammen könnten (39). Ein paar Beispiele:

Partei-Hymnen sind gang und gäbe--

Erst die große Vereinigung
wird mir mein wahres
Leben schenken
und wird mich
nähren und lehren
durch tausend gedruckte Adern.
(aus: "Partei," WM, 78);

die übliche Lenin-Apotheose taucht mehr als einmal auf--

...
Ihr Feldherr ritt nicht zu Rosse,
Schwang nicht den Prügelstock
Er hieß schlicht Genosse Lenin
Und trug einen einfachen Rock.
(aus: "Die Lokomotive der Geschichte," UH, 67);

die Rote Armee bestand einst aus lauter Samaritern (vgl. "Die Soldaten," UH, 46f.); die Sieger aus dem Osten meinten es von Anfang an gut mit den SBZ-Deutschen--

...
Auf Anraten meines russischen Arztes
Nutze ich, was mir geblieben: den Spaten,
Die Hacke, die Mauerkelle, den Rest von
Vernunft.
(aus: "Die uns Behausende," TW, 57);

und Stalin-Worte werden ins Gedicht eingefügt, ohne daß der Verfasser genannt wird (40):

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...

Es wird Nacht. Die Hitler kommen.
Denkt daran: Sie müssen wieder gehen.
Was sie gegen euch auch unternommen,
Ihr bleibt doch als Volk bestehn.

Was sollte man dazu sagen? Es bieten sich wohl zwei Erklärungen an:
1) Eine "kritiklose Hingabe" war tatsächlich vorhanden, das Umdenken kam später. Solche Fälle hat es haufenweise gegeben, und sie erregen heute kaum noch besondere Aufmerksamkeit. 2) Kunert war wirklich von vornherein von Zweifeln geplagt, aber als Schriftsteller legte er sie beiseite, weil er ein unerbittlicher Feind des Faschismus und--im Sinne der Theorie Dimitroffs--des Kapitalismus war. Das wäre auch angesichts seiner Kindheits- und Jugenderlebnisse durchaus verständlich. Eine solche Einstellung--die Brecht übrigens nicht fremd war--ist aber für den Kunert dieser Tage ein Horror, denn gerade jegliche Indienstnahme der Literatur kämpft er seit Jahren verbissen an. (Über das Gedicht sagt er z.B.: "... es unterhält nicht und belehrt nicht, informiert nicht, moralisiert nicht, philosophiert nicht, vermittelt keine Verhaltensweise und klärt nicht auf" (VS, 24)). Wir können natürlich nicht wissen, ob Kunert innere Konflikte aus seiner frühen Schaffensphase verdrängt hat, aber die Auseinandersetzung mit Brecht--und Biermann! (41)--hat hie und da doch den Charakter des Scheinboxens.

Daß dieses Kapitel noch nicht abgeschlossen ist, führen zwei Gedichte vor, die Kunert in den achtziger Jahren über Brecht geschrieben hat. Die "Erinnerung an den armen B.B." ist eine Polemik in Versen (42):

Aus schwarzen Wäldern kommend seinerzeit:
Ein Menschenfresser ohne Arg und Harm.
Viel Lust an Frauen. Und Genuß am Streit.
Verläßlich aber, daß es Gott erbarm.

Vertrieben von der braunen Obrigkeit:
Als einer in der Exilierten Schwarm,
der nicht zum Aufenthalt bereit
Im Musterland von Orwells "Farm."

Sein Thema war: Besitz schafft Leid,
schafft Elend und schafft Schuftigkeit.
Der Mensch: Verhaltensweise. Sonst: Nur Darm.
Ich bitte Euch: Seid nicht mehr arm.

Anders als im jugendlich-verschmitzten Selbstporträt "Vom armen B.B." (1922) ist die Ironie hier keine heitere, sondern eine schneidende. Dem Flüchtling wird kaum Mitleid gezollt, und dem Denker wird Einseitigkeit und Naivität vorgeworfen (von der Charakterfrage ganz zu schweigen). Im vier Jahre früher

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erschienenen Gedicht "Deutscher Dichter, Güteklasse A," das sich wie eine Anklageschrift liest, ist der Ton noch schärfer (43):

Befaßt mit sich selber
wie mit der Revolution:
Glanzvolle Verse über die Notwendigkeit
des Schreckens
Heldenverehrung hymnisch
Reimloser Ruhm den Kämpfern
aller letzten Gefechte
Fragen nach den Erbauern
des siebentorigen Theben
nach seinen Zerstörern keine
Urteile am laufenden Wortband
Ein Spiel mit der Sprache
auf willigen Tasten
hinter dem Rücken der Welt
aber die Hand
zurückgezogen
ist blutig

Ausgerechnet Kunert, der seit Jahren bestreitet, daß literarische Werke die Welt verändern könnten, wirft dem einstigen Lehrer vor, die (stalinistische?) Schreckensherrschaft durch sein Schreiben mit ermöglicht zu haben. Wäre ein derartiges Vorgehen Kunerts das Produkt von ausschließlich literarischen bzw. politischen Überlegungen, so müßte es einen befremden. Man wird jedoch das Gefühl nicht los, daß es bei diesem Gedicht nicht (nur) um Brecht geht (44). Die Rücksichtslosigkeit, ja Unversöhnlichkeit, der man hier und an anderen Stellen begegnet, deutet meines Erachtens darauf hin, daß die Angriffe auf den toten Mentor zumindest zum Teil als--mehr oder minder verschleierte--Selbstkritik aufgefaßt werden müssen. Es wäre zwar falsch, Kunerts Vorwürfe deswegen als unberechtigt abzutun, aber sie sollten in jedem einzelnen Fall gründlich auf ihre Wahrheit geprüft werden (45).

Notes

1. Klaus Völker, Brecht-Chronik (München: Hanser, 1971), Eintragung vom 10. Mai 1952. Zitiert nach der US-Ausgabe (New York: Seabury, 1975), S. 174.
2. Reinhold Grimm, Bertolt Brecht, Sammlung Metzler 4 (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1971), S. 173 u. 116.
3. Martin Esslin, Brecht. Das Paradox des politischen Dichters, dtv 702 (München: dtv, 1970), S. 132. Ilja Fradkin stellt die damaligen Verhältnisse

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anders dar: "In diesen Jahren wurde Brecht Mittelpunkt eines großen Kreises sozialistischer künstlerischer Intelligenz verschiedener Generationen." Für "die Jungen" (Kunert u.a.) sei Brecht "der Lehrer" gewesen. Vgl. I. Fradkin, Bertolt Brecht. Weg und Methode, RUB 551 (Leipzig: Reclam, 1974), S. 243.

4. Günter Kunert, Vor der Sintflut. Das Gedicht als Arche Noah. Frankfurter Vorlesungen, Edition Akzente Hanser (München/Wien: Hanser, 1985), S. 57. Weitere Hinweise auf diesen Band im Text der Arbeit (Sigel: VS). Bei der vorliegenden Untersuchung steht die Lyrik im Vordergrund. Auf den Prosaisten Kunert hatte Brecht wenig Einfluß.

5. Johannes R. Becher, Auf andere Art so große Hoffnung. Tagebuch 1950/ Eintragungen 1951, Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 12 (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1969), S. 50.

6. Bertolt Brecht an Leon Schiller, 25.4.1952. Abdruck in Autorenkollektiv unter Leitung von Horst Haase, Geschichte der Literatur der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, hrsg. von Hans-Günther Thalheim u.a. (Berlin/DDR: Volk und Wissen, 1977), Bd. 11, S. 472. Auf S. 848 wird angemerkt, Günter Kunert besitze eine Fotokopie des Originals.

7. Kunert lesen, hrsg. von Michael Krüger (München/Wien: Hanser, 1979). Seitenangaben im Text der Arbeit (Sigel: KL).

8. Was die künstlerische Produktion bzw. Theaterarbeit, die oft im Kollektiv vor sich ging, betrifft, war Brecht kein Einzelgänger. Hier bezieht sich diese Bezeichnung eher auf die Tatsache, daß Brecht--trotz seines sozialistischen Engagements--weder Parteimitglied wurde noch die Exiljahre in der von ihm gelobten Sowjetunion verbrachte.

9. Klaus Schuhmann, Untersuchungen zur Lyrik Brechts (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1977), S. 154.

10. Günter Kunert, Wegschilder und Mauerinschriften (Berlin/DDR: Aufbau, 1950), S. 14. Weitere Hinweise auf diesen Band im Text der Arbeit (Sigel: WM).

11. Hans Mayer, Besprechung von Wegschilder und Mauerinschriften. Teilabdruck in Kunert lesen (s. Anm. 7), S. 186. Erstdruck: Leipziger Volkszeitung, 17.12.1950.

12. Joachim Walther, Meinetwegen Schmetterlinge. Gespräche mit Schriftstellern (Berlin/DDR: Der Morgen, 1973), S. 90.

13. Klaus Werner, "Zur Brecht-Rezeption bei Günter Kunert und Hans Magnus Enzensberger." Weimarer Beiträge, Brecht-Sonderheft 1968, S. 65.

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14. Bertolt Brecht, Gesammelte Gedichte, edition suhrkamp 837 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), Bd. 3, S. 1015.

15. Günter Kunert, Unter diesem Himmel (Berlin/DDR: Neues Leben, 1955), S. 36. Weitere Hinweise auf diesen Band im Text der Arbeit (Sigel: UH).

