Communications from the International Brecht Society. Vol. XIII, No. 2 April 1984

San Antonio, Texas: International Brecht Society, Inc., April 1984

https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/M3HLL3GNJRCAF8S

COMMUNICATIONS

from the International Brecht Society

Volume 13, Number 2

COMMUNICATIONS

from the INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

Volume XIII **April 1984** **Number 2**

Editor:
Marc Silberman
Division of Foreign Languages
The University of Texas at San Antonio
San Antonio, Texas 78285 USA

Associate Editor:
Gary Chancellor
Department of Foreign Languages
Trinity University
715 Stadium Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78284 USA

All correspondence should be addressed to the editor.

Subscriptions, membership payments and address changes should be addressed to the Secretary-Treasurer:
Karl-Heinz Schoeps
Department of Germanic Languages
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois 61801 USA

Membership in the IBS includes subscriptions to the bulletin COMMUNICATIONS and to the BRECHT YEARBOOK.

The editors wish to thank The University of Texas at San Antonio and Trinity University for their technical support in producing this issue.

Published twice a year at The University of Texas at San Antonio.

ISSN 0740-8943

Third class postage paid at San Antonio, Texas and additional mailing offices.
The INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY, INC. is a non-profit, educational organization.

Cover design by Lory Poulson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

editor's note

The past year's activites of the IBS demonstrate the continued vitality of the organization and its membership. The new volume of the Brecht Yearbook, published by Wayne State University Press, is gaining international attention; the two Brecht sessions at the Modern Language Association Conference attracted sizable crowds; and I am happy to report that the Society's bulletin, Communications, is receiving good material from around the world. Although there is no definite news to report, there are plans for a Brecht session at the annual meeting of the American Theater Association, and President Antony Tatlow is still working on an International Brecht Congress for 1985 or 1986.

This issue presents a number of articles which implicitly or explicitly suggests revisions and rethinking of Brecht's work. Jost Hermand critically elaborates Peter Weiss's fictive Brecht character in the novel Die Ästhetik des Widerstands; Wolf Siegert rereads Die Tage der Commune through the eyes of its children; and VèVè Clark describes a remarkable synthesis of Brechtian dramaturgy and indigenous voodoo tradition in Haiti. In addition, two interviews--with the American director Peter Sellars and the Belgium theater collective Nieuwe Scene--demonstrate how Brecht's plays continue to change in very Brechtian ways. Finally, Roman Szydlowski's essay on "Brecht in Poland," one of the last pieces he wrote before his sudden death last year, carries on the series of international reports.

This is the last of the planned "promotional" issues of Communications. Membership has increased dramatically in the last six months, and the Executive Committee wants to welcome and to thank all those who have joined or renewed membership recently. Those who have not, we encourage to consider joining now or asking your library to become an institutional member. This is one of the best means to secure the future of the IBS. Please talk to your librarian, if you have not already done so.

Paid up individual members will find a ballot inserted in this issue of Communications with directions for the election. Special thanks go to graphic designer Lory Poulson for her cover design and helpful comments on layout as well as to Joann Sedriks at Trinity University who so patiently "word processed" this issue.

THE SUPER-FATHER

Brecht in Die Ästhetik des Widerstands

Jost Hermand*

After the collapse of the Spanish Republic and a short, temporary stay in Paris, the narrator of Peter Weiss's Die Ästhetik des Widerstands finally arrives in Stockholm in 1939, where he is glad to get a residence permit and a job working in the separator plant. And it is here in Stockholm at a discussion about the causes of the Spanish debacle, that he meets the fugitive Brecht. During the next eight months, until Brecht's departure for Finland in April of 1940, the young narrator is unable to resist the fascination that Brecht holds for him. Thus, the description of this period, which stretches over 180 pages of the second volume of Die Ästhetik des Widerstands, is central to understanding the ideological intention of this novel and its accompanying Notizbücher.

Viewed politically, these eight months are a time of shameful defeats, deepest uncertainties, and extreme acts of desperation, which cause even steadfast leftists to leave the Party or commit suicide. These are the months after the fascist victory in Spain and the dissolution of the Popular Front in Paris, the months of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact, the outbreak of the Second World War, the Polish partition, the occupation of Denmark and Norwary--that is, the months of absolute triumph for Hitler's fascism. Even in neutral Sweden the pressure on the left intensifies during this period. There are bombings of Communist Party buildings, police raids, and arrests and internments of leading Party members, which are sanctioned by the majority of the population. Even Brecht, who does not belong to the Communist Party and who also enjoys the protection of leading Swedish Social Democrats, is called to account by the security police. In other words, leftists suddenly feel pushed to the wall. They must disappear into the illegal underground; they lose their optimism which they have struggled so hard to preserve; or they even turn their backs on communism. And so, the situation of being cast adrift sets in again here, just as it is evoked at the beginning of the second

volume.[1] Like the shipwrecked passengers on the Raft of the Medusa, these leftists--and especially the Germans among them--are seized by a feeling of being blown about aimlessly, by a feeling of total wreckage, total failure.

In this situation Brecht is almost the only one who keeps his head above water and tries to steer a steady course. Thus, he becomes something like a human and ideological guiding star for the other homeless leftists, a source of stability in an unstable world. And even though Weiss may not have known Brecht at all in Stockholm, he makes every effort to describe Brecht in an objective, historical manner. In particular, he proceeds with the utmost care in describing Brecht's milieu. The house in Lidingö with the "whitewashed walls," the "tables everywhere," the "copper bowl" for cigar ashes and the "large volume" of Brueghel's works: everything is just right. Furthermore, the description of the group discussion about the fascist victory in Spain corresponds closely to the situation Tombrock depicted in a drawing.[2] And even the details about Brecht's private library, which Weiss examined carefully in March of 1975 in the Berlin Brecht Center, are painstakingly exact.

However, the references to Brecht's appearance and behavior are a different matter. To be sure, Weiss also attempts to show these things as accurately as possible, but he does this like a probing analytical psychologist who is more concerned with exposing the truth than with creating some kind of model or example. And what is even worse, the younger writer's feeling of being inferior to the older master also enters in. Viewed from this perspective, Brecht is above all a respected authority figure for Weiss, a super-father whom he instinctively dislikes. After all, Brecht has everything that Weiss doesn't possess: namely, knowledge of life, women, artistic accomplishments, a well-thought-out political perspective, and so forth. It can be proven that Weiss was certainly conscious of feeling this resentment. As he said in a discussion with Burkhardt Lindner: "I didn't really find Brecht likeable, because he wasn't interested in me. I also had feelings of inferiority. I didn't have anything to show him, no completed works. I stood there like an

****

[1]C.f. my article "Das Floß der Medusa. Über Versuche, den Untergang zu überleben," in Karl-Heinz Götze and Klaus Scherpe, eds., "Die Ästhetik des Widerstands" lesen (Berlin: Argument Verlag, 1981), pp. 112-121.

[2]C.f. Bertolt Brecht, Über die bildenden Künste, ed. Jost Hermand (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1982), p. 240.

inexperienced beginner, and he was the master[. . .] He was surrounded by people who looked up to him, who helped him, and who were always ready to clear everything out of his way."[3]

And this is exactly how Brecht appears in Die Ästhetik des Widerstands. In contrast to Weiss's teacher Hodann, who is hardly criticized at all, Brecht almost seems like a "monster" in his "personal relations with others."[4] His very appearance is described as "uncongenial" and even repulsive. His figure is "small and slight;" his face looks "sallow and pale;" his "red-rimmed, close-set eyes" stare with a "fixed, teary look;" his lips are "pursed;" his voice sounds "sharp and croaking." Since Brecht "seldom bathes," he spreads an unpleasant "stench." The reader also discovers that he wore "heavy wool socks and long underwear," "forgot birthdays," never washed his hair, and "never undressed" to have sex, which he only enjoyed in a "animal-like fashion," as Weiss writes. In short, Brecht is shown as extremely "authoritarian and petty-bourgeois" in his behavior, and as someone who tyrannized his family mercilessly.

For Weiss, all of this manifests an "absolutely atavistic cult of masculinity." Brecht seems to him like the super-father of a primeval horde who claims everything around him for himself and tolerates no challenges to his authority. Weiss not only makes use here of psychoanalytic insights, but he also employs feminist arguments from the years around 1975. This is particularly evident in those passages where he describes Brecht's behavior towards women, which he views as especially repugnant. As Weiss states, women were constantly "subordinating" themselves to Brecht to the point that they became his "slaves," and Brecht unscrupulously exploited this "bondage" by busying them with "all kinds of work." And he also pressed other people into his service just like women, without taking particular notice of their individuality or their private lives. "With the right that was based on the accomplishments he gave in return," Weiss states at one point, Brecht expected "that everyone would come to him whom he beckoned, that everyone would help him and support him, that everyone would answer his questions and bring him what he needed." Consequently, Weiss doubts that Brecht was at all capable of any

****

[3]Peter Weiss in a conversation with Burkhardt Lindner, in "Die Ästhetik des Widerstands" lesen, p. 155.

[4]Herbert Claas, "Ein Freund nicht, doch ein Lehrer. Brecht in der Ästhetik des Widerstands," in "Die Ästhetik des Widerstands" lesen, p. 146.

sort of "cooperative work." He liked to let himself be "instructed," as Weiss maintains, but he always had his "own mind made up beforehand."

For this reason, the narrator simply feels that Brecht is exploiting him, even though he is furnishing Brecht with important material for the Engelbrekt project. He is insulted because no one even offers him a "glass of water" or asks him what he "is living on." Brecht is totally "indifferent" towards him as an individual and views him only as a "messenger, a medium, a servant" who can leave after he has done his duty. For Weiss, Brecht seems to live only in order to advance his work. Thus, when officials of the security police call on Brecht, he only thinks about saving himself and his works. As the narrator states: "It was of no consequence what would happen to the rest of us and to all of those in prison or those living as illegal immigrants. The only thing that mattered now was what Brecht could take along on the trip." Accordingly, Brecht has the others hurriedly pack his books and manuscripts, orders them around, gives the narrator only a "cursory handshake," and suddenly behaves in an altogether undignified manner. The last thing we hear about him is that upon seeing the swastikas on the German freighters in the harbor, he has collapsed on the ramp of the steamer he is boarding and has to be "supported" and "almost carried" by the others.

And yet: this is only one perspective on Brecht in this novel and the Notizbücher. In contrast to Grass (Die Plebejer comes to mind), Weiss does not allow himself to give in to defamatory envy. To be sure, he writes that his narrator experienced Brechts's presence as "oppressive," and his departure as a "liberation," but this is not the whole story. What Weiss wants to expose with such statements is the contradiction between Brecht's "behavior and his work," which he shows as being productive, like every genuine contradiction. And so the remark of his young narrator that Brecht was not his "friend" but his "teacher" is certainly intended as a positive provocation.