16. Erstdruck in Bertolt Brecht, Gedichte (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp und Berlin/DDR: Aufbau, 1960-1965), Bd. 8 (1965), S. 207. Vgl. Edgar Marsch, Brecht-Kommentar zum lyrischen Werk (München: Winkler, 1974), S. 358.

17. Günter Kunert, Tagwerke (Halle/Saale: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1961), S. 121. Weitere Hinweise auf diesen Band im Text der Arbeit (Sigel: TW).

18. Günter Kunert, Erinnerung an einen Planeten (München: Hanser, 1963), S. 37.

19. Günter Kunert, Verkündigung des Wetters (München: Hanser, 1966), S. 78.

20. Günter Kunert, "Belagerungszustand," in ders., Abtötungsverfahren (München/Wien: Hanser, 1980), S. 50. Weitere Hinweise auf diesen Band im Text der Arbeit (Sigel: AV).

21. In folgenden Gedichten werden Menschen, die Kunert bewundert, porträtiert: "Edgar Lee Masters," "Abe Lincoln," "Roald Amundsen" (alle in UH), "Fotografie: Lenin mit einer Katze," "Die Stimme" <d.i. Lenin> (beide in TW), "Epitaph für Tadeusz Borowski (1922-1951)," "Halas, begraben in Kunststat" (beide in Der ungebetene Gast. Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1965), "Jessenin und Majakowski," "Beim Lesen Lenas," "Yannis Ritsos nicht zu vergessen," "Berühmtes Subjekt" <d.i. Einstein> und "Marx" (alle in Warnung vor Spiegeln. München: Hanser, 1970). Anderer Art sind die Gedichte "Die Erzählung des Sergeanten Jack Johnson aus Oklahoma" (UH), "Gagerin" (Der ungebetene Gast), "Exegese J.R. Bechers" und "Bedauerlicher Hitler" (beide in Warnung vor Spiegeln). "Ernst Balcke" (auch in Warnung vor Spiegeln) ist eigentlich kein Porträt.

22. Hans Richter, "Selbstaussdruck und Gesellschaftsbezug. Interview mit Günter Kunert," in Auskünfte. Werkstattgespräche mit DDR-Autoren (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1974), S. 473f.

23. Günter Kunert, "Ohne Bilanz," in ders., Die Schreie der Fledermäuse, Ullstein TB 26041 (Frankfurt/Main, Berlin, Wien: Ullstein, 1981), S. 351. Weitere Hinweise auf diesen Band im Text der Arbeit (Sigel: SF).

24. "Ein Dialog" (Dieter E. Zimmer/Günter Kunert), in SF (s. Anm. 23), S. 378.

25. Gerhard Wolf, "Der lebende Vers," in KL (s. Anm. 7), S. 101f.

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26. Uwe Wittstock, "Nachwort" zu Günter Kunert, Gedichte, RUB 8380 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1987), S. 72.

27. Über die irdische Liebe und andere gewisse Welträtsel in Liedern und Balladen von Bertolt Brecht (Lizenausgabe Frankfurt/Main: Insel, 1972), S. 8.

28. Günter Kunert, "Einige Überlegungen zu den 'Teppichwebern,'" in ders., Warum schreiben? (München: Hanser, 1976), S. 173. In diesem Essay wird Brecht allerdings nicht nur gegen seine Verehrer verteidigt, sondern auch kritisiert: "Sie <die Teppichweber> sind wahr als gestaltgewordener Vorschlag Brechts an den Leser vernünftige Entscheidungen in seiner Lebenspraxis zu finden--unwahr, indem sie diese Entscheidungen als bereits aufgetretene allgemeine historische Qualität behaupten" (175). Da Brechts Quelle ein Zeitungsausschnitt war (vgl. E. Marsch, S. 279), läßt sich das Gedicht--entgegen der Kunertschen Deutung--so interpretieren: Brecht betrachtete die vernünftige Entscheidung der Teppichweber durchaus als eine Ausnahme und stellte sie deshalb dar, weil er hoffte, daß solche Ausnahmen mit der Zeit zur Regel werden könnten.

29. "Selbstaussdruck und Gesellschaftsbezug" (s. Anm. 22), S. 467.

30. Günter Kunert, Ein anderer K., RUB 9851 (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977). Ur-sendung am 26. August 1976 im Berliner Rundfunk.

31. Günter Kunert, "Heinrich von Kleist--Ein Modell," in ders., Diesseits des Erinnerns, dtv 10438 (München: dtv, 1985), S. 46f.

32. Günter Grass, "Der Traum der Vernunft," in Der Traum der Vernunft. Vom Elend der Aufklärung. Erste Folge, Sammlung Luchterhand 571 (Darmstadt und Neuwied: 1985), S. 7. In der Zweiten Folge (Sammlung Luchterhand 572, 1986) wird Kunert von Michael Schneider heftig angegriffen: "Der derzeit wohl profilierteste literarische Vertreter dieser scheinprogressiven Katastrophen- und Untergangsrhetorik, in deren Namen drei Jahrhunderte europäischer Aufklärung einfach über Bord gekippt werden, ist der Schriftsteller Günter Kunert." M.S., "Wie vernünftig kann Literatur sein?", S. 81.

33. Fritz J. Raddatz, "Die Aufklärung entläßt ihre Kinder," Die Zeit, 6. Juli 1984 (Nr. 27/überseeausgabe). Dasselbe Formulierung taucht in einem späteren Essay auf. Vgl. F.J.R., Zur deutschen Literatur der Zeit 3. Eine dritte deutsche Literatur, Rowohlt TB 8449 (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1987), S. 51f.

34. Der Masseneinsatz von solchem Werbematerial, das ja nicht zu recyceln ist, liefert den Kritikern der Aufklärung wieder einen handfesten Beweis für die Richtigkeit ihrer Thesen! (Werbespruch: "Der Klassiker der Vernunft"!)

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35. Karl Corino, "West-östlicher Kraftakt," BuchJournal 1988, H. 1, S. 20.
36. Die Zeit, 14. August 1981 (Nr. 33/Überseeausgabe).
37. Heinz Osterle, "Ansichten von Amerika. Gespräch mit Günter Kunert," Germanic Review, Summer 1985, S. 108.
38. Günter Kunert, "Mein Lesebuch," in ders., (Hg.), Mein Lesebuch, Fischer TB 5760 (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1983), S. 10.
39. In einem kürzlich erschienenen Aufsatz liefert Elke Kasper eine gründliche Analyse von Kunerts frühen Gedichten. Darin heißt es, der junge Lyriker sei "als Chronist und Aufklärer am Aufbau der sozialistischen Gesellschaft beteiligt" gewesen (S. 308). Obwohl Kasper von einer "enge(n) Brecht-Nachfolge" spricht (S. 309) und dem Autor einen "ungebrochene(n) Fortschrittsglaube(n)" attestiert (S. 308), sieht sie davon ab, aus der eigentlichen 'Partei-Lyrik' zu zitieren. Vgl. E.K., "wie ein Gedicht also/ das nicht mehr ist als ein Gedicht." Zur frühen Lyrik Günter Kunerts," in Deutsche Lyrik nach 1945, hrsg. von Dieter Breuer, suhrkamp taschenbuch 2088 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), S. 306-320.
40. Günter Kunert, "Anno Domini 1933-1945: Die Zerstörung Deutschlands von innen," in ders., Das kreuzbrave Liederbuch (Berlin/DDR: Aufbau, 1961), S. 67.
41. Vgl. "Wenn ich so dächte wie Kunert, möchte ich lieber tot sein." Ein ZEIT-Gespräch zwischen Wolf Biermann, Günter Kunert und Fritz J. Raddatz," Die Zeit, 14. November 1980 (Nr. 47), S.41. In dem von Jürgen P. Wallmann herausgegebenen Band Von den Nachgeborenen. Dichtungen auf Bertolt Brecht (Zürich: Die Arche, 1970) findet man Beiträge von Biermann ("Herr Brecht") und Kunert ("Erinnerung an Bertolt B."). An diesen Gedichten ist der spätere Konflikt zwischen den beiden DDR-Exilanten nicht abzulesen.
42. Günter Kunert, Berlin beizeiten (München/Wien: Hanser, 1987), S. 107.
43. Günter Kunert, Stilleben (München/Wien: Hanser, 1983), S. 65.
44. Zweifellos kennt Kunert das Brecht-Gedicht "Böser Morgen" aus dem Jahre 1953, in dem es heißt: "... Heut nacht im Traum sah ich Finger, auf mich deutend/ Wie auf einen Aussätzigen. Sie waren zerarbeitet und/ Sie waren gebrochen./ Unwissende! schrie ich/ Schuldbewußt." Aus: Brecht, Gesammelte Gedichte, Bd. 3 (s. Anm. 14), S. 1010.
45. Karl-Heinz Schoeps hat mich darauf aufmerksam gemacht, daß Kunerts Brecht-Bild demjenigen ähnelt, das David Pike in seiner Studie Lukacs and Brecht (Chapel Hill and London: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1985) entwirft. Das trifft in bezug auf die Einschätzung von Brechts politischem Denken durchaus zu, obwohl Kunert die Bezeichnung "tyrannophile" (S. xiv) wahrscheinlich nicht verwenden würde. Hinsichtlich der literarischen Produktion stimmt der Schriftsteller Kunert mit dem Literaturwissenschaftler Pike

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jedoch nicht überein. Während dieser Brechts Weltbild als die Voraussetzung für sein "innovative literary genius" (S. 255) betrachtet, meint jener, Brecht habe seine 'poetische Sendung' verraten: "Gefährlich an der Übernahme einer umfassenden Weltanschauung ist, daß ihre Denkschemata vorzuherrschen beginnen und selbst beiläufige Text überwältigen ... Jedes Einbringen andersgearteter Denkkonstruktionen bedeutet für das Gedicht nur zu bald seine Verwandlung in Makulatur" (VS, S. 73 und 76). Ein letzter Hinweis: Kunerts Ambivalenz Brecht gegenüber ist heute noch vorhanden. Ende 1985 fragte er bei einem Vortrag über "Literatur und Politik:" "... warum ... war Brecht ein bedeutender politischer Dichter, und warum gibt es heute keinen seines Formats?" Abdruck in Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel, Frankfurter Ausgabe, 41. Jg., Nr. 97 (6.12.1985), S. 3189.

EPIC THEORY AND ARISTOTELIAN BIOGRAPHY: WERNER MITTENZWEI'S "LEBEN DES BERTOLT BRECHT"

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Perhaps the biggest obstacle to writing a biography of Brecht is Brecht himself. Few writers have dominated the approach critics and biographers have taken to their life and writings as decisively as he. Werner Mittenzwei's long-awaited "life of Brecht" is no exception, for he clearly allows Brecht's theories of non-Aristotelian representation to influence the type of biography he has written.

Among other things, this fourteen-hundred page tome tries to break with the traditional linear structure that characterizes most Western biography. Mittenzwei does this in several ways. Though the work generally moves from the beginning to the end of Brecht's life, it presents shorter periods in a non-linear time-line. Such episodic structuring is part of a strategy designed to interrupt a sequential plot by presenting discrete themes from any given period without necessarily connecting them to other events happening simultaneously. Even within these episodes he breaks with strict chronology by reaching forward or backward a few years. For example, he treats the period between 1929-31, which he sees as decisive for Brecht, in three separate chapters, each dealing with a different thematic constellation. Yet even these three chapters fail to contain everything relevant to that period. Further material about this period also appears in other sections that precede or follow these three.

Another didactic device which Mittenzwei borrows from epic theory is repetition in order to underscore some element of Brecht's character or habits. In various contexts one reads recurring examples of how he was not a systematic reader, how he did not like to read long novels, how he remained supportive of many women with whom he had affairs long after the intimate relationship had ended, how he could not stand the emotional turmoil associated with the jealousy and contention his extra-marital affairs caused, and how he made his women settle these disputes themselves in order to spare him. These and similar repetitions remind the reader of Brecht's own tendency in some poems and plays to repeat himself to make a point.

A further "epic" device that Mittenzwei draws directly from the theoretical writings on acting is his practice of what Brecht called "Rechtfertigung und Kritik," i.e., the simultaneous criticism and justification of a dramatic character in order to produce dialectically a more complex and contradictory figure. While the author's sympathies lie with Brecht, he does criticize certain attitudes and behavior in his subject, e.g., his aggressive manner of treating the gentler Walter Benjamin in their conversations, his bitterly unfair judgments of Thomas Mann, his illusions about how German workers had resisted Hitler, his paranoiac belief that he was surrounded by unrepentant ex-Nazis in the German Democratic Republic, etc. Yet criticism never stands alone. There is immediate justification, or at least failure to

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condemn the attitude or behavior criticized, and the contradictory nature of his subject does in fact emerge clearly.

Mittenzwei also analyzes and criticizes the political-economic forces that shaped human behavior in the societies where Brecht lived. By employing this basic perspective of epic theater, he also produces a life-story quite different from what we are accustomed to. I know of no biographies of Western writers in the past two centuries that present so much historical background or engage in as much societal analysis as he does. For this reason, he devotes as many pages to the last fifteen years of Brecht's life as he does to the first forty-three. World-historical phenomena like Fascism, World War II, exile from Fascism, and the building of a socialist state in East Germany receive far more commentary than the earlier years, and the author obliges the reader with considerable background material on matters ranging from the Battle of Smolensk to the origin and development of the German Democratic Republic. His historical account of internal struggles within the party there, for example, and Brecht's relationship to the new state gives us more extensive detail than any previous biographies have.

Yet Mittenzwei's attempt to create a new form of biography by applying epic theory does not live up to its promise. In fact, his non-Aristotelian approach creates distinct problems. Perhaps something in the genre biography does not lend itself to a non-Aristotelian mode of representation. It may be that readers are conditioned to expect a human's life, however erratic, to be portrayed in a more coherent form. For whatever reason, Mittenzwei's non-linear approach confuses us. He conveys no sense, for example, of Brecht's strong and consistent development toward Marxism after reading Das Kapital in 1926. He does deal briefly with his first encounter, but says little else about its effect on Brecht until he has it suddenly burst forth again in 1929-30 as Brecht found himself in a "crisis." From this the reader gains the impressions of an ideological inoculation that did not "take" until several years later.

In biography, one also expects dates to help establish a context. In many cases Mittenzwei fails to provide them at the appropriate point. In his treatment of the dispute over The Trial of Lucullus, for example, the reader learns only that the time frame is sometime between 1950-52 but otherwise has no clear idea when it took place until dates are finally given at the end of a lengthy section. Dealing with events out of chronological context also creates a fragmented picture. The only discussion of Brecht's anti-Stalin poems written in 1956 after Krushchev's revelations at the Twentieth Party Congress occurs in the context of 1938 as Mittenzwei discusses Brecht's Me-Ti writings to outline the playwright's attitude toward Stalin. Nothing is said about them in 1956. Besides this incomplete treatment at an inappropriate point, he makes the questionable assertion "daß Brecht über die Moskauer Schauprozesse wie über das Phänomen Stalin insgesamt keine feststehende Meinung hatte" (I, 629). This may have been the case in 1938,

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but it certainly was not in 1956.

He compounds the problems of non-chronological presentation by a laxness about dates which is typical of Brecht but less acceptable in a biographer. Among the factual errors is the invention of a non-existent date, February 29, 1929, which is not a leap year. And his carelessness in checking dates results in events being misplaced chronologically, as happens with the poems "Die da wegkönnen" or the poem about Karl Kraus "Über den schnellen Fall des guten Unwissenden."

In using Brecht's categories of "Rechtfertigung und Kritik," Mittenzwei tips the scales strongly in favor of justification. A typical sentence illustrates the rhetorical model he repeatedly follows. Using the English word "teamwork" to preface his remarks on Brecht's early collaborative methods, he says: "Obwohl Brecht sehr demokratisch vorging und andere Meinungen respektierte, ist diese Form doch manchen Mitarbeitern zum Verhängnis geworden, weil sie ihre Eigenheit gegenüber der Individualität Brechts nicht behaupten konnten" (I, 190). If Brecht were indeed truly democratic in his teamwork, one wonders how this "individuality" could have so intimidated them as to make their collaboration a disaster for them. A description of the polemics that Brecht and Benjamin directed against leftist bourgeois writers such as Kästner and Tucholsky shows a similar imbalance. He admits that the two oversimplified and were unfair, but concludes: "Aber sich in diesem Punkt fair und ausgewogen zu verhalten konnte man gerade von Brecht und Benjamin nicht erwarten. Ihre Entscheidung wie ihre Unduldsamkeit kamen aus den Schwierigkeiten, die es ihnen bereitete, neue Positionen zu finden und im Kampf zu behaupten" (I, 399)--referring to their commitment to the proletariat, which apparently justified this basic intolerance and unfairness.

Except for occasional qualifications, Mittenzwei's tendency to accept Brecht's own statements uncritically conveys the impression that this biography has set itself two goals--to justify every aspect of Brecht's controversial life, and to portray him as the century's best dramatist who became that because of Marxism. Almost parenthetically, the reader learns that Brecht also wrote some poetry. The weak portrayal of the lyricist Brecht, who in my view ranks among the most gifted poets in our century, is counterbalanced by adulation that alternates between apologia and glorification. One reads how at one point while in exile Brecht approached Hermann Kesten with an offer that each desist from criticizing the other's works. Kesten declined, which prompts Mittenzwei to defend Brecht by saying: "Daß Brechts Angebot selbst in seiner Diktion des Kalküls mehr geistige Noblesse enthielt als der so redlich erscheinende Standpunkt des literarischen Subjektivismus, verstand Kesten gar nicht" (I, 502). Clearly, Mittenzwei's noble subject was completely justified in this unusual request. And in calling Brecht's Caesar novel "nicht weniger radikal als die Experiments von Joyce, Proust und Kafka" (I, 603), the author overreaches in trying unnecessarily to enhance Brecht's reputation.

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This tendency to write hagiography instead of biography may explain in part why Mittenzwei neglects or omits so many known facets of Brecht's life. From this work, one would never guess that Brecht wrote a considerable number of erotic poems, and the treatment of his relationship to the many women in his life fails to deal adequately with their influence on him. The author also reveals a bias in his somewhat desultory treatment of The Threepenny Opera, which is not ideologically pure enough for him. And the failure to mention Brecht's Swiss bank account is another example of how an apparently taboo topic did not fit into his concept of Brecht.