Accordingly, when pedagogical matters are at issue, Brecht always proves to be a model. In this context he appears with unshakeable composure, as the great person who never submits in spite of obvious defeats and who simply keeps on working, thinking, and writing. Whereas the other leftists experience severe crises as a result of the political events in the winter of 1939/40, Brecht is protected from all irrational vacillations by his ostensible coldness and indifference. Consequently, there is no atavistic gloom in his presence. On the contrary, even during these times Brecht radiates his characteristic "intellectual clarity," which springs from his enormously concentrated strength of will. During the discussions in his house, his "attentiveness" is usually the "focal point for the different opinions being presented," even when he himself refrains from taking any position

and merely poses questions. As soon as his "desire for knowledge" subsides, the circle around him immediately "falls apart." He is the only one who understands how to give the proper historical assessment of the various opinions which arise in especially confusing situations. Since he is the only one who has a "historical perspective," he is also the only one who can look beyond the "present situation of distress." To be sure, as Weiss maintains, Brecht also "knew" about the "degeneration" of the Soviet Communist Party, "but he persevered in what seemed right to him, and he would have persevered even if he had been the only one left."

Thus, according to Weiss, what seemed "right" to Brecht in that winter, when "the political situation had become so complex," was to continue writing. And of course, the goal to be constantly kept in mind was the transformation of those aspects of human society which could be changed. For this reason, Brecht always turns the discussions back to "the task at hand," "after a short analysis of world affairs." He doesn't only want to talk, but to have a hand in shaping destiny through effective writing. Thus, he immediately connects everything that he hears with his artistic production, which, of course, is being carried out for the sake of the "third way." For example, his first reaction to the defeat of the leftists in Spain is that now his Frau Carrar has to be adapted to the "changed situation," that is, it must be "rewritten." Thus, what Weiss describes on the one hand as Brecht's egomania and his atavistic cult of masculinity appears, on the other hand, as an expression of the most intense activity, a desire for change, a rational sense of responsibility, and firm self-control.

And so, in these weeks and months of pervasive misery when "everything was aiming towards destroying us," Brecht continues to work uninterruptedly on Mutter Courage, Das Verhör des Lukullus, Me-Ti, the Flüchtlingsgespräche, and the Cäsar novel. For For him, these works are just as important as acts of political resistance. Even in a situation of only all too apparent constraints, when the other leftists are running out of ideological wind, "new ideas are constantly occurring" to Brecht. "In his factory which was running at full steam," Weiss writes, "he hurried back and forth, supervising all the departments, giving brief instructions here and there, following the development of the various products, examining the results and always making them available for further use." And in this process, Brecht is concerned above all with working out "patterns of learning" in which he can "illustrate something about the important issues of our time." Since a work like the Cäsar novel does not fulfill this function, Brecht simply drops it without a second thought. Instead, he devotes himself all the more intensively to the Engelbrekt project, in which he also involves the young narrator. And Weiss is fair enough here to stress the aspects of such a cooperation which go far beyond merely personal or even exploitative ends. For him, Brecht is not only someone who

uses others for his own purposes, but also someone who knows how to liberate others from their defeatist self-preoccupation and make them productive in a political sense. Furthermore, as Weiss writes with respect to such forms of cooperation, "Brecht did not view the assistance he required as something carried out for his own benefit, but as service to the cause. Therefore, no thanks was forthcoming, and we wouldn't have counted on receiving any. He only accepted those people as collaborators whom he could expect to work without reservations for the same goals as his own."

With his Engelbrekt drama Brecht wanted to make a political statement about the history of the country "where he had been cast ashore." This work was to deal with the great popular rebellion of 1435, which can only be understood as a reaction to invasions from Denmark and Mecklenburg. Thus, intensive historical study was necessary in order to grasp these complicated conflicts, along with all their political, social, and economic implications. Because of his knowledge of Swedish, the young first-person narrator is able to help the playwright Brecht with sorting through the historical material. In doing this, he receives an extremely instructive lesson in the difficulties of laying out the basic historical situation and the problems of treating it in an "epic" way. He learns from Brecht how difficult it is to achieve a dramatic "simplification" of the historical conflicts while preserving their dialectical interconnections, in order to find a "theatrically effective form" for the play. But just when Brecht begins to get a handle on this "dramatic form," he discontinues the project as he had the Cäsar novel. The material does not seem to him to provide enough "models for learning" for the political situation in the year 1940.

At times, this cooperation between Brecht and Weiss's narrator is depicted as quite productive. In these passages, Brecht is not only the exemplary dramatist, but also the exemplary Marxist--that is, an absolutely ideal teacher for a young leftist author. And yet, the fundamentally different conceptions of Marxism advocated by Brecht and Weiss stand out even more sharply in this cooperative relationship than in the purely psychological reactions against Brecht as "super-father." Within the framework of this collaboration, Brecht is depicted primarily as a Leninist--that is, as a Marxist who is interested almost exclusively in questions of political strategy and who therefore subordinates all of his actions to the goals of the Party. Consequently, he only speaks "scornfully" about the "humanistic" values of the Swedish Social Democrats and their bourgeois allies. Of course, Brecht also sees that his own Party sometimes makes mistakes. But for him, these are mistakes that must be concealed for strategic reasons. Weiss's Brecht even declares that nothing about "Stalin's madness" should become public knowledge, and goes on to say that such problems can be discussed only when a new historical stage has been

reached. Thus, in the context of the anti-fascist resistance movement, Brecht does not advocate a popular front, but rather a united front of the working class, in order to avoid having to make unnecessary compromises with the bourgeoisie. In answer to the question whether he could imagine a revolution which would be carried out by people "outside the Party hierarchy," Weiss wanted to have his Brecht reply: "No, impossible without the strong Party!"

And Weiss even derives Brecht's concept of art from this Leninism. In this realm as well, he understands Brecht as someone who consciously de-emphasizes his individuality and places himself in the service of the "third way." As it says in the Notizbücher: "The schooling we received from him was to set aside our individuality, to view ourselves as members of a collective, and this corresponded to a strict Leninist principle of the cultural revolution. That is, we were supposed to give conscious support to a process in which creative work was a movement shared by all and experienced by all." For the young narrator in Die Ästhetik des Widerstands, then, Brecht is above all a writer who is not concerned with flaunting his individuality. On the contrary, Brecht attempts as far as possible to disregard this individuality and concentrate on gathering collective experiences. Therefore, Weiss views Brecht as a completely different person in his work than in his life. Whereas Brecht's strong individuality is almost totally dominant in his life, Weiss shows that the Brecht who listens, collects, and generalizes dominates in his work. And, as Weiss states approvingly, "this collective knowledge which he absorbed bestowed a generally valid political meaning on everything he wrote." Thus, Weiss perceives Brecht's writing as a fundamentally strategic, Leninist process which never deviates from the path of clear reason, which always seeks to arrive at a rational understanding of emotional, irrational, and atavistic forces. Viewed from this perspective, the Brecht in Die Ästhetik des Widerstands seems like a dialectical point of intersection between the Party and the people, who views his relative autonomy as the task of transmitting the Party's teachings to the people and the people's collective wisdom to the Party.

In contrast, Weiss remains--even as a Marxist--a bourgeois advocate and moralist who takes his own subjectivity as a starting point even in political matters. This means that he even views the Party as a sort of "super-father" which has to be approached with all the necessary self-assertiveness. Thus, within the context of the political debates of the thirties--which are a central topic in Die Ästhetik des Widerstands--Weiss always advocates forms of organization based on the concept of the free association of those who are "in agreement" with each other. In connection with references to Münzenberg and Hodann, the novel sets up four models of alliances based on the concept of the Popular Front: the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, the Popular Front in Paris, the resistance group called the

"Red Orchestra" (Rote Kapelle) in Berlin, and the Stockholm Cultural Alliance of 1944. And what all of these groups have in common is that Communists play an important, but not an absolutely decisive role in them. In particular, with respect to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Weiss expects to gain more from a thorough, open critique of Stalinist errors than from concealing these mistakes for tactical reasons. In this novel, Weiss opposes a strategic way of handling the truth (represented by Brecht) with that psychoanalytic method which views a merciless disclosure of past mistakes and omissions as the only possible way to effect a thorough catharsis.

Proceeding from these ideological assumptions, Weiss necessarily advocates a totally different concept of art in his Ästhetik des Widerstands than that put forth by the impressive figure of Brecht. To be sure, Weiss published these three volumes in the same format and the same gray color as that of Brecht's early Versuche in order to make them look like "workbooks," as he writes in the Notizbücher. However, even this procedure does not make it possible to pass over the fundamental difference between the two writers. Weiss does not stress abstraction, generalization, and the gathering of collective experiences, although such a method might have been quite appropriate for dealing with the collective experiences of the anti-fascist resistance. On the contrary, he emphasizes the greatest possible individualization. In contrast to Brecht, whom Weiss criticizes for the distinction he makes between individually experienced life and collective production, Weiss strives for a total unity of life and work. Whether in politics or art, Weiss does not want to be only an agent, a "professional revolutionary" or "professional writer," but also wants to remain himself--with all due loyalty to dialectical materialism. Thus, as a direct consequence of meeting the "cold" tactician Brecht, his young narrator is seized by the wish not to accept anything in his own thinking and writing as dogmatically fixed truth, but rather always to remain a "student" of his "own experiences." In contrast to those who are mere functionaries, he does not want simply to subordinate himself or align himself with an already existing phalanx. Everything--whether political commitment or artistic creation--should originate from his own needs. Consequently, he even views his work for Brecht as a first step towards his own self-realization as a writer, and not as something done for the sake of the "third way." As he states with respect to this cooperation: "It helped me get over the unsatisfactory aspects of the situation when I realized that I was participating in producing a work which was also my own. It was for myself, my advancement, my training for the writing profession that I carried out the studies which had to be fit exactly into my schedule."

Perhaps the best illustration of the fundamentally different appraoches to poetic truth taken by Brecht and Weiss occurs in those passages where Weiss intersperses

the political debates carried on in Brecht's home with surrealistic outbursts which confront Brecht's rationality with absolutely irrational elements. One such moment occurs during the discussion of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact, which threatens to topple the entire political struggle of the left into absurdity. The narrator suddenly looks around and sees nothing but atavistic, grotesque faces in the room instead of the clear features of Bebel, Liebknecht, Luxemburg, or Lenin, whom he had expected. "We were slimy mollusks," it says here, "washed ashore by the breakers, wriggling between strange formations; even the slightest movement forwards, between clods, jagged edges, was a triumph." Whereas Brecht does not lose his head even in this situation, and continues his attempt to place initially confusing facts into a historical context, Weiss's narrator feels lost at first. Instead of struggling to make a clear statement, he would rather burst out with a "deranged scream" in order to be able to withstand such "tortures" at all.