In dealing with Brecht's response to the uprising of June 17, 1953, Mittenzwei, who clearly does not share Brecht's view that fascist agitators from West Berlin were solely responsible for it, tactfully downplays his difference with his subject. But his increasingly painful apologia for a writer whom he repeatedly calls "der Meister" (after Brecht's return to East Berlin) reaches its apogee in his reading of the poem "Böser Morgen" written sometime that same summer. There he contradicts the standard reading of this poem as a statement of Brecht's guilty conscience for not supporting the workers in these uprisings and asserts: "Eine Interpretation, die das Gedicht als eine Art Selbstkritik Brechts an seinem Verhalten am 17. Juni deutet, geht am philosophischen Gehalt wie an der Struktur des Gedichts völlig vorbei. Ganz abgesehen davon, daß eine solche Aussage allen sonstigen Erklärungen Brechts zum 17. Juni widerspräche" (II, 536). Indeed Brecht's public utterances supported the government, but Mittenzwei never allows that his subject might have had private thoughts that contradicted his public position.

Occasionally the author violates Brecht's anti-Aristotelian model of writing that sees socio-economic circumstances as the determining forces in human behavior and examines instead Brecht's psyche as the source of certain works. On the struggle of two men portrayed in In the Jungle of Cities, he insists that Brecht's competition with the utterly bourgeois Herr Recht for the hand of Marianne Zoff is the direct biographical source of the play (I, 176). And he interprets The Measures Taken as an anti-Karl Korsch text written as Brecht's answer to his dispute with Korsch over Marxist theory (I, 411-412). Besides making biographical connections to these two dramas, Mittenzwei indulges in old-fashioned psychological probing that results in the surprising assertion that Brecht went through not one, but at least two personal "crises," a category normally reserved for a person's inner biography. He places one between 1920-22 and another between 1929-30. When he eliminates this Aristotelian psychologizing almost completely after 1930--as he turns his attention increasingly to a portrayal of the socio-economic-political forces so characteristic of epic theory--the reader almost wishes he had stayed with Brecht's psyche, for his own ideological bias so skews Mittenzwei's presentation as to make his method questionable and many of his facts untrustworthy.

Like Brecht, he sees the world from a Marxist perspective, but most of his "facts" derive from East bloc, Cold War sources that oversimplify complex issues. The reader is informed, for example, that in 1945 the Japanese

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were ready to surrender well before the United States dropped the first atomic bomb, that the Berlin blockade in 1948 was intended solely to keep the new Western currency out of the Eastern part of Germany, that the United States invaded North Korea in 1950, and so on. In my opinion these and similar Cold War versions of recent history achieve the opposite effect of epic theater or narrative, for however propagandistic Brecht's works were, many of them possessed a rich multivalence and ambiguity which is totally lacking here.

But it is Mittenzwei's ill-concealed personal antipathy towards America that causes the most serious distortions and errors. He spends more pages than necessary emphasizing how much Brecht hated America during his exile years, and he raises the matter repeatedly even in the context of Brecht's post-exile years in Europe. This fierce anti-Americanism leads him to make a number of insupportable statements. He claims, for example, that Brecht's being cheated out of money for a film story he told to Elizabeth Bergner could only happen in Hollywood (II, 33) when, of course, it could and did happen anywhere that films were made. And he repeats the tired cliché that American exile was the least productive period in Brecht's life, when in fact it was more productive in terms of poetry, prose, and plays written than the same length of time he spent in East Germany after the war. Other distortions and factual errors include a version of American geography on Brecht's first train trip to New York in 1943 that resembles something right out of Mahagonny. From Brecht's diary, which he still calls his Arbeitsjournal (though we now know Brecht never gave it that title), he cites a passage where the exile describes traveling through Arizona and Texas on the Southern Pacific Railroad. Mittenzwei informs his readers that on this trip from west to east Brecht passed through the Rocky Mountains, then the Great Salt Desert by Salt Lake City, and finally the vast expanses of the Midwest before reaching Chicago. Similar errors include the statement that Brecht's name never appeared on the Duchess of Malfi program for the Boston production (it did) and that the play never made it to Broadway (it did, and played thirty-nine performances). Perhaps the biggest distortion arising from this attitude is evident in the amount of space he devotes to Brecht's associations with Europeans, which conveys the impression that he almost lived in a refugee ghetto and had only limited contact with Americans. This ideologically propelled zeal also causes significant omissions of visits by Ferdinand Reyher, Eric Bentley, Harold Clurman, and other Americans who came to see him in East Berlin between 1950-56, for he cannot allow Brecht to be seen consorting with enemies from the "evil empire." He also excludes any account of Brecht's trip to Munich in the fall of 1950 to direct a production of Mother Courage, for West Germany, too, was the enemy. He does, however, devote ample space to accounts of Brecht's plays causing political scandals or being banned in West Germany during these years, without acknowledging that during his lifetime East German theatres were far less receptive to his dramas and produced fewer of them than West German theatres did. In fact, with the exception of Senora Carrar's Rifles, between 1950 and 1955 only one Brecht play (Mother Courage) was produced in East Germany outside the Berliner Ensemble, once in Gera, and once in Halle.

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Despite these and other lacunae, errors, and oversights, Mittenzwei's biography is not without merit. From it, a perceptive reader can compile a catalogue of personal traits such as cowardice, fanaticism, hunger for power, desire for recognition, toughness, tenacity, insensitivity to the feelings of those around him, a tendency toward extremes in almost everything, and, above all, a complexity of character that marked this extraordinary human being. However, in contrast to the durative endings in most Brecht plays, which leave the audiences to create their own conclusions, Mittenzwei's attempt to write a definitive biography--the "final word" on Brecht so-to-speak--produces nearly the opposite. In traditional Aristotelian fashion he resolves contradictions and gives answers about a life that in my estimation resists this kind of closure. I believe that the most effective way to deal with Brecht's complex life and personality is to portray them by leaving them open, by failing to resolve contradictions, by reporting and documenting instead of explaining and justifying. Had he done this, I think, we would have had a biography that begins to capture the complete B.B. As it is, that biography has not yet been written.

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THE MACHINE GUN AS SYMBOL IN BRECHT'S MANN IST MANN:
SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE TECHNOLOGY OF WAR

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At my first reading of Brecht's Mann ist Mann some twenty years ago I was intrigued by what I felt were some rather peculiar choices on the part of the playwright regarding the squad assignment of the soldiers and the venue of the play itself. Whereas the fact that the soldiers are assigned to a machine gun detachment (as opposed, for example, to being portrayed simply as rifle-carrying infantrymen) has received little or no attention from scholars, the fictitious colonial Indian background for the action has received at least some mention. With respect to the latter, I, too was satisfied with the long accepted postulation: "Die Verlagerung der Vorgänge in ein literarisiertes Kolonial-Indien hat eine ähnliche Funktion wie die Wahl des Schauplatzes Chicago für das Dickicht: Der Exotismus ermöglicht eine Verfremdung der Geschehnisse" (1). But as I reread the play over the years I felt more and more uncomfortable with the idea that Brecht's choice of venue had been based mainly on a fascination with Rudyard Kipling and a desire to alienate the action so that audiences could better see the more abstract issues at hand. Was his inclusion of allusions to Buddhist temples, war in Tibet, and a Tibetan fortress named, peculiarly, Sir El Dchowr--all of which seemed to muddy the Indian venue--part of this "Verfremdung?" Was it simply another case of Brecht's playful love of anachronism and incongruity? Alienation, anachronism, incongruity, dialectical thinking--yes, all of these played a role, I think, in Brecht's decisions here. But I also think there is far more to it than meets the eye of post-World War II audiences, and these deeper implications are tied very closely to the designation of the soldiers as machine-gunners.

That the importance of the machine gun as symbol in Brecht's play has not yet been fully explored does not surprise me. Scholarly inquiry into Brecht's earlier works had long been overshadowed by research into his more mature plays; it is only in the past ten years that detailed examinations of Brecht's early plays have begun to contribute significantly to Brecht scholarship. At the same time, however, the analysis of Brecht's earlier plays (in particular) is encumbered by a methodological problem which can obscure Brecht's intent perhaps far more than in the analysis of the later plays. The problem lies in the fact that we ourselves are still a part of the process of development of the twentieth century, a process rooted in certain epoch-making events and ideas of the nineteenth century. Because of our role in that process, we may very well overlook potentially important and major differences between epochs in our own century in many areas of human endeavor (2). Thus, for example, because Brecht is a twentieth century author, many of whose concerns overlap with our own, and whose works portray particularly twentieth century cries of anguish, we are tempted to read the works with somewhat less attention to the historical, social, and political realities of Brecht's own world than, say, if we were reading a work from the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.

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In this paper I will look at Brecht's Mann ist Mann from a new perspective, namely, that of the social impact of "war machinery," as reflected particularly in Brecht's choice of the machine gun. In previous analyses of Mann ist Mann, much has been written about what is generally accepted to be the major themes of the play: the inhumanity and exploitation brought about by industrialization and the introduction of mechanization, the loss of individual identity in that process, and the transformation of Galy Gay into a "human fighting machine." But, to date, no one seems to have given serious attention to the tremendous changes in the technology of war and the impact of these changes on social history which were of great importance not only for Brecht's post-World War I Germany, but for the world in general at the beginning of the twentieth century. I feel that these changes and this impact are intentionally reflected in the play through Brecht's choice of a machine gun detail of four soldiers serving in a somewhat obscurely described, but nonetheless obviously British colonial venue.

The machine gun--what, exactly, would it have signified to German audiences watching Brecht's play during those closing years of the 1920's, audiences having direct experience with the unprecedented carnage of the "war to end all wars?" The very mention of the word "machine gun" must have called up four very strong associations in the minds of the average citizens of central Europe. The first of these was with the role of the machine gun in the so-called "Great War" itself; the second was with its role in imperialist aggrandizement all over the world; the third was with its use as a standard management weapon against organized labor in the United States in the early decades of this century; and the fourth was as a representation of the evil which could stem from unbridled capitalism serving the advance of the industrial revolution. Since these issues lay at the heart of Brecht's artistic production during these years, it seems the perfect symbol--albeit one sparingly used--to infuse, in a very concrete way, a constant presence of these concerns into the play.

World War I--the first "total war"--involved, for the first time, participants which were powerful industrial societies forced to mobilize their full potential. The war became one of attrition, in which each combatant bled itself and the others dry. The capacity of each warring power to

throw more and more into the field--the British began the war thinking 100,000 men would suffice; by September 1914 they had 500,000; by December 1915 the figure had reached three and a half million--meant that a premium would inevitably be placed on those weapons that could annihilate the enemy as cheaply and as quickly as possible. During the First World War the machine gun was the most important such weapon ... Basically then, the increased reliance on the machine gun that was a feature of the 1914-18 War was an inevitable consequence of the necessity to wear one's enemy down as cheaply and completely as was then technically possible. By the end of the war every side was producing machine guns in unprecedentedly huge quantities (3).

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World War I, then, brought a new brutality to warfare which had not yet been experienced in Europe. It was the brutality of the American Civil War transposed onto European battlefields, but with one overriding difference: the inadequate Gatling gun was replaced by the incredibly deadly and accurate Maxim gun.

World War I became trench warfare and a war of attrition, in which for the first time battles were not necessarily won by thousands of individual acts of heroism in single close-up combat with bayonets, swords, and knives, but by directing hundreds upon thousands of men in uniform--one looking just like the other at the accurate firing distance of the machine gun--toward the trenches of the enemy, where they were openly exposed to the crowning achievement in arms development of its time, the machine gun. Indeed, the military officer elite itself--tenaciously clinging to outmoded concepts of warfare--contributed to the carnage wrought by the machine gun in the earliest battles of World War I because they had not reckoned with the newest technology of war (4). The Germans were far ahead of anyone else in the procurement and implementation of the new technology. A German machine-gunner gives the following account:

When the English started advancing we were very worried; they looked as though they must overrun our trenches. We were very surprised to see them walking, we had never seen that before ... The officers were in front. I noticed one of them walked calmly, carrying a walking stick. When we started firing we just had to load and reload. They went down in their hundreds. You didn't have to aim, we just fired into them (5).

In the first months of the war the British kept throwing men against continually reinforced German machine gun positions. The Battle of the Somme became the deadliest battle in the history of warfare. When the end of the battle came, the combatants had traded the lives of over one million men for roughly eight miles of swampy land (6). Nineteenth century romantic ideals concerning the honor, courage and valor of the individual soldier marching into enemy lines had clashed with and been bloodily defeated by the most advanced war machinery of the twentieth century. At the Battle of the Somme, as in the entire First World War, the machine gun played a decisive role. Lloyd George attributed almost eighty percent of the ten million war casualties to the machine gun (7).

The word "machine" is defined as "a structure consisting of a framework and various fixed and moving parts, for doing some kind of work; mechanism: as, sewing machine." The rationale for the development and introduction of machines was to make work easier and more efficient, and to take over the repetitive tasks of human labor. But "work" and "labor" in the context of war become the inhuman tasks of killing one's fellow beings, and the machine gun is "a structure consisting of a framework and various fixed and moving parts for doing the work of killing more efficiently." The term "machine

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gun" itself represents the ultimate irony of man's turning his own technology on himself.

During and after the World War I, the machine gun was regarded literally as a machine for mass destruction; it was technology gone wild, the atomic bomb of its age. It had brought to warfare a new level of brutality, in the truest sense of the word "brutus," the Latin for senseless and irrational. Millions of faceless people died in the fight for tiny parcels of land. The individual in war was meaningless; what counted were uniformed masses and the machinery of war. Brecht's "einer ist keiner"--so often repeated in Mann ist Mann--can certainly be understood by today's audiences in the broader sense as a reflection upon the conscious destruction of individuality in the military and, by extension, in the modern world, but in its post-World War I context it becomes an even more agonizing cry.

If the machine gun emerges from World War I as the ultimate symbol of the destruction of the individual and the brutalization of industrialized society at war, it had already emerged prior to World War I as a symbol of racist imperialism, for it had been used as the primary weapon to mow down the resistance of unwilling natives caught up in colonialist designs all over the world--by the Germans, as well as the British and others (8). Not only in India, but elsewhere in Asia, and everywhere in Africa, the machine gun was the principal instrument of imperialist expansion. "With machine guns in their armory, mere handfuls of white men, plunderers and visionaries, civilians and soldiers, were able to impose ... their rule upon a whole continent" (9). As many scholars have noted before, Brecht's choice of a fictionalized India as the principle location of this play was certainly meant to provide fertile ground for a caustic commentary on British imperialism in Asia (10). The Indian milieu and the many allusions to Kipling make that connection abundantly clear. "Kilkoa" is not all that far from "Calcutta." The connections to Tibet, however, and to the rather Arabic-sounding Sir El Dchovr are not quite so obvious to modern audiences, until one looks into the history of the use of the machine gun in the cause of colonial aggression. As John Ellis explains in his book The Social History of the Machine Gun, "... perhaps the bloodiest exercise of the machine gun's potential in Asia occurred in 1904, during a British punitive mission to Tibet ... In the final battle of the campaign between six and seven hundred Tibetans were killed, as against a mere handful of British troops" (11). When the Tibetans realized their impotence in the face of the machine gun fire, they simply bowed their heads and retreated, having suffered massive casualties. For the most part, the use of the machine gun in the conquest of colonial territory and peoples was considered justified--it was the triumph of the superior technology and civilization of the white man over the backward brown man. Only occasionally was there heard a cry against these practices. Henry Labouchère, a member of a small group of British anti-imperialists and also a member of Parliament, preceded Brecht when he wrote, around the turn of the century:

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Pile on the Brown Man's burden!
And if ye rouse his hate,
Meet his old-fashioned reasons
With Maxims--up to date,
With shells and Dum-Dum bullets
A hundred times make plain
The Brown Man's loss must never
Imply the White Man's gain. (12)

Brecht's criticism became even more scathing somewhat later in the "Kanonensong" (13) of the Dreigroschenoper. While knowledge of the history of the machine gun in routing the Tibetans in 1904 can shed some light on Brecht's references to Tibet in Mann ist Mann, we cannot be quite as certain about his references to a fortress called Sir El Dchowr, obviously a concocted name, which in the play guards the pass to Tibet. The name does not sound Tibetan, but rather calls up associations with Arabic place names, much as Kilkoa sounds Indian to the Western ear. There were, of course, many imperialist incursions into Arabic lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and it is interesting to note that the last important engagement of the British in which the Gatling gun was used took place in 1882 in the Sudan, at Tel-el-Kebir. Here a British naval machine gun battery attacked a fortress:

Round whisked the Gatlings, r-r-r-r---rum, r-r-r-r-rum, r-r-r-r-rum! that hellish note the soldier so much detests in action, not for what it has done, so much, as for what it could do, rattled out. The report of the machine guns as they rattle away rings out clearly on the morning air. The parapets are swept. The embrasures are literally plugged with bullets. The flashes cease to come from them. With a cheer the blue-jackets double over the dam, and dash over the parapet, only just in time to find their enemy in full retreat. That machine gun was too much for them. Skulking under the parapet they found a few poor devils, too frightened to retire, yet willing enough to stab a Christian, if helpless and wounded (14).

Sir El Dchowr could have been associative enough in the minds of Brecht's audiences to call up such places as Tel-el-Kebir. Therefore, Brecht's use of a basically Indian background with allusions to Tibet and Arabic-sounding place names is, I feel, not so much an alienation device meant to enable audiences to distance themselves from the concrete actions of the play, as it is a thematic device--a constantly recurring motif made up of carefully chosen allusions to major places and actions in which the machine gun played a decisive role in colonialist aggression. The machine gun as symbol, in connection with these place names, fits very well into Brecht's Einstellung in the play and adds significant depth to the interpretation. Whereas the machine gun as a symbol in this sense would probably not

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occur to the more casual reader of the play today, it must have been unmistakable to Brecht's post-World War I German audience, which was quite well acquainted, through newspapers and magazines, with the conduct of war actions all over the world.

It was, however, not only in war actions that the machine gun was making its mark as the weapon of mass destruction. It also played a major role in the suppression of labor uprisings in the United States. From the end of the nineteenth century through the 1930's the machine gun was used as a standard weapon in bitter individual struggles between management and labor in the U.S. They were used from West Virginia to San Francisco by National Guardsmen to quell strikes in the early 1920's, but the bloodiest interventions of the machine gun into the collective bargaining process came in the first two decades of this century during the Colorado miners' disputes. The worst incident occurred in 1913 in Ludlow, Colorado where the mine owners armed a train--known as the "Death Special"--with machine guns manned by private gunmen. The "Death Special" was used only as a scare tactic, but the National Guard was eventually called in and for no reason surrounded the Ludlow miner's tent colony and leisurely raked the area with their machine guns, killing 36 miners and leaving 100 injured (15). Accounts of such incidents in the newspapers cannot have escaped Brecht, whose condemnation of the corruption and exploitation inherent in American capitalism of the period becomes more direct and vehement in the Dreigroschenoper and Heilige Johanna which followed closely upon Mann ist Mann. When the machine gun squad of Mann ist Mann opens fire, for no apparent reason, on the Buddhist temple which is the site of their thievery in the play, the audience of the twenties must have been reminded not only of the past use of the weapon in colonial aggression, but also of its current use as a weapon of capitalist aggression.