The same situation occurs during the discussion about the Spanish Civil War. While Brecht also reacts in an absolutely rational way here and attempts to ascertain the political causes of this defeat, Weiss's narrator yields once again to surrealistic visions since any sort of realism seems too superficial to him in view of such terrors. For example, when he looks at Brueghel's painting of "Tolle Gret" (which Brecht viewed as more of a Grusche figure), he states: "Here, everything subterranean erupted, brought forth by the figure of the Megaera. There were the phantasmagoria of deceitfulness, treachery, shamelessness, and crime; everything took on substantiality in the turmoil." "Confronted with this image," we read, "the unnatural forced itself upon us with a vengeance; licked, fingered us; stroked us horribly on the skin; stretched out bristles, snouts, suckers, tusks, and claws towards us." At this point the young narrator actually reproaches himself for having believed too much in reason during the war and consequently, for having consciously denied the "uncanny" in order to "be able to survive." And it was this sort of thinking, he now believes, which made it possible for a "false security" to lead to the "undoing" of everyone.

In view of what he understands as a short-sighted, superficial, and even dangerous faith in reason, Weiss advances over and over again in his Ästhetik des Widerstands to the "threshold of the irrational," which holds an almost magic attraction for him as an old surrealist. But he remains at the "threshold." The greatness of this novel is that Weiss consciously resisted the temptation of stepping over this threshold and becoming lost in the realm of fantasy. In spite of rampant betrayal, annihilation, murder, and the standstill of the dialectic, Weiss does not burst into unarticulated stammering. Rather, in this novel which deals almost exclusively with defeats, he constantly wrests away new realms of rationality from the

irrational by means of his humanizing language.[5] Without his "teacher," Brecht, who harbored a deep distrust of surrealism,[6] Weiss would certainly not have been able to accomplish this--at least not in the form we find here.

Translated by Carol Poore

****

[5]C.f. also Klaus Scherpe, "Kampf gegen die Selbstaufgabe. Ästhetischer Widerstand und künstlerische Authentizität in Peter Weiss' Roman," in "Die Ästhetik des Widerstands" lesen, pp. 57-73.

[6]C.f. Brecht, Über die bildenden Künste, p. 95 and 133.

Threepenny Dialectics

BRECHT'S CHILDREN OF THE COMMUNE

Wolf Siegert

> And as always with Brecht, the children are the victims.
> George Tabori[1]

> Die Kommune zeigt das Proletariat noch in den Kinderschuhen, aber es sind diejenigen eines Riesen.
> Bertolt Brecht[2]

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It began with the common men joining together into their own occupational and political unions after the relaxation of the political repression of Napoleon III. The common man: that meant above all the inhabitants of the large cities who were employed in the factories which were rapidly growing in size and number, but also artisans whose living situation increasingly approached that of the workers. Under the pressure of the intensifying strike movements and the increasingly evident inability of Bonapartism to promote its imperial intentions by military means, the

****

[1]This quotation is taken from Communications Vol. XIII/1 (November 1983), 25. That I have taken an interest in this topic from this point of view, I owe not least to George Tabori, for whom I served as an assistant in Berlin in the early seventies.

[2]Brecht himself signed this quotation "Karl Marx" and then used it to introduce one of his typescripts of "Kommune"--the "Commune" with a "C" began only with the publication by Elisabeth Hauptmann in 1957. In a remark expressing the same sentiment, Karl Marx referred to the Weavers' Rebellion of 1844; Brecht "rededicated" the comment in regard to his interpretation of the events of the period of the Paris Commune.

alliance between Napoleon and Thiers broke down. The spokesman of bourgeois powers, Thiers recognized that the dealings over the border, which were peacefully being pressed forward, promised more success.

With the proclamation of the Third Republic on the initiative of Republicans Favre and Gambetta, two days after the defeat of Sedan--that is, the imprisonment of Napoleon III and the capitulation of the army of precisely those generals who, in May of the following year, were obliged to lead his troops against the Commune in Paris--the "dynastic war of aggression was changed into a national war of defense."[3] However, the people's movement, which, chiefly in the cities, interpreted this national aspect in the tradition of the war of 1793, forced on their part a military preparedness which increasingly contradicted patriotism as the bourgeoisie had imagined it. As Gambetta fled by balloon from Paris, which had been besieged by German troops since September 18, in order to support the resistance from the provinces, Favre and Thiers simultaneously engaged in intensive attempts at an armistice with Bismarck. The fronts shifted. While an armistice was reached with Germany on Jan. 28, 1871, and this political arrangment was endorsed in the elections of Feb. 8 for the National Assembly in Bordeaux (Thiers, its new president, relied on the support of the rural population along with that of the bourgeoisie), the petty bourgeoisie and workers, which had meanwhile organized into an armed national guard, were speaking of a "Government of national betrayal." The rebellion of the citizens of Paris on March 18 and the flight of the government to Versailles made the new front lines definitively clear. It was no longer national boundaries which determined those lines but the class boundaries within one's own country.

BEGINNING OF THE STORY

> In the besieged Paris of 1871 large and small businesses no longer flourish. A stout gentleman complains to a waiter of the small cafe, which now serves the National Guard as a recruiting station, about the momentary unprofitability of the war, and Mme. Cabet, the seamstress with her unemployed son on her hands, can't sell her cockades any longer. Luckily she discovers her tenant in a group of guardsmen, who are just

****

[3]Heinz-Gerhard Haupt/Karin Hausen, Die Pariser Kommune: Erfolg und Scheitern einer Revolution (Frankfurt/M.: Campus, 1979), p. 79.

> returning from battle. With fiscal inexorability the downtrodden woman, pressed for payment, treads in turn upon those below her: in the name of the government, she demands immediate payment of her back rent. But Francois cannot pay, his pay is only enough for a little glass of wine; on top of that, he is wounded. His comrades succeed in bribing Mme. Cabet with a chicken, left behind by the fine gentleman who has fled from the guardsmen. Mme. Cabet mentions that, by coincidence, she hasn't really had anything proper to eat, whereupon her son Jean interrupts the ceremony of the chicken-eating: people inside no longer buy the cockades because the government doesn't want still more workers armed. Mme. Cabet must put her half-eaten chicken into her basket, for the guardsmen recognize in her an ally against the traitorous government. They set out for a demonstration before the City Hall. After this demonstration officials in government circles become sensitive to marching feet. At all costs, they want to bring the peace with Prussia safely under cover. The open national treason mobilizes the proletariat, which now turns their weapons around. The national battle is transformed into social combat.[4]

A comparison of various presentations of the story demonstrates that the episode quoted here by Manfred Wekwerth, told from the story of Mme. Cabet, by no means agrees with other narrations, whether those of Hans Kaufmann or even those of Brecht himself.[5] But one element is lacking, in Kaufmann's as well as Wekwerth's presentation, in the more historically oriented version as well as that more closely bound up with the story of the play's figures: what is lacking is the representation of the Commune's "childlike illusions" (Lisagaray) and, above all, the representation of the Commune's children as they are portrayed by Brecht.

Let us retrieve this missing piece. Let us endeavor to examine more closely Brecht's concept of "Naivität" as the most concrete aesthetic category in all of his works; and especially in The Days of the Commune, the discussion of which in 1956 first caused Brecht to feel a general demand for a naive manner of performing. That this play up to now has not been given the attention it deserves--either on

****

[4]Manfred Wekwerth, "Auffinden einer ästhetischen Kategorie" (1956), in Theater in Veränderung (Berlin: Henschel, 1959), p. 26f.

[5]On this point I go into more detail in the second part of my book, Die Furcht vor der Kommune: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung und Bedeutung von Bertolt Brechts "Die Tage der Commune" (Bern/Frankfurt/M.: Lang, 1983).

the stage or in the research--may yet turn out to its advantage. So once again. Raise the curtain:

SCENE 1

For the stout gentleman the children are an annoyance. The waiter is supposed to stay in the area so that he can keep "these vermin . . . out of his hair" (TC, p. 7).[6] As long as he pays, he can, unlike the locomotive stoker Jean, use them for his purposes. However, if they try to do some business of their own, just as he does, then he becomes enraged about these little " competitors." These children, however, don't profit from the war but only as a result of it. These conditions under which they grow up force them to cheat their customers, just as their fathers and mothers are cheated by the bourgeoisie. The children want to sell Mme. Cabet fresh rabbit meat. Jean, her son, warns her against this business. "That isn't rabbit" (TC, p. 8). And the circumstances of the times give him cause for this skepticism. Since the bloackade of the city by the Prussians on Sept. 19, 1870, the problem of food shortages got noticeably worse. But the way people of various social levels dealt with the problem differed considerably.

While for most Parisians even horse meat immediately became a luxury item, others complained of having to eat it: "Insidiously horse flesh is creeping into the foodstuffs of Paris." So said the gourmet Goncourt on Oct. 1 of this year.[7] On the same day the Central Commission for Hygiene arranged a "horse-meat tasting" in order to calm the protestors, and the slaughtering of horses was declared a government monopoly. But people like Goncourt were not helped by this, and so they began to consume the contents of their zoos. In one entry from Dec. 6, the following is recorded: "Today buffalo, antelope and kangeroo are on the menus of restauranteurs."[8] Nordahl Grieg, in a play of 1937, Die Niederlage, goes into this condition in much more detail than Brecht:

****

[6]TC=Bertolt Brecht, Die Tage der Commune (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, [3]1970).

[7]Quoted by Franz Herre, Anno 70/71. Ein Krieg, ein Reich, ein Kaiser (Cologne/West Berlin:Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1970), p. 161.

[8]Ibid.

> René (looking over to the child): Here things are serious. For the rich scarcity is just a new refinement. It has become so amusing in the restaurants since they have slaughtered the beasts of prey from the zoo and put them on the menus. I waited yesterday in front of the cafe, there I heard an officer say to Sylvie Gerard, while he helped her out of the coach: "Today let me serve you a dish that you should eat daily: Tiger heart."--Ah, one day we will roast his heart.[9]

But even for Grieg, the children were not only spoken of in connection with the question of provisions, they are also active, bargaining characters in the play.

> Gabrielle: Are you fishing here? What are you fishing for?
> Maurice: Rats. What else? . . .
> Guy: If you catch a rat, give it to me, OK?
> Maurice: No.
> Guy: Do you want to eat it yourself?
> Maurice: Do you think I can afford that? I sell them. 3 francs.[10]

Paris soon had its own rat-market, which was quite busy. There the captured animals would press together in large cages. When the buyer had chosen a rat, the seller would release it, a mastiff which stood ready would break its back and retrieve it. Prosper Lissagaray witnessed these events himself and reported: "The hunger gnawed more bitterfly from hour to hour, horse meat became a dainty morsel, one also ate dogs, cats and rats.[11]

Since Brecht did not want to limit the Paris uprising to a starvation revolt, he refrained from describing such details. In those places where he used them, his effort to show personal needs and society's response as standing in a direct relationship always remains evident. The following is a good example. Because Mme. Cabet must make a decision about buying the roast meat dependent on the sale of her

****

[9]Nordahl Grieg, Die Niederlage (Nederlaget), in Dramen, ed. Horst Bien (Berlin: Henschel, 1968), p. 249.