In this context it would be very interesting to know whether Brecht himself was aware of the history of the development of the machine gun, which was a uniquely American phenomenon. Indeed, the machine gun could be seen as an almost archetypal representation of the evil which could stem from the application of the unbridled interests of American capitalism to the technological advances of the industrial revolution. For centuries gunnery was a very crude and unreliable science; until the nineteenth century most guns were neither very accurate at long range, nor very reliable. The machine gun, i.e., an even more complicated gun which could produce concentrated and sustained rapid fire, was not feasible until the industrial revolution. Up to that point, although many inventors had attempted to develop such a weapon, there had been no appropriate metals that could withstand the pressures of sustained fire, nor were manufacturing capabilities such that craftsmen could work to the fractional tolerances necessary for the production of such a gun. Once the industrial revolution brought about the necessary technology, the rapid fire weapon appeared rather quickly. Between 1854 and 1884 relatively reliable machine guns such as the Gatling and Maxim were being demonstrated, patented, and produced. The machine gun was thus a product of the industrial revolution; as Gatling proclaimed about his invention, "it bears the same relation to other firearms that McCormack's reaper

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does to the sickle, or the sewing machine to the common needle" (16). Thus, killing was mechanized and made more efficient, just like reaping the harvest or sewing clothing.

The market for these guns was, however, very limited at the time of their development. Thus,

the manufacturers and their representatives were obliged to use decidedly shady means to ensure themselves at least a slice of the market. For most of them, the idea of commercial success was of overriding importance, and they made few concessions to either patriotism or normal business ethics ... Zaharoff (an early machine gun developer) was one of the principal influences behind the late nineteenth-century arms race, in which carefully planted rumors and "leaks" about other nation's military capacity forced governments to buy increasing numbers of weapons to keep ahead of their "rivals." Machine gun development, then, revealed many of the most unattractive aspects of the brash and often brutal spirit of nineteenth-century capitalism. The inventors ... saw no reason why they should not sell as many as possible and reap the rewards of their ingenuity (17).

The ethical questions involved in the development and deployment of the machine gun, then, were very much parallel to those of the later development of the atomic bomb. Since these questions were of central concern to Brecht in his later work, particularly Galileo, one is tempted to suggest that his choice of the machine gun in Mann ist Mann was meant to be an even more powerful symbol than might be suggested by its associative properties as weapon of choice in the suppression of colonists and laborers and as instrument of wholesale slaughter in World War I.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the importance of seeing Mann ist Mann specifically in the context of the First World War. The play is, of course, an Antikriegsstück in a general sense and does not necessarily have to be related to World War I for its message to be analyzed and understood. However, a study of the technology of war and the sociological and ethical questions posed, some for the first time, by that technology in the first decades of this century contributes substantially, I feel, to an understanding of Brecht's intent and makes the impact of the play even more powerful. Mann ist Mann presents us, indeed, with a perfect example of the methodological problem which I discussed earlier. Because the ethical and existential questions raised by World War II and its aftermath are so similar to those of World War I, it is easy to overlook the centrality of a symbol such as the machine gun for Brecht and his contemporaries. To us, in the late 80's, the machine gun is a rather minor implement of war; our weapons of destruction have made it as antiquated as was the sword to the combatants of World War I. We no longer have any concept of the impact of the mechanization of destruction upon people living in that epoch. D.H. Lawrence spoke

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of the Great War as "the terrible, terrible war made so fearful because in every country practically every man lost his head, and lost his own centrality, his own manly isolation in his own integrity, which alone keeps life real" (18). It is in this context that one should see the transformation of the simple dock worker Galy Gay into the "human fighting machine" Jeriah Jip who has completely lost his former identity, his centrality, his integrity, and his real life.

Notes

1. Klaus-Detlef Müller, Bertolt Brecht: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung (München: Beck, 1985), 117.
2. See the introduction to Müller's Brecht: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung for a more in-depth discussion of this methodological problem.
3. John Ellis, The Social History of the Machine Gun (London: Croom Helm, 1975), 113.
4. See Ellis, The Social History of the Machine Gun, Chapter V, for an excellent summary of the attitudes of the elite officer corps, particularly the British, toward the introduction of the machine gun.
5. Ellis, 135.
6. In Bill Moyers' PBS series A Walk Through the Twentieth Century there is a one-hour episode entitled "The Arminng of the Earth," in which Moyers includes a treatment of the importance of the role of the machine gun in World War I. He devotes considerable time to the Battle of the Somme, which brought home the impact of the new war technology upon outmoded ideas and ideals of war in an unprecedentedly brutal way.
7. Ellis, 142.
8. Indeed, ironically, it was its reputation as a weapon used against "the heathen" in far corners of the world which partially contributed to the refusal of the British elite officer corps to consider the serious use of the machine gun on the front in Europe in "civilized" battle, in the early years of the First World War. So the British were the first in the war to be mowed down en masse as they converged in civilized rows upon the trenches of the Germans.
9. Ellis, 79.
10. Ronald Speirs, in his book Brecht's Early Plays (London: Macmillan, 1982), is one of the most recent to mention the connection.

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11. Ellis, 98.

12. Ellis, 99-100.

13. The refrain to the song reads:

Wenn es mal regnete
Und es begegnete
Ihnen 'ne neue Rasse
'ne braune oder blasse
Da machen sie vielleicht daraus ihr Beefsteak Tartar.

14. Report from the Army and Navy Gazette, as quoted in Ellis, 84.

15. Ellis, 42-44.

16. Ellis, 16. For a complete description of the American role in the development of the machine gun, see Ellis, 9-46.

17) Ellis, 14.

18. Quoted in Ellis, 145.

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Production Notes

REFLEXIONEN ÜBER "LEBENSKUNST"
 Zur Vorbereitung von Arturo Ui (Premiere 6.10.89)
 am Bremer Theater

Heinz-Uwe Haus, Berlin/DDR

1. Lebenskunst unter heutigen Bedingungen zu fördern, heißt, "eine tiefgreifende und zum Handeln ausreichende Erkenntnis der großen gesellschaftlichen Prozesse unserer Zeit zu vermitteln" (17/1020). Über eine "Benutzung der Wissenschaften für Kunstwerke" (15/281) und die Verwertung wissenschaftlicher Kriterien für die Dramatik hinaus geht es Brecht um die "Angleichung der Funktionen einer Kunst und einiger Wissenschaften" (16/545). In dem Aufsatz "K-Typus und P-Typus" konkretisiert Brecht dies in dem Vergleich des neuen Typus der Dramatik mit dem Planetarium, "einer allbekannten Einrichtung für astronomische Demonstrationen" und des alten Theaters mit Karusellen, "die uns auf hölzernen Rossen oder Autos oder Flugzeugen an allerhand auf die Wände gemalten Darstellungen von Gebirgslandschaften vorübertragen" (16/540f.). Im Gegensatz zum Modell des mechanischen Genießens im Karusell-Erlebnis ist das Planetarium ein Modell auch wissenschaftlichen Vergnügens: "einfach die bewegungen der menschen (auch der gemüter der menschen) zum studium modelliert, das funktionieren der gesellschaftlichen beziehungen gezeigt, damit die gesellschaft eingreifen kann" (AJ/12.2.39). Brechts Beobachtungsformen und -methoden, vor allem das gestische Prinzip in seiner Theaterarbeit, verknüpfen, fassen zusammen, begründen das Handeln im Betrachten. Mit Brechts Methode ist Umschau nach Stücken zu halten, die revolutionäre Umwälzungen und soziale Widersprüche gebrochen im Prisma bemerkenswerter Persönlichkeiten zeigen. (Also nicht Individuum gegen Gesellschaft, sondern Individuum als gesellschaftliches Wesen. Denken und Sein sind nach Marx zwar unterschieden, aber zugleich in Einheit miteinander.) Solche Modelle können heutigen Menschen zur Lebenskunst dienen, sich als langen historischen Prozeß zu begreifen, sie können den historisierenden Blick schärfen und die Fähigkeit und Lust vermitteln, sich selber als beteiligt an einem Veränderungsprozeß zu begreifen. Die zu findende Spielweise sollte nicht eine ein für allemal gültige Fabel vorsetzen, sondern eine mögliche. So provozierte Fabulierlust wird den Zuschauer veranlassen, andere Verläufe, Eigenschaften, Varianten, Details als die gezeigten hinzudenken.

Brechts "lernendes" System lehrt auch unter heutigen Bedingungen, daß die Kenntnis und Erfahrung seiner eigenen Umwelt für den Zuschauer die auf der Bühne gezeigte Welt genießbar, das heißt verwertbar macht. Die Fragen, die Brecht provoziert, die nach den epocheübergreifenden Gesetzmäßigkeiten des revolutionären Prozesses vor allem, ordnen sich durch ein deutliches Bewußtsein des Weltzusammenhangs geschichtlicher Kämpfe. Darum geht es, wenn wir nach Lebenskunst fragen. Brechts Methode ist noch immer das aussichtsreichste Instrumentarium, daß es--wie in großen Epochen des Theaters--wieder zwischen Bühne und Zuschauerraum zu bestimmten und bekannten Vereinbarungen kommen kann. Die Betonung der Fabel im Brechtschen Sinne als "angewandtes Theater" zielt auf eine neue Bereicherung gesellschaftlicher Einsichten, die

das Überleben im Prozeß der Schaffung neuer Lebensqualität sichert. Dabei gewinnen in unserer Kunst die Vermittlungsformen an Bedeutung.