[10]Ibid., p. 233f.

[11]Prosper Lissagaray, Geschichte der Commune von 1870 (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1971), p. 36.

crafts, the stout gentleman is irritated by the business going on around him. If any of the deprived ones were to hold the mirror up to him, he would protect himself against it with moral indignation. He attempts to unmask what in his view are the true interests and intentions of his opponent: "There we have it, Anarchy!" (TC, p. 10). He also includes the children in this reproach, since they indeed serve his means, demand his money for services rendered, but simultaneiously they will not give up yelling along with the National Guardsman "Papa," "Down with the governor!" (TC, p. 9). But without them, on the other hand, the stout gentleman can earn nothing more in Paris and at the expense of Paris; therefore, he flees.

SCENE 6

When one of the two children, Victor, appears again in the sixth scene in front of the same cafe, but now in liberated Paris, he has changed. Mme. Cabet: "His father fell with the 93rd, in the defense of the cannon, on March 18th" (TC, p. 52). After she has sent the boy into the cafe on some pretext, she answers the mason, "Papa," who had attempted, with a simple and extravagant word, to answer the essential question of the Paris Commune, its justification and its nature. His question to the child, "What do you live for?" he answered in the following way: "My son, you live for the 'Something Extra.' You must have it, even if you have to use cannons. For what purpose do you achieve anything? For that, just to achieve it! Prosit!" (TC, p. 51).

On this 26th of May, 1871, the municipal council was chosen by an overwhelming majority; and precisely in the joyous naiveté in which "Papa" takes the "simple wishes and needs as the immediate reason for the necessity of the Commune lies the deep scientific method of a social theory whose goal and sense are ultimately the satisfaction of the needs of man and his enrichment."[12] Through the boy, Victor, and Mme. Cabet's relationship to him, essential characteristics develop which are significant for the whole play. The function of the role of power becomes practical and comprehensible in this connection but is not idolized. On the contrary, the enormous personal responsibility of each individual in class altercations is pointed out and thus scientific theory about society is related concretely to the members affected by it and acting in it. Thus, only because Victor's father had stood up for the cannon's remaining in the hands of the Parisians could this

****

[12]Manfred Wekwerth, Theater und Wissenschaft. Überlegungen für das Theater von heute und morgen (Munich: Hanser, 1974), p. 21f.

existence, worthy of human beings, for which Victor's father has died, live and develop further.

In this way, Brecht has not only discussed necessity and justification theoretically, nor has he only attempted to answer the problem outside of the limits of the play. But rather he has in addition taken a direct and exemplary position. To quote Lissagaray: "Whenever the bourgeois declines to fight and declares: 'I have a family,' the worker says on the contrary: 'I fight for my children.'"[13] Brecht can claim that he has not developed this position out of the dogmatic, alienated position of a "leftist ideologue" to bring it into his play; rather the actions of the characters determine his position, un-dogmatizes it without weakening it, indeed animates it. He shows clearly that even at the time of the Commune, when the attack of the Versailles troops had not yet happened, human liberation was just beginning. He qualifies the achievement in that he also shows the boundaries of what is accomplished at any given time. And Brecht makes this clear precisely in the characters of the children. A very unusual decision, it appears, since children, in a variety of literatures, always appear as "representatives of a better future." This common attitude, however, which makes use of moments descending to the level of kitsch, is overcome here. In its place is the presentation of a real utopia, and Brecht succeeds in remaining realistic, even where the real conditions by no means correspond to those aspired to.

And so Mme. Cabet explains to "Papa" during the brief absence of Victor that the boy has opened a meat market. "Rabbits," she says and continues: "Be quiet, Jean. I'll buy some from him, considering. . . ," here she stops because Victor returns. She feels responsible for him as the son of a fallen comrade in arms, but she acts upon this attitude with great discretion; she lets the boy do business and eats, instead of a rat, a rat at the price of a rabbit. Even if we acknowledge this behavior of Mme. Cabet, it remains nevertheless, just as the behavior of the boy does, on the plane of individual solutions. On the other hand, overcoming such models would have required a collective cognitive process which in that brief time could only have begun to develop.

Later, in Scene 12 when Victor works together with the other children at the barricade, he fights side by side with the members of the Commune. What was once the attempt to achieve Victor's private welfare has become a matter of public welfare. In addition, the Commune has decided to adopt and care for the children of the

****

[13]Lissagaray, p. 179. The caricatures of one such "little bourgeois son" is given by Brecht in Scene 5. Lacking his own upright posture, the son must be admonished by his father, Mr. Taxcollector, not to make himself a hunchback (TC,

fallen soldiers, even those of the opposing ranks. (c.f., TC, p. 88). At the end of Scene 6, when all who participate in the celebration drink to their future at this most important moment, the teacher Geneviève raises her glass to the well-being of the children of Paris. But the very next scene shows that this well-being of the children, as of all the other inhabitants, can only be achieved through working together toward this goal.

> Geneviève: I'll have to ask the charwoman, perhaps she has children who have to go to school.
> Langevin: She won't know anything.
> Geneviève: Together we will learn.
>
> (TC, p. 60)[14]

SCENE 7b

It is certainly not accidental that Brecht introduces precisely the problem of public instruction when he reports on the practical tasks which the Communcards must solve. The closing watchwords at the end of this celebration in Scene 6 are equally intentional: "Studies" and "the children" (TC, p. 57). Yet during the time of the Commune there were other delegations who worked much more successfully than those responsible for education. We know of plans to organize the elementary and vocational instruction. On May 6, the opening of a first school was announced, as well as, on day before those from Versailles marched in, a second school which had as its task the instruction of women.[15] The activity of the Communards was evident in the commissioning of Elle Recius and B. Gastineau to reestablish the National Library, which they did with great success, and at the same time forbade the lending out of books. In addition, they established a Federation of Artists who were to oversee the reopening and supervision of museums. Both library and museums recorded immediately a public crowd.[16] Besides this, on April 17, the

****

[14]In earlier drafts by Brecht, this community was established primarily between the two Delegates Geneviève and Langevin; concerning the charwoman we find only, "where is she anyway?" (BBA 308/102).

[15]C.f., Hans Kaufmann, Bertolt Brecht--Geschichtsdrama und Parabelstück (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1962), p. 269 (Note 103).

[16]C.f., Lissagaray, p. 224 and 284.

Commission for Education began the reorganization of the Medical School which had been abandoned by the professors.[17]

Brecht, on the other hand, mentions the plan to arrange reading rooms in the hospitals and makes allusions to several circulars of various mayoral offices which concerned themselves with public instruction. Those Jesuits who had not already fled were banished; all crucifixes and similar symbols in the buildings were burned, and all those who had studied public instruction were summoned to work with them (c.f., TC, p. 76). In these new schools, at least of the 20th Arrondissement, the children were also supplied with clothing and food (c.f., TC, p. 59). The 4th Arrondissement declared: "To implant in the child the love and respect for his peers, to impart to him a sense of justice, to teach him that he must learn in the common interest, these are the moral principles on which Communal education will rest from now on."[18] Brecht consciously chose this example for the arrangement of a new educational (and cultural) administration in order to show, amidst all his admiration for the greatness of the Paris Commune, its weaknesses as well. In this way, he attempts to fulfill his claim to write the truth about the Paris Commune. He shows what and how the men of that time learned in their fight, if and to what extent they were in a position to use what they learned, and, finally, again and again he calls into question the use up to that point of their practical knowledge for the profit of all persons. "Learn, teacher," Brecht has Langevin say to Geneviève (TC, p. 63).

The "learning-from-experience-and-from-discussion" is, however, simultaneously a challenge to those who are confronted with the play today, those who are prepared to come to terms with the play. Of course, by using the children, Brecht shows not only where the Commune was able to realize a future goal even during those 71 days (see the decrees of April 3 and 10) or endeavored to strive for a future accomplishment (as, for example, in public education), but he also shows the decisive limits and mistakes of the Commune where they really need to be shown. By doing this Brecht hopes to contribute to the discussion in such a way that a following generation, which learns from these experiences, will truly create lasting conditions for living and survival. For that reason, he does not direct

****

[17]Hermann Duncker (editor and preface), Pariser Kommune von 1871. Berichte und Dokumente von Zeitgenossen (Berlin: Verlag für Literatur und Politik, 1931), p. 444.

[18]Lissagaray, p. 225.

his criticism primarily at weaknesses, for example at the construction of public education and other arrangements of the Commune, but he makes his point clear in the decisive barricade scene, Scene 12, once again in connection with the children.

SCENE 12

Brecht describes how the children prepare the defense of the city just as do all the other Communards. He thereby expresses quite impressively what an important role even the youngest members of the Commune learned to undertake in those days. At the same time, it is clear that, in this moment of final battle, virtually every person was needed to defend the city. Also in Lissagaray's presentation of the deeds of the Communards, we find, particularly in the defense of Paris, again and again indications of the participation of children. For example, he reported on the building of the barricade in the Rue de Revoll, which was supposed to protect the City Hall. "Swarms of children carted dirt from the sqaure" to the barricade,[19] and the same was true for other locations, like the Place de la Bastille.[20] Many of the children took an active part in the street fighting and were killed in it, a fact which is verified by the 660 children taken prisoner by the victorious Versailles troops.[21] Yet despite all this, in Brecht's play the children are not supposed to witness the shooting of secret police agent, Guy Suitry, who was taken prisoner by the members of the Commune. At least Mme. Cabet attempts to prevent his execution by using this argument among others. When she finally succeeds, even "Papa" acquiesces to her, but not without very bitter criticism of Mme. Cabet and prophecying to the others: "The devil take you all. They will trample you like dirt." And directing himself to the Versailles spy: "March, scoundrel, be thankful to the children, they decide here in Paris" (TC, p. 98). If we analyze Mme. Cabet's "success", it is summarized in the following four arguments. Investing the strength of her entire personality, she refers to:

1) (as already mentioned) the children, for whose sake a shooting must be prevented,

****

[19]Ibid., p. 305.

[20]Ibid., p. 308.

[21]Ibid., p. 203.

2) Easter Sunday, on which one surely must not be killed,
3) Geneviève, whom, as the fiance of Guy, she wants to spare suffering,
4) herself, in that she wants to offer a glass of wine to Guy who has already been put up against the wall: "He isn't feeling well, can't you see that?" (TC, p. 98).

Seen in this light, Papa's statement that the children decide in Paris has a double meaning. The children are no longer only the youngest comrades in arms against the Versailles troops, as even Lissagaray describes them, they are, above all, those who have not understood that the use of armed violence--here the execution of Agent Suitry--does not destroy the humanitarian ideal of the Commune but rather that it alone is really in a position to establish that ideal for a lasting period of time. They are all those who have denied the recurrent argument that the humanitarian desires which formed an essential part of the idea of the Paris Commune must be defended not only passively but also actively. Brecht criticizes through the character of "Papa" a government of "children" in the sense that they represent a still immature phase of the revolutionary workers' movement. "Spontaneously, naively, they throw themselves into the arms of the future, unsuspecting of what the 'grown-up,' bourgeois society is capable of."[22] At the same time, and this must not be overlooked in any criticism, "Papa" defends the Commune at the risk of his own life during the whole play. His criticism means a strengthening, not a betrayal, of the idea of the Commune.

Had the Commune's political development progressed and united more strongly, then each of Mme. Cabet's four arguments would have been contradicted in the following way:

1) How long can one withhold from the children the knowledge and personal experience of death caused by violence when only too many of them would soon themselves be shot or already were shot?
2) Why has the Commune, in the decree of April 3, declared the separation of church and state? So that now one more Easter Sunday should not hinder the destruction of the old and the construction and protection of the new.
3) Have the decisive actions, the hostile positions, antagonistic to the point of death, of both Geneviève and her fiancé--even given any still existing passionate devotion--not long since destroyed any real hope of a continuation

****

[22]Kaufmann, p. 66.

of their relationship?

4) Is Mme. Cabet clear about the fact that this man whom she now wishes to save from death out of pity will soon stand next to Thiers on the hill before the city and from there will watch as all the "children of Paris," who had tried to found a new form of living and society, are murdered by the Versailles troops partly because of their own immaturity--she and her children included?

As Babette works on the barricade, she already directs herself toward the future. She asks Geneviève if she could pay the rent alone if she withdrew in order to live with Jean. Jean, preparing himself for the last fight, hears this and asks: "Oh, damn. Must you women always speak of the future?" to which Geneviève answers him softly: "She must, Jean" (TC, p. 94) and thereby tells him that Babette is expecting his child.[23] The announcement of the pregnancy intensifies even more the question of the Communards, if and how their life is to be defended--or at least their hope of a future which they might yet experience. The battle for the bank, and thus the battle for power in Paris and in France itself, was already lost, chiefly because they had failed to destroy their opponent in Versailles while he was still weak.

The children of the Commune simultaneously plan and practice a future about which the brother of the seminarian François--precisely Langevin's example for the progress of the Commune (see TC, p. 64)--has given up hope. One day out of financial need, but unlike his brother who enters the cloister seminary, he enters the enemy army ranks of Thiers, then however leaves during his fraternization with the Communards, returns again to the troops when no money can be gotten for his brother's microscope, and once more turns his back on them when Thiers cannot pay his troops. But this second return to Paris is also an Intermezzo. He abandons it again, just as a louse hops from one tree to another. François is angry about Jean's comparing François' brother to a louse; François deliberates however and proposes the following compromise to Jean: his brother could not be a particularly courageous person, since he has never learned to think. "Ok," says Jean, and thereby accepts this formula. Yet at the end of the scene, they are again at odds: François has decided to cut down the apple tree because it stands in the way of completing the barricade. Mme. Cabet, who had seen to it that the spy was set free, asks: "Do we really have to?" and Babette, who comes with Jean, answers immediately, "No!". With whom will Jean agree, his friend François or his beloved Babette? He attempts to agree with both: "it will never be a proper barricade with

****

[23]This does not correspond to Manfred Wekwerth's version, where, in default of the revolution, Jean becomes a "privatier" and founds a family; in particular, when he sets the pair in opposition to those who meanwhile found a new government.

the tree in the way," he begins, but then he continues, speaking to Babette: "But we'll leave it standing if you want it that way" (TC, p. 99). By doing this, he rejects the measures which serve the safety interests of everyone for the sake of his beloved's wishes; but in addition to that he brings along his own answer: on a canvas transparency.

Babette and Jean erect a banner on the barricade, the writing turned toward the attacker: "You are workers like us"--and Jean answers François: "There I have my motto. . .You have to tell them." (Ibid.) According to Lissagaray's witnesses, this sentence is taken literally from one of the freshly posted declarations of the Commune's Welfare Committee in the last days of Paris, it ran: "You are Proletarians like us. What you did on March 18, you will do again. Come to us, brothers, come to us, our arms are open to receive you." And Lissagaray continues:

> The Central Committee simultaneously proposed a similar appeal. Childish but magnanimous illusion! The entire population of Paris thought of this as its mandate. In spite of the madness of the National Assembly, the shooting of the wounded, the mistreatment of the prisoners for six weeks, the workers did not want to accept that children of the people could tear to pieces the bowels of that city for which they fought.[24]

What magnanimity--and what naiveté, we might conclude with Lissagaray; but Brecht re-composes the end of Scene 12 and creates a much more multi-layered declaration. He has Jean grasp the barrel of the cannon left in the barricade: as if to remind us of that memorable March 18 when Thiers' troops did not succeed in tearing out the cannon of the Communards and when the fraternization of the troops who were driven together was the signal for revolt. Mme. Cabet had kept her cannon, but what had happened to load it again? Now it had only symbolic value, just as the banner had. Nothing could make the call to reconciliation more believable than the fact that the cannon could not be used--if they had loaded and aimed it at the proper time, the banner would not have been necessary at all; at least not as a sign of defense but rather of victory. And so the scene closes with a dialog between mother and son. Mme. Cabet, herself a petty bourgeoise, warns her son about his illusions concerning the sons of indebted shopkeepers and shoemakers who will

****

C.f., Siegert, p. 231.

[24]Lissagaray, p. 315f.

oppose them, who always imagine something better for themselves than to be workers. Jean tries to learn: "Perhaps they'll think it over when they see the banner together with our weapon fire, Mama." (Ibid.)

SCENE 13

In the last scene at the barricade in the Place Pigalle, "during the bloody week in May," Babette is missing, just as are all the children who had helped earlier with the construction of the barricade. Differently than in Lissagaray--and also than the Commune history itself--the children reappear neither as heroes nor as victims in Brecht.[25] And in this material the chronicler (Lissagaray) sketches truly "stageworthy" scenarios:

> On the barricade of Faubourg de Temple the bravest marksman is a child. When the barricade is stormed, all its defenders are executed. It is the boy's turn. He demands three minutes delay, his mother lives across the way, he wants to bring her his silver watch, "so that she won't lose everything after all." The officer, involuntarily touched, lets him go, in the sure assumption that he will never see him again. After three minutes, the child hurries back and cries: "Here I am," jumps on the pavement and leans softly against the wall next to the corpses of his comrades.

Here the presentation of Lissagaray stops and he cries: "O Paris, you are immortal as long as such sons are born to you!"--And, "How many were called heroes, who never even have shown the hundredth part of this simple courage, which, without theatrical effects, without mention in history, flamed up in these days in a thousand places in Paris."[26]

****

[25]In opposition to what Tabori maintains (see footnote 1), precisely here Brecht tries not to let the children appear as victims. If Tabori asks after that whether the child in The Measure Taken is not Brecht, then I would be interested to know who, in his opinion, follows on Langevin's heels silently and unperturbed?

[26]Lissagaray, p. 341.

In Brecht, too, this last Commune scene--although not the last of his play as a whole--ends with the wounding of Mme. Cabet, the shooting of François, the collapsing of the banner under a salvo of grape shot, the death of the German Dragoons who had fought on the side of the National Guard, and finally with the shooting of the teacher and delegate for public education, Geneviève. By sacrificing their lives, these "children of the Commune" had given everything, won and lost everything; and just for that reason Brecht endeavors to see that they are not lost to us in his drama as witnesses of a new time.

For the sake of this dialectic of a lifetime versus historical time, Brecht sought other metaphors; and so he uses the role of the child--just as he did the image of the tree[27]--differently than the quoted chronicle suggests. Had Brecht followed the presentation of Lissagaray too closely, his concept of the Communards as the children of a new Paris would not have been fully carried out. Nevertheless--and this is overlooked by many even in a performance of the play--in this scene too a child appears: namely in the company of Delegate Langevin. The child must already have been following him for a long time, and likewise seen and heard what Langevin now reports: "The butchery at the North Train Station is now so bad that the women are dashing into the streets, boxing the officers' ears and positioning themselves at the wall" (TC, p. 16). There it is again, the motif of the heroic-despairing self-sacrifice, just as it was described above by Lissagaray, now not linked to the image of the child but to that of the woman. The child in Brecht's work, on the other hand, remains linked to its role of witness of the events, even when it is ordered by Langevin to go away. The child (we don't know if it is a boy or girl) moves back, but then stands there and waits until it can again accompany Langevin farther, through these days and weeks of terror and murder into, in my opinion, our own time.

BEGINNING OF QUESTIONS

As long as we will ask nothing about the Commune--or believe we have already understood everything about the battle and the life of those days--we will seek this witness in vain. But he will be there, whenever we try to turn to someone with our questions. And the more naively we ask, the better we will understand. And he will speak to us about the children at the time of the Commune and the Communards, those children of a New Age.

Translated by Kathleen L. Komar

****

[27]Here too Lissagaray's and Brecht's tree images differ markedly from one another. In the History of the Commune the trees no longer have leaves, "and their broken branches hang down like torn off limbs, which still are held on by a scrap of flesh" (Ibid.). In The Days of the Commune the apple tree, on the contrary, is "in full bloom!" (TC, p. 99).

HAITI'S BRECHTIAN PLAYWRIGHTS

Vèvè A. Clark

The decade of the seventies was a productive period for Haitian theatre. Three plays from 1973 alone describe the contemporary economic and political situation in this, the world's most disadvantaged republic. Two of these works were written by Haitian exiles, Franck Fouché and the ensemble called Kouidor. The other is by Max Vallès, a major in the Haitian Armed Forces. His La Récolte sera belle continues the tradition of partisan political drama in Haiti that has chronicled a succession of internal revolutions since the War of Independence, 1791-1804. Fouché and Kouidor are, by contrast, critical of the current Duvalier government. Their anti-establishment aesthetic has been largely inspired by Bertolt Brecht and to some extent by Erwin Piscator.