Mit Vermittlung ist nicht die dramaturgische Lesart gemeint, die das Theater für ein bestimmtes Stück findet und die es veranlaßt, es in den Spielplan aufzunehmen, sondern die direkte gestische Realisierung durch Schauspieler auf der Bühne. Alles sollte über den Schauspieler erzählt werden können. Seine verschiedenartigen Mittel müssen entwickelt/trainiert werden: weg von der naturalistischen Befindlichkeit, hin zu einem gestischen Spiel.

Hier liegen die Möglichkeiten einer "auffälligen Verknüpfung" der Praxis des Theaters mit der gesellschaftlichen Praxis oder auch der Lebenspraxis. In diesem Sinne wäre--

2. Brecht zu wünschen, was er in seinem Aufsatz "Über experimentelles Theater" (1939) fordert: "Ist dieser neue Darstellungsstil nun der neue Stil, ist er eine fertige, überblickbare Technik, das endgültige Resultat aller Experimente? Antwort: Nein. Er ist ein Weg, den wir gegangen sind. Die Versuche müssen fortgesetzt werden" (15/305). Das besondere Prinzip an dieser Relativierung ist allerdings, daß sie unter einem wesentlichen Kriterium des Gestischen in der Theaterkunst erfolgt, nämlich ihrer Beziehung zur Gesellschaft und ihrer Einbindung in sie. Und--

3. wünschte ich mir eine Stärkung des Fabel-Begriffs, wie ihn Wekerth faßt: "Sammlung und Ordnung aller gestischen Äußerungen, die während des Spiels gemacht werden" (122), da umfassenderes Verständnis für die Möglichkeiten solcher mehr theatralischen Vermittlung nötig ist. Gegen die literarischen Bestimmungen wie Tragödie, Komödie, Schauspiel sind, wie das Wekerth ebenfalls vorschlägt, (für einige Zeit wohl verstärkt) Historie, Clownerie, Parabel, Modellspiel zu setzen, um das Verhältnis von Stücktext und Theater wirklich wieder auf die Füße zu stellen. Ziel sollte eine größtmögliche Mobilisierung der Darstellung zur Erhellung des Dargestellten sein (Brechts Idee der Verfremdung und Shakespeares Methode der Komplementärperspektive sind ausgewiesen gute Paten, aber die Ufer des Realismus sind breit und vielgestaltig). Damit träte auch die unmittelbare Produktion auf der Bühne wieder mehr ins Zentrum der Theaterarbeit. Hier stellte sich augenfällig im Moment der theatralischen Vorführung die Grundbeziehung her, die das Theater als Theater ausmacht: die Beziehung des produzierenden Schauspielers zum produzierenden Zuschauer. Stück, Regie und Interpretation, die Mitarbeit der anderen Künste haben durch dieses Kalkül zu gehen. Wir sind mit Brechtscher Kunst noch lange nicht am Ende ...

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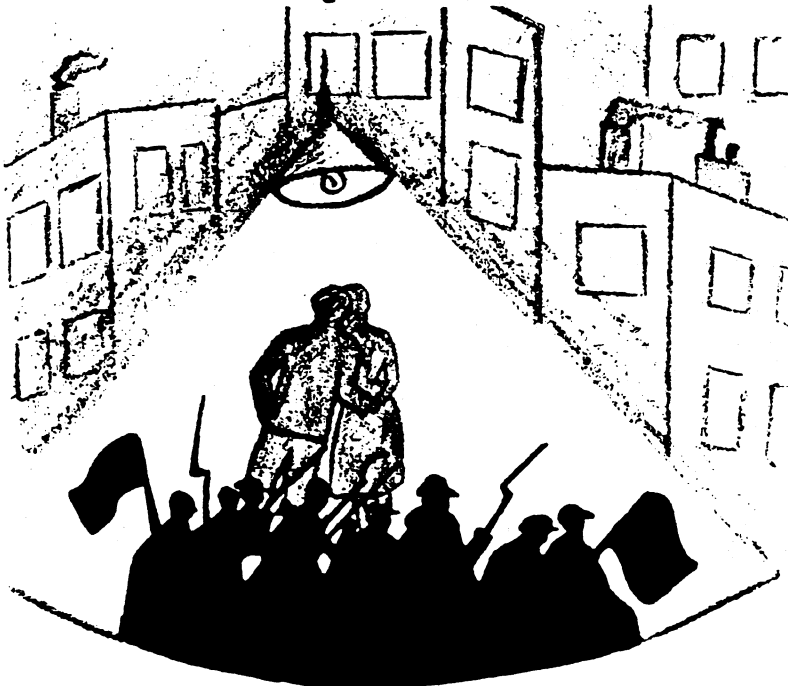
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New York Ensemble Presents

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DRUMS IN THE NIGHT IN MANHATTAN

New York Ensemble Theatre & Film Company
Turkar Coker, Artistic Director
May 15-21, 1989

New York Ensemble Theatre Company presented Bertolt Brecht's rarely staged early play Drums in the Night this spring (in a translation by Frank Jones). The play was directed by Turkar Coker and was performed at People's Playhouse, 64 East 4th Street.

The New York Ensemble Company for Drums in the Night included: Keith Gilroy (Kragler), Tom Delaney (Balicke, drunk), Betsy Brody (Anna), Kevin O'Halloran (Babusch), Leslie Lisbona (Marie, maid), Joe Fox (Murk, worker), Judy Stoll (Mrs. Balicke, Augusta), Peter McLaughlin (Manke), Danny Watt (Bulltrotter), and Robert Kiernan (Glubb). Set design was by Turkar Coker and Danny Uskokovic; lighting by Anna Somogyi; and music and costumes by Samiha Coker. Stage manager was Lisa Bobonis.

New York Ensemble Theatre Company is a non-profit organization with high artistic expectations. While the company is still looking to find a permanent home, it is preparing to present many interesting plays for the coming summer and fall seasons. The company draws its repertory from highly diverse dramatic periods but at the same time insists on relating the social context to the present without sacrificing dramatic and artistic values. NYE is interested in producing plays from Sophocles to Shakespeare, or from the early Expressionists to Brecht, Fassbinder, Fo, Bond, Müller and others. The company highly values experimental approaches in theatre, promotes and encourages modern staging, and vividly tries to avoid meaninglessness, eclecticism, anti-content and anti-aesthetic approaches in its productions. Original interpretation of plays and working toward the building of an école is the group's main concern. NYE won a Prize of Excellence for its production of The Lesson by Eugène Ionesco at the Queens Theatre Festival in 1988. In the future, the Company hopes to build a solid, growing bridge between itself and its audience by maintaining a high artistic, dramatic and social consciousness. New York Ensemble Theatre & Film Company can be reached c/o Turkar Coker, Artistic Director, 42-29 Judge Street, Elmhurst, NY 11373, tel. (718) 458-5611.

MORE ON "SETZUAN AS MUSICAL"

As reported in COMMUNICATIONS 18/1, composer Michael Rice and playwright/critic Eric Bentley have collaborated on a musical version of Bertolt Brecht's Good Woman of Setzuan which was performed last November at American University (not Catholic University, as reported) in Washington, D.C., in a production directed and choreographed by Cliff Fannin Baker (by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc., New York).

From the composer's notes (Michael Rice):

"For a Brecht play, I admit that the score is more 'beautiful' than 'shocking.' The artistic challenge I encountered in musicalizing Brecht was this: How do I intelligently fuse his work with my lyrically poetic musical impressions of the work? Indeed a contradiction. I have done what I have done because I think this play should be experienced by everyone. Hopefully, the finished product is a fresh and ironic version of a Brecht work ... an unorthodox treatment ... capable of reaching a broader audience."

From the director's notes (Cliff Fannin Baker):

THE GOOD WOMAN OF SETZUAN is a musical prable about good and evil.

THE TIME: is tomorrow and yesterday

THE STYLE: is now and never was

THE SETTING: a half-Westernized society intent upon moral decadence, corrupted by power and money and greed ... the backdrop is one good woman.

...

THE QUESTIONS: Can one remain good in a capitalistic society?

Can one remain good when goodness is not in demand?

Can one change people?

Can the world be changed?

MUSICAL SELECTIONS

ACT I

IN SETZUAN Ensemble
 NOCTURNE Shen Te
 IT ALL ADDS UP Shen Te, The Family, Carpenter, Mi Tzu
 FUNNY HOW THINGS HAPPEN Shen Te
 ONE CAN'T HAVE A COUSIN Wife and The Family
 I AM HER COUSIN Shui Ta
 THE ADVERTISEMENT Shui Ta and Policeman
 A WONDERFUL RAINY DAY Shen Te, Yang Sun, Wong
 THE SONG OF DEFENSELESSNESS Ensemble
 (Lyrics by Brecht/Bentley)
 FUGUE ON SUNLIGHT, WATER, AND LOVE Shen Te, Shu Fu,
 Yang Sun, Ensemble

ACT II

THE WEDDING PARTY Yang Sun, Mrs. Yang, Shen Te, Ensemble
 LULLABYE Street Whore, Shen Te
 SOMETHING HERE IS JUST NOT RIGHT Mrs. Shin
 THE FACTORY SONG Ensemble
 WONG'S SONG Wong
 THE TRIAL Ensemble
 IN SETZUAN Reprise

*In Brief*A NOTE ON THE BENTLEY-VESEY VERSION OF THE THREEPENNY OPERA

Who was Vesey? In an account of the life of Guy Burgess we find this: "He (Burgess) lived for a time at the Rothschild house in Bentinck Street, which, together with Guy's other quarters, temporarily became a center of Dionysianism for highly placed people in wartime London. Anthony Blunt, the art critic, lived with him ... Frequent visitors included Guy Liddell and Desmond Vesey, both of the secret services ..."