In truth, there is no Brechtian drama within the confines of Haiti. Committed epic theatre cannot survive long in the political climate of present-day Haiti. For that reason, the two Haitian representatives of Brechtian theatre have centered their work outside of the country in Montreal and New York City where they play for largely Creole audiences of the Haitian Diaspora. Throughout the 1970's, the playwright Franck Fouché and Kouidor experimented with epic theatre combined with more indigenous modes based on the present religion of ancestors, Vodoun (Voodoo). The evolution away from Brecht toward ethnic techniques has been a natural one that is reflected in the works of other Third World groups as well. Fouché died without having returned to Haiti. Though Kouidor disbanded in the late seventies, several members of the troupe still participate in theatre, and a few have returned wearily home.

Franck Fouché (1912-1978) concentrated his talents on playwriting and on theories of popular drama. He attempted to create the total theatre experience through discourse. One writer has referred to Fouché's grammar of gesture and to his incantatory recitation style, while others say that theatre was sacrifice for him,

an engagement in daily labor.[1] In his later plays, Fouché became progressively preoccupied with mise-en-scène to the point that his last published piece, Général Baron-la-Croix (1971), overflows with scenic directions.[2]

In Général, Fouché focuses singularly on repression in what could be called the political biography of a dictator. Général Baron-la-Croix or The Masked Silence has been staged in Canada for audiences of Haitian exiles. The theme is historical and prophetic. Not only does the play record the mad violence of life under François "Papa Doc" Duvalier (1957-1971), but it also forecasts similar obsessed scenarios performed by other Third World leaders in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chili, Uganda and Gabon.

Franck Fouché is the Icarus of Haitian popular theatre. Before his sudden death on January 3rd, 1978, he had been striving for years to write a Haitian epic that would synthesize his Marxism with the genetic bases of the Haitian environment.[3] Consumed by his ambition to be a literary man of the people, exiled as of 1965 in the frigid, unyielding climate of North America, Fouché died before he could compelte the work he knew he had in him. Général Baron-la-Croix and Vodou et Théâtre, an essay, are the last and best of his published works in popular performance.[4] I met Fouché in 1977 during a book party for Vodou et Théâtre that was more forum than celebration. Fouché's description in Général of militants playing out a ritual of critique was true to that late afternoon's encounter with the northeastern Haitian community gathered in Cambria Heights, New York.

The Fouché oeuvre is impressive. Beginning with adaptations of Oedipus the King (1953) and Yerma (1955), the playwright moved on to create more indigenous drama. After a trip to China, Fouché became interested in how the imaginary in theatre

****

[1]Gérard Etienne, "Sur la vie et l'oeuvre de Franck Fouché," Présence Francophone 16 (Spring 1978), p. 195.

[2]The definitive edition of Général Baron-la-Croix was published in 1974 by Leméac, Québec. References in the text are to this edition.

[3]Etienne, op. cit., p. 192.

[4]Vodou et Théâtre, Pour un nouveau théâtre populaire (Montréal: Editions Nouvelle Optique, 1976).

could be fashioned upon the ethnographic matter of people. The Peking Opera, along with the Italian nationalism he recognized in Verdi, suggested a model for Haitian national and popular theatre.[5] In ancient forms of performance, Fouché was searching for modes that pre-dated the Western schools of art and that had been rediscovered in the 1930s by the Surrealists. For Fouché, a surreal type of discourse informed folk performances, especially in the Vodoun. But Vodoun was still the opiate of the people for Marxist thinkers of the age, so that for Fouché and others Brecht's epic theatre rather than Vodoun became the initial influence. Between 1955 and 1975, Fouché's performance techniques have evolved from world revolutionary discourse of the Brechtian type back into Haitian folk expression.

Among the more than twenty theatre and radio plays that Fouché wrote, the most notable are Bouqui nan paradis (1960/1967), Feux verts dans la nuit (1964), Le Trou de Dieu and Général Baron-la-Croix (1971). Some form of each of the earlier plays is contained in the last. Bouqui brings the folktale characters Bouqui and Malice to the stage where they act out the theme of solidarity threatened by personal deception. Feux verts dissects the problems of class differences--bourgeois, working class and peasant. Trou de Dieu, a futuristic play of the absurd seems to be a parody of the classic Haitian peasant novel by Jacques Roumain--Masters of the Dew--set in a Beckett-like tunnel of isolation.

Faust set in Haiti could be no more sinister than Général Baron-la-Croix. A houngan (Vodoun priest) by the name of Dokossou has become the leader of a major city. Once installed, he practices with the left hand, i.e., he uses magic and poisons to dominate his adversaries and colleagues. A thirst for power encourages Dokossou to make a pact with the dead--Baron-la-Croix. In the bargain Dokossou himself becomes possessed by the god of the dead and changes his given name, all for the purpose of extending his office indefinitely for at least 2000 years. In the leader's character there are memories of the Henri Christophe figure in Aimé Césaire's Tragedy of King Christophe. Both rise and fall dramatically. The leader in Général, with the assistance of Baron-la-Crox and Beelzebub, creates a new persona and a kingdom built of corpses which depends upon the strength of one man's word. When that Word turns in upon him, the leader commands silence. Soon the imposed silence overpowers even the leader, who is forced to resurrect the noise and sound of Carnival in order to soothe himself and release the tensions built up

****

[5]Etienne, pp. 193-194 and Antonio Louis-Jean, La Crise de possession et la possession dramatique (Montréal: Leméac, 1970), p. 120.

over the many years of his reign. The potential release of the Word signals the leader's imminent doom. During a sanctioned Carnival celebration militants lurking in the streets use a form of masked silence--the subtitle of the play--as the subterfuge that will help destroy the monarch. Later, they will tend to his successor once this initial act of retribution has been completed.

Franck Fouché creates a communitas in Général Baron-la-Croix from the inside in. Communal participation, symbology and language are built up through the studied use of Haitian folk culture combined with the techniques of epic theatre. Audience participation is elicited through remythification and the stylization of Haitian lore. Audiences that are ignorant of these myths come to learn them through the senses and through discourse. The use of sound and dance at the beginning of the play works on the audience's nerves and visual perception, so that one is made to experience the chaos and oppression of life under Baron-la-Croix. Later in the play, speeches, poems and songs carry the message of Haitian myth, old and new, to both aware and novice spectators.

Religious symbolism, especially Catholic, provides structure for the play which occurs in its own season. Divided into two calvaries (acts), twenty-eight stations and a mass in black and red, Général is synonymous with the rituals of Holy Week. The play has been called a "dance of logic,"[6] an apt description of the sensual and philosophical motivations in this and in all of Fouché's work.

There is a great deal of journalism in Général. For those acquainted with the past twenty-five years of Haitian politics, it is fairly obvious that the leader represents Papa Doc Duvalier, who, in everyday life, played the role of Papa Guédé (the god of life and death) in ways similar to Fouché's own characterization.[7] One may question, though, whether the play is too local, too Haitian to be accessible to a wider audience. Would an exiled Haitian of the elite class recognize the gestures implied in Vodoun symbology? Is Fouché's rendering of folk culture as hermetic as some have suggested? Or, as in the epic theatre of Brecht and Piscator, will various other jeux de scène provide the feeling of repression in Haiti so that Général can become a national, popular classic translatable to the outside world? These are questions that will only be answered once the play is resurrected and

****

[6]From the jacket cover of the Leméac edition of Général Baron-la-Croix (Québec: Leméac, 1974).

[7]See Bernard Diederich and Al Burt, Papa Doc (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), pp. 354-367, and Robert D. Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, Written in Blood (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978), pp. 586-589.

perhaps translated into other languages. Général may one day be performed before more than a partisan audience of Haitian exiles, for political oppression and exodus in modern life figure as major human concerns. Like those preparing to leave the city in Station 17 of Fouché's play ("Le train de l'exil," pp. 68-70), refugees around the world are often dispatched without baggage. They carry a single permit which guarantees each departing citizen a single handful of land as a souvenir--no more.

For nearly ten years, beginning in 1969, a small group of Haitian immigrants and exiles living in New York City performed more than ten pieces in the New York area, Montreal, Paris and Martinique. Inspired by Brecht and Piscator, the group organized itself into a collective directed toward non-demonstrative, anti-linear performance while maintaining a nearly anonymous profile all the while. Poetry and folklore formed the basis for plays in which dream sequences, monologues, song and dance predominated. Kouidor undertook a demythification and remythification of its audiences' imagery by using revolutionary topics as a platform. Their Memoires d'un balai (Memorial for a Broom, 1972), for example, revolved around a strike of Haitian proletarian workers.[8] Unlike similar plays in the Afro-American tradition, works like Langston Hughes' Scottsboro Limited (1932), Kouidor's plays were not chronicles of actual historical events, but rather forecasts of future sociopolitical activities in and around Haiti, viewed from the exile's perspective.

Living and working in a non-Creole, non-French environment, Kouidor was destined to remain liminal in American society. Nonetheless, that position worked to their advantage. They performed in a closed situation where their form of theatre expression permitted the unspeakable, even the subversive, to be suggested, for there were few in mainstream America who could understand their discourse. In addition, Kouidor provided estranged Haitians with a forum for reflection on national folkways, art and politics. Awaiting return, perhaps triumphantly, to the island, Kouidor's actors and audience could enter the stark dreamworld of theatre to contemplate the realities of their separation--from Haiti and from the world outside the playhouse.

Kouidor performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Columbia University and the Sacred Heart High School in Queens, thereby reaching audiences in the three major boroughs of New York City. In Paris, in 1972, they mounted a production at the Théâtre des Nations. The group has appeared in Montreal and at the 5th Cultural

****

[8]See the 1970 manifesto by Hervé Denis excerpted in Robert Cornevin's Le Théâtre haitien (Montréal: Leméac, 1973), pp. 239-247. "Introduction à un manifeste pour un théâtre haitien" originally appeared in Nouvelle Optique I:1 (January 1971), pp.

Festival in Fort-de-France, Martinique in July of 1976. The nine or so players in the group are responsible for creating eight plays since their first show before 1000 persons on September 20, 1969, in Brooklyn.[9] Their plays came nearly one per year beginning with Les Puits errants (1969), Aya Bombé drama (1970), Coumbite 71 (1971), Memoires d'un balai (1972), La Parole des grands fonds (1973), Quel mort tua l'empereur (1975), Les Chants de Melanie (1976) and their last production Telcide ak Durema (1977).[10]

In 1972, the group underwent an internal crisis which they solved by eliminating from their number those who slavishly followed the revclutionary line in politics and theatre.[11] Kouidor's adherence to the anti-hero, anti-linear, non-demonstrative theatre of Brecht and Piscator did not come without major criticisms. Unlike Brecht, for instance, Kouidor believed in the use of folklore, not as exotic dressing, but as a way of life embraced with respect for class differences.[12]

The ten tableux La Parole des grands fonds (Word from the Great Estate) investigates the rapport of the city to the country and between capitalist and semi-feudal modes of production. The troupe set out in this work to explore divergence in Haitian discourse, promoted by the play of dominance and submission within the economic realms.

La Parole des grands fonds turns consumerism into a ludic exercise. Plays on words, on the Haitian untutored accent in French, as well as children's games provide continuity in the piece. "A Little Hug and Kiss" (Ti Bo Ti Ba), the opening sequence, plays on the typical French greeting cheek to cheek. The salutation as performed by Kouidor breaks down immediately the staged wall between actor and performer. The actors mime gestures in imitation of the spectators' attitudes,

****

132-141. Reference to the article is to the full version in Nouvelle Optique.

[9]Ibid., p. 132.

[10]Kouidor, "La Présentation (Notes pour un travail)," Nouvelle Optique 9 (January-March 1973), p. 125.

[11]Ibid., p. 125.

[12]Robert Oriol, "Réalisme merveilleux et tract politique," Présence Francophone 16 (Spring 1978), p. 195.

inviting the audience to see itself collectively through a magnifying mirror. In the succession of ten tableux, all levels of stratified Haitian society are represented: the commerical aristocracy, young bourgeois (male and female), the petty bourgeois, the peasant and beggars. The last tableau, "Kokobé," features a band of crippled beggars who breed on the paternalism of potential donors. They have divided the city into begging quarters and periodically renew their infirmities as a form of life insurance. They render guilty and thereby magnanimous members of the elite. That the play concludes with this image is particularly striking given that the ragged, barefoot beggar is the most often cited memory tourists retain from their trips to the Third World. The bourgeois attitude of "pity the poor" is just one of the many that Kouidor attempted to strip away during the period of its existence.

Fouché, Kouidor and other Haitian playwrights bring the peasant voice or the peasant to the stage as a vehicle for exposing traditions lost to rapid industrialization. These popular theatre practitioners attempt to educate the larger public about Caribbean concerns. Using Brechitan methods combined with indigenous performance techniques, they have demonstrated that magical realism is not a style confined primarily to the Latin American novel. The question remains, however, whether the folklore dredged up from the complexities of its moorings will be comprehensive to an international audience without the aid of footnotes or detailed program notes. The affirmative response has been proven by numerous dancers and choreographers like Katherine Dunham, Lavinia Williams, Jean-Léon Destiné, and more recently the Afro-American writer John Edgar Wideman who have all based their creative works on the reinterpretation of peasant beliefs and expression. Brecht may be less visible in the Haiti of the eighties, however, the memory of his spirit survives particularly among some popular theatre adherents recently returned home from exile.

INTERVIEW

Peter Sellers with James K. Lyon

Editor's note: The following interview was conducted on June 29, 1983, before Lyon had seen the Sellars' production of The Visions of Simone Marchard (c.f., Lyon review in Communications XIII/1, 51-55). Sellars has been celebrated as the brightest young director in the United States today, confirmed by the prestigious grant he received from the McArthur Foundation in Chicago. At age 26, he has directed over 100 productions, among them Brecht's Das kleine Mahogonny in Boston (Spring 1983). Sellars claims that he hit upon the idea for doing Simone Marchard from reading Lyon's study Bertolt Brecht in America, referred to several times in the interview. The translation of Simone Marchard mentioned here is to the Manheim/Willett edition.

LYON: How do you deal with religious elements implicit in a play whose "motor" seems to be traditional Christian visions?

SELLARS: To my mind it's why Simone has been ignored so much, and why Brecht himself probably ignored this play. I think it's fair to say it was written during the blackest period of his life, the one of most intense despair. My sense of it is that almost all of Brecht's plays were written for very specific production prospects. This is a huge exception. One has the sense that he is writing this for himself as a type of consolation with the idea that it would be heeded by one's countrymen, and that one does have a voice that has political and spiritual import to one's contemporaries. Of course that's why Joan is neither 11 years old nor anything else. It's so clearly autobiographical; it so clearly has bottled up in it Brecht's hopes at that moment for his own work and for his own country. The notion that it was being written as a screenplay is wrong. The play itself, more than any other Brecht play, is resolutely a play rather than a film. Most of Brecht's works are in episodic structures that very readily translate into filmic situations. This play, on the contrary, has for the first time in Brecht's career these huge scenes that just sit there and can only go on the stage. There is no way one can adapt these gigantic, fat scenes for film. All Brecht's other plays move rapidly, on location, with vignettes, cuts, etc. Ultimately, cinematic structure is buried within them. This play is almost entirely devoid of cinematic structure, which is an astounding

development for Brecht. The irony is that it resembles American playwriting of the forties--these big, long scenes in the backyard.

LYON: It does seem unique, or at least different, doesn't it? It almost has a stodginess about it.

SELLARS: Completely. One asks, "What is happening here?" Of course I am trained in a structural approach in many ways, and that's highly evident from my productions, where what is very important to me is always representing the structure of the play on some very concrete level that allows the audience to grapple with what they are seeing as a structure. Once it's seen as a structure, one moves to other levels. Part of it comes through the Russian Formalists and Mayakovski, who was intent on using the form of a medieval mystery play in an extremely secular context to imbue that context with, shall we say, the imminence of a myth, ultimately a religious myth, and finally some kind of transcendental experience.

LYON: But Mayakovski never denied the religious origins of the form, the structural basis.

SELLARS: Absolutely not. Now Brecht's connection to medieval mystery plays is well-known, and the function of those as part of typical German life at high holiday festivals and Easter was readily visible as non-historical artifacts at that point in history. The fact that he had in mind for the angel a Gothic carving is one example. There's also that long speech Simone has--in fact her only long speech in the play, because otherwise everything she says is in short verse or monosyllables--which is this description of the parade of the Nazi presence. It's amazing, by the way, that in this play the Nazis are almost never mentioned. Marta Feuchtwanger told me that it was Brecht who insisted on it--Lion wanted more of the Nazis, but Brecht said "absolutely not" and tried to resist every Nazi reference so the play could very clearly be less about the notion that the Nazis are evil and other people are good than the fact that good and evil is rather less. Simone's long speech describing the wagons and the torture chambers on wheels is, of course, a medieval mystery procession. Take the whole idea of the Noah play, for example, taking place on all these wagons. The audience would stand there, and the wagons would roll by, and you'd see scenes enacted on each wagon as it would go by. That's exactly what that speech is--a description of the Nazis in WWII as a pageant on medieval mystery wagons. Again and

again one finds imagery in this play that is culled from a very specific religious context. Marta Feuchtwanger claims that Ruth Berlau came up with the Joan of Arc connection to begin with, and that they didn't really know what heroic vision Simone was going to have. On this subject of the religious, and I'm sure Brecht had never heard of her, but there is an amazing connection between this play and the visions of Simone Weil. Clearly nothing can be proven. She died in the year the play was completed, and I suspect her work was unknown until after her death, but her [Simone Weil's] life fits all the particulars of the play--a girl in rural France who decides not to eat because the peasants aren't being well-fed, and who devotes her life to the workers in ways for which she is totally unprepared and ultimately destroys herself because she feels it is a higher calling of a religious voice. Of course Simone Weil's brother was named André, and André read books and got her to read books, and the mother is constantly saying, "It's all her brother's fault, it's those books she reads." It's very much the attitude of Simone Machard's parents toward her.

LYON: Could Brecht have known about it?

SELLARS: I just don't know. Her reputation while she was alive was limited to a very small group of French writers, and primarily French religious writers, and it wasn't really until after her death that her works began to be published abroad.

LYON: Is it possible that news of her concern for the oppressed who weren't getting enough to eat could have found its way into Marxist intellectual circles? Even out of contempt for her misguided religious motivation?

SELLERS: That's an interesting point. For me I feel very strongly Simone Weil on page after page of this play. Brecht was embarrassed and said only an 11-year old or retarded girl could say these things, except that again and again, line by line, every word that Simone says comes out of the writing of a very important religious philosopher. There is the Biblical statement that these things have been "hidden from the wise and revealed unto babes." That is an entire direction of religious pursuit with a significant history of which Brecht could not be unaware. It's possible to make fun of Simone's lines, and to do as he did publicly, i.e., dismiss them as the patriotic babblings of an infant--except that he wrote the play. Think of the angel's last speech to Joan that

"France is wherever you set your foot," and that "no one can do you harm." One takes it today very much in the connection, for example, of Soviet dissidents imprisoned in mental institutions who, even though they are supposedly snuffed, serve as real rallying points. To a certain extent we say that Russia right now is bound and gagged in an asylum. That image of Vichy France as this woman bound and gagged in an asylum is actually very apt. What is so striking about this play more than most other Brecht plays is the relation to factual event. For the cast we brought Ophul's film The Sorrow and the Pity and went through it a couple of times. What looks like sort of high relief comedy writing for Mr. Soupeau, the "Patron" in this play, comes out of the mouth word by word, and very seriously, of people in The Sorrow and the Pity. Brecht, of course, had read Feuchtwanger's book on The Devil in France and asked Feuchtwanger if they couldn't write this play.

LYON: Let me return to a point you made. Brecht was, at bottom, an optimist.

SELLARS: All great cynics are. They're desperately hopeful.

LYON: But they're disillusioned idealists who are getting even with the world.

SELLARS: The cynical stance one doesn't believe.

LYON: You speak of Brecht's embarrassment at having to use a religious form to express this hope. Doesn't this embarrassment mitigate that hope somewhat? It's there, but it's concealed, and critics haven't seen it. But do you agree that it is there?

SELLARS: Yes. I think it's been ignored, and willfully, in the same way Brecht tried to ignore it publicly. When you write a play with a part for an angel, it's too late to claim you don't believe.

LYON: The St. Joan theme isn't new to Brecht, but why did he turn to it at this particular time? Surely not just because Berlau mentioned it to him. What did you mean about the play as an expression of "private despair?"

SELLARS: I think it's important that at this moment in Brecht's life, literally everything worldly deserted him. He was used to a certain standard of living and to a certain level as a celebrity, and America literally becomes his vow of poverty. The reason one turns inward in what might

be called a religious way is that this is the only outlet. Every other outlet was closed. At this moment of physical deprivation, and of course spiritual deprivation in his being away from his country, his friends, his roots, he had no choice but to turn to something higher which, on some level, one would hope is more trustworthy and put one's faith in it.

LYON: It's interesting to me how he mitigates this hope by using a young girl who, he tells us, is either too immature to understand or is demented.

SELLARS: Again, I must say I just don't buy it. I'm sorry, the words are there on the page. After they are written, you can say anything you want about them, but it doesn't change the fact that those words are there, and, if one looks at them word for word in their exact meaning, incontrovertible. There is no way one can say anything but that Brecht has written a play about the martyrdom of a saint, and that the author decided to call André an angel. He didn't have to say that. He could have said "messenger" or "spirit" or "ghost." Shakespeare called Hamlet's father a ghost, not an angel. Brecht was certainly familiar enough with that point of view, so he didn't have to cast it in those terms, but he did. I think it was also a function of the Nazis, dealing with them in a way Brecht almost never did. One reason the Nazis are as peripheral to the play as the subject of what is God (except both of them are paramount) is that when faced with an evil so absolute, one has no choice but to counter it with a good that is so absolute. Yes, the play dwells at great length on the grey areas, and very deliberately, but over-shadowing the whole thing is that for once, the Nazi thing has pushed Brecht to the notion that the only way to oppose it is with some level of absolute good. Therefore in this world, on some level absolute good must be possible, or at least worth reaching for.

LYON: How did you come up with such a superb cast?

SELLARS: Some of them were found for me, but the production was really from my hotel room in Chicago. I never saw any of them before the first day of rehearsal. I had known of some of them and asked the La Jolla Playhouse to try very hard to obtain them. You'll see a range of fine playing. Priscilla Smith gives a very carefully sculpted performance that you feel comes out of a medieval illumination book, which is what Brecht pasted between the pages of the play.

LYON: You mean the tremendous simplicity and clarity of form?

SELLARS: Yes, and always a pose or an image that transmutes. All that is happening in Priscilla's performance at all times. And then, on the other hand, and literally on the level of Valentin's comedy, moving with no warning to something serious and a little chilling, is Bill Raymond. His ability as the mayor to be outrageous, to get away with what I imagine from my reading of Valentin, is what happens when someone comes on the stage and is much too broad, and we say "They're not allowed to do this, we will not swallow this, we're a mature audience, this is a serious play, please."

LYON: Back to the question of the angel. How did you deal with that?

SELLARS: I must say Dan Sullivan [Los Angeles Times] was very smart about this.

LYON: He's a bright reviewer.

SELLARS: Yes, he's very smart about this. I mean associating him with Martin Luther King as he did--we go for that. But I just read an incredibly stupid review in the Los Angeles Herald, which went on about how weak the play was, a minor work, Brecht drives his points with sledgehammers as usual--the usual stupid cliché of Brecht, which, I think, has to do with the fact that because in the very sad period your book deals with, Brecht had no professional productions, so it became the province of university theater in this country to perform him. All the worst traits of university theater were automatically grafted onto these plays, and it was assumed by the American public and the theater profession that these plays resemble university theater productions and were written for university theaters. The irony is that even in the last decade of professional productions of Brecht in this country, most of them resemble university theater productions. There is that odd mixture of everybody with that respectful and bored hush, and the assumption that everything is going to be delivered with some gut level of thumping obviousness that says, "People are starving in the world" and we get all upset, and that would be enough. The pure entertainment value that was so high for Brecht is missing again and again. One of my big quotes this year--that was all over the national press--was when I was fired from this Broadway musical, and they quoted me as saying, "It's Brecht versus 'Pajama Game'." Now that is a misquote. I was explaining to them that I love the American musical, and that I thought the "Pajama Game" was good

Brecht because the factory workers get a 7½¢ raise, and I tried to explain to them that the two were not incompatible, and that Brecht loved the form of the musical. In fact, Brecht was always interested in an expression I love, "big entertainment." He desperately wanted to be on Broadway, he desperately wanted to be in Hollywood.

LYON: He liked circuses.

SELLARS: Exactly. There was none of this aloofness. What I keep trying to maintain is that what Brecht means by "alienated" performing is not that the actors do less, but rather that the actors do more in the sense of Edmund Kean, of Edmund Booth, and the great nineteenth-century actors. You don't mistake Edmund Kean for Othello. You see Edmund Kean, but then you see a brilliant and huge performance which lets you know everything you need to know about Othello--that level of really huge nineteenth-century acting that combines the applause and entertainment thrill of the circus with that nineteenth-century love of telling a story. That telling a story in the tradition of the great nineteenth-century melodramas is about giving everyone a good cry because of the evil landlord who comes to take away the house--Birth of a Sewing-Machine Girl and Eastland. You look at those plays, and they're self-conscious plays. They're about the oppressed classes--all of that is there. The irony about most of those who appreciate Brecht is their myopia in not knowing anything about forms of theater except in this century. Where I apply most of my Brechtian theory is in conjunction with my recent work in directing eighteenth-century opera as if for the first time. People are just stunned. One approaches them seriously, and one understands that in the eighteenth-century the audience would sit in a lighted house. Wagner was the first person who turned off the house lights. It was just a matter of course that the house lights were on, and that the audience was talking and eating during the show. None of these things prevents the essential emotional impact of the evening from being transferred. It was also a matter of course that the characters very clearly represent structurally formalized positions which then have these various geometric interactions with each other. With all of this, one realizes that the theater which interests Brecht is simply very traditional.

LYON: Absolutely. He wasn't rebelling against the traditions of world theater, but against much of what he found in Germany in the late nineteenth-century tradition.

SELLARS: As soon as it is declared loudly by a generation that it opposes something, you realize they're getting a lot from what they're claiming to dismiss. The Russian Futurists depended on the Symbolists so heavily, even though every manifesto was about throwing the Symbolists off the steamship of time. Nonetheless they were desperately dependent on and got enormous value from the very thing they were trying to kill. It's a standard Oedipal configuration, and Brecht has to be seen in that light. The myth that's grown up in this country about this body of work, as if it's this unapproachable, distant monument (the word dur was applied once again to Brecht in the review in the Los Angeles Herald) is the last thing in the world he is. We'll be doing Mother Courage in a new translation with Linda Hunt this fall at the Boston Shakespeare Company. We hope to take it to New York and all that bit. But New York producers will tell you that Brecht is a depressing playwright and not a good playwright. It's impossible to get a Brecht play on in New York. Even Joe Papp won't touch it. It's incredible that his reputation in professional New York theater circles has come to that. It's shocking to me. What I tell people is that on the contrary, Mother Courage is the play that is lively, and Blithe Spirit is questionable, and perhaps more about death than they suspect. In terms of vitality, of actually being about life, Brecht's work is not depressing, but the most life-affirming work that exists on the stage.

LYON: I couldn't agree more with you. In addition, there is an entertainment value in Brecht's plays that is seldom acknowledged or realized on the stage.

SELLARS: Well, part of it is the Berliner Ensemble. Impressive as it is in many aspects that are not on the stage (administrative, the Ensemble spirit, etc.), that should not have become freeze-dried, like Lenin in his tomb. It's deliberately opposed to the principles that underlie the work. One has to draw the line and go back to the works themselves and say, "Why was this written?" Frequently, as is familiar in criticism, one has to decide that the author himself wrote while only partially acknowledging what is really occurring.

LYON: Only can partially acknowledge it.

SELLARS: Exactly. Thank you.

LYON: The monolithic influence of the Berliner Ensemble shows Brecht at loggerheads with himself. On the one hand, his whole notion of theater

is that it's experimental--constantly developing, changing. That's why I welcome every experimental production of Brecht and ask myself how he might have responded to it. For him, nothing was ever finished. For him to think this way, yet to allow a reification, the canonization of his works through the model books, is the biggest contradition I can imagine. In my estimation, they've had a depressing effect on anyone who wants to work with Brecht.

SELLARS: I think so, and I think they have seriously undermined the reputation of the work, not as something vital, but as something somehow related to some mortuary impulse. It's so opposed to the works themselves. Clearly Brecht would have disagreed with a number of things that are on the stage here, but I'm not very interested because the work has to be re-interpreted for each specific situation.

LYON: Why did you choose this work to perform?

SELLARS: Originally they wanted Galileo, to make their connection with Hollywood and the forties. Galileo is something you don't attempt unless you can give it a real sheen because the play itself demands that everything be very finely etched and have this sense of very precise inevitability in which things work like little tumblers in a lock that go click-click-click all night and give the sense that everything is locked in--a series of locks that are turning and shutting and clicking. You realize that doors are shutting. Three weeks were not enough to begin to get that level of precision. It's all clockwork, all based on incredibly fine-point work. Simone on the other hand, more than many Brecht plays, is in its way a ramble, like the events in The Sorrow and the Pity in which one begins when one sees that sprawling film by saying "I believe this person and this person, but I believe this person less," but by the end it's a different story. The second time you see the film, suddenly you have to revise all your opinions yet again because the person who emerged as the villain in the first viewing of the film makes you say, "Wait a minute. He's the only self-aware person here." The events of Vichy France, and what is faced in this play, unlike any other of Brecht's historical plays, is one of the huge questions of historical drama, i.e., of how events get transmuted into history. Who decides that while it was happening, they didn't know what was happening.

LYON: But is that any different from any point in history? Are we aware of what's happening to us today?

SELLARS: Clearly not, but this question is not often treated in historical drama. Pushkin in Boris Gudonov treats it in the role of Pimenn, and you see the chronicler of history at work shaping it. But as a special problem in the construction of historical drama, it's not often deliberately treated by playwrights. Generally participants in events are caught up in them and don't understand them. To this day, who can say that if Pétain had not come in, France would have been destroyed? Vichy France to me is the least clear-cut of any of the plausible venues for discussion of WWII, which by and large is rather clear in many respects. It's a war at the same time that is crucial to modern history in that it's a war that began with Germans putting sirens in their Stukas to frighten the crowds underneath and ended with the first atomic bomb. That leap in terms of the anatomy of human destruction is enormous.

LYON: But hadn't a rather big leap already been taken at the outset of the War? According to Lewis Mumford, this was the first war in history where there was this large-scale, indiscriminate destruction of the civilian population.

SELLARS: Right. My sense of it is that the capacity for human destruction equals the mechanisms for comprehending the size of the world at that moment, and that it has to do with the limits of the known world, and there is some proportion there, and one finally has the media available to have some kind of global sense. Brecht took something in which, even in 1969 when Ophuls was making The Sorrow the Pity, it was by no means clear what happened, even from the distance of twenty-five years. It's interesting, then, when we think of Brecht writing this play practically off the newspaper headlines. Another feature of the play is the deliberate way in which events are presented ambiguously. In most Brecht plays, plot events are very clear. There is rarely ambiguity about the narrative of the plot, because one is presented with a very clear-cut series of actions.

LYON: Certainly in plays like Mother Courage and Galileo. But is that the case here?

SELLARS: Well, in this play, almost every single action or event takes place offstage, a kind of Aristotelian level that is rather a surprise in Brecht. It's amazing how terribly clear-cut the visions are. What I like about the way Brecht labeled the sections of it is that it's not clear which are the visions and which are the so-called "realistic" scenes. The

visions move along with a very nice, neat little clip and have very few question marks in them. However, the so-called realistic scenes are convoluted, grind to a halt, fall to pieces before your very eyes, and desperately try to patch themselves together again. Simply in terms of stagecraft, it is the so-called "realistic" scenes that call for the exotic solutions, whereas the visions seem very straightforward. What I like about the play is that as it goes on, the relation of the visions to these so-called "realistic scenes" begins to blur