But Desmond Vesey was known to me only as a translator and publisher. He was the pioneer translator of Brecht into English, having begun this work in the middle-Thirties with the Threepenny Novel. In the Forties he must have learned of my own interest in Brecht, because he mailed me the manuscript of his Galileo and Threepenny Opera. (We were not on the same side of the Atlantic.) I arranged for the publication of the latter in my anthology From the Modern Repertoire, Volume One, 1949. Since Vesey gave me a free hand with the revision of his text, it was credited to us both, with his name preceding mine. I made further changes for the Anchor Books edition six years later, and this text was called an "English Version by Eric Bentley and Desmond Vesey" (The Modern Theatre, Volume One). When, in 1960, Grove Press undertook to bring out the Threepenny Opera as a separate paperback, Desmond and I decided on a different distribution of credits: this time he took on the revision of the dialogue, and I took on that of the lyrics. The title page reads, in full: "Bertolt Brecht/ The Threepenny Opera/ With the author's notes and a foreword by Lotte Lenya/ English book by Desmond Vesey/ English lyrics by Eric Bentley/ An Evergreen Black Cat Book/ Grove Press, Inc./ New York."

Since there has been comment in the Kurt Weill Newsletter to the effect that these lyrics do not always fit the music (KWN, Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 21), this must be contradicted here. Though sometimes tiny changes in the musical line may have been made to fit the new words (as they always are in translated opera), most often the words fit the music exactly as it stands. Indeed, these lyrics have been used in many productions, unbeknownst to those who know their Threepenny Opera exclusively through newsletters. What happened was this. For many years, producers were told they must use the Blitzstein text. But they didn't always do it. What they did do was credit Blitzstein in the program and send along monies which presumably found their way into the Blitzstein estate. But my lyrics were sung. If I was informed of such goings-on ahead of time, I was bound to comment that I did not think they were legal, and that I could not accept either credit or money. However, returning to the topic of how the English words fit the music, I did take a pencil and write in the English words under or over the notes they belonged to, so that no wrong conclusions would be drawn. (From a lyric, without musical notes, it is frequently quite impossible to tell how the lyricist intends his words to fit.) Thus, I do know that no accented syllables fall on unaccented notes unless that should be an intended effect (a joke, for example). If productions of the Bentley-Vesey were piracies, I suppose I did become an accomplice of the pirates if and when I showed them my pencilling in the score. Beyond that, I not only plead not guilty, but would now like to get the Bentley-Vesey version legally performed. Credit

and money would, I trust, follow. My only regret is that no benefits could be shared with Desmond Vesey, the real pioneer. He is no longer with us.

P.S. About our use of lines by Christopher Isherwood. Two points: first, we had a green light from Isherwood; second, we used very few of his lines.

--Eric Bentley
New York

FROM THE GERMAN INFORMATION CENTER, NEW YORK:

Aus der Theater-Werkstatistik: An der Spitze der meistgespielten Autoren liegt nach Angaben der "Werkstatistik 1987/88" des Deutschen Bühnenvereins in den Theatern der Bundesrepublik, Österreichs und der Schweiz noch immer Shakespeare, dicht gefolgt von Brecht, und dann kommen schon Fo und Rame, knapp vor Molière und Goethe. Beckett rangiert auf Platz 9, Schiller auf 13, Kleist auf 15, Thomas Bernhard auf 27, Büchner auf 28 und Heiner Müller auf 50 ...

PETER-WEISS-TAGE 1988: "ASTHETIK, REVOLTE UND WIDERSTAND IM WERK VON PETER WEISS"

A session of the International Peter-Weiss-Tage 1988, Hamburg/FRG, was devoted to the topic "Brecht und Weiss:"

Moderator--Prof. Martin Jürgens, Münster

Speakers/Topics: Robert Cohen, New York, "'Engelbrekt-Modell' und Sickingen-Debatte--Annäherung an eine bisher unbeachtete Passage in der Asthetik des Widerstands"

Petra Göllner, Salzburg, "Brecht in der Asthetik des Widerstands"

Also, an "International Peter Weiss Society" is in the process of being established; interested persons should contact Ulrich Schreiber, Am Kätzchenbach 125, 7050 Waiblingen, West Germany, tel. 07151-28778.

SCHAUSPIELERIN WALFRIEDE SCHMITT IN KANADA

Erfahrungen der Theaterarbeit in der DDR vermittelte die an der Berliner Volksbühne tätige Schauspielerin Walfriede Schmitt an der Theater-Abteilung der Universität von Victoria (Provinz British Columbia). Die Künstlerin war zu einer vierwöchigen Gastdozentur an die Hochschule eingeladen worden. (Walfriede Schmitt was interviewed by Prof. Gisela Bahr for COMMUNICATIONS 16/1, November 1986.)

INTERNATIONAL CLASSICAL THEATRE (ICT) ESTABLISHED UNDER ARTISTIC DIRECTION OF HEINZ-UWE HAUS

The ICT was established July 27, 1988 in Droushia, Cyprus to carry on the work started in 1986 by the International Theatre Workshop for Ancient Greek Drama at the ancient Greek theatre site in Oiniades, Mesolongiou, Greece (see report by Heinz-Uwe Haus in COMMUNICATIONS 16/1, 67-68). From the ICT Statement of Purpose: "The scope of ICT activities has been expanded to go beyond ancient Greek classics in accordance with the interests of Artistic Director Haus. ICT perceives its principal artistic mission and focus as becoming a world-class creator and refiner of new, multi-disciplinary forms and theatre content which are vital enough not to be restricted by traditionally conceived boundaries of performing arts ... ICT maintains two areas of activities. The first is workshop/production. We seek new interpretations and translations of the world's great dramatic literature. We are organizing a group of skilled directors, actors, designers, composers, choreographers, dramaturgs, producers, technicians and art administrators ... who will provide opportunities to stage professional performances. We aim to cultivate a massive, committed and articulate multi-cultural audience in the USA and all over the world. The second area is symposia, through which we will continue to encourage the collaboration between theatre practitioners and theorists, presenting scholars and artists who are renowned nationally and internationally." Additional information on the ICT is available from: Heinz-Uwe Haus, 1055 Berlin, Pasteurstraße 28, East Germany or, in the USA, Robyn Hatcher, 411 W. 24th St., Apt. 2A, New York, NY 10011.

The following is a set of theses concerning "Theatre as a Transcultural Event" drafted by Director Haus and members of the ICT:

THEATRE AS A TRANSCULTURAL EVENT

- 1) Don't accept what the dogmatists classify as absolute in the theatre.
- 2) Theatre and life are not absolute. Both are in a constant state of flux.
- 3) Knowledge doesn't protect us from foolishness.
- 4) Doubters are in no way destroyers.
- 5) Through doubts we make discoveries.
- 6) Become masters of fate.
- 7) The audience needs to think as well as feel.
- 8) Re-examine tired aesthetics.
- 9) We must answer the question that Appia proposed, "How do we produce contemplated experiments?"
- 10) The process involved in creating theatre must be organic as opposed to spasmodic growth.
- 11) To move forward we must first look back.
- 12) As Grotowski says, "People who are dissatisfied create."
- 13) Resist what is normal in the theatre. Abandon rhetoric. Look towards the space beyond spoken language that is alive.
- 14) Choose process and collaboration rather than product and fragmentation.
- 15) The theatre is a place of social interaction. Have courage to converse. Create a common vocabulary for an international realm.
- 16) Actors need to explore through their own experiences. They must be both willing

and flexible.

17) Actors must develop their craft before pursuing a project.

18) In an ensemble, visualization makes discovery possible.

19) There are new laws formed everyday. Don't take a one-way road for granted because knowledge stagnates.

20) Truth is only asserted to the extent that we exert it.

21) We must develop a relationship between the past and the present to be able to progress. We must think universally.

22) A found solution to a social problem is merely a starting for a new solution. It's a cricle rotating through aesthetic enjoyment. This is what we mean by using theatre to discover ourselves in our society.

23) Theatre as a social function has intensified, especially in our third world countries. Dissatisfied fighting countries use theatre for revolutionary means. The theatre acts as an instrument of change.

24) The same production of a certain play takes on different meanings according to the society in which it is appearing. Thus the theatre must be adaptable in order to create desired effects.

25) Transcultural theatre must be: adaptable; truthful; derived from tradition and craftsmanship; focused on communication of humanistic and universal principles; recognized as an arena for process and growth rather than an arena for product and stagnate absolutes; and finally, it must speak to the children of our age.

References: Brecht, Grotowski, Appia, Shakespeare, The Greeks, Reinhardt, Meyerhold, Brook and Suzuki Technique.

Recent & Forthcoming Publications

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Note: COMMUNICATIONS Vol. 19, No. 1 (January 1990) will contain an extensive bibliographic update. Please notify the editor of any pertinent items!

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The following directory contains the names and addresses of all paid-up individual IBS members as of July 1, 1989. **ADDRESS CORRECTIONS AND UPDATES ARE REQUESTED!**

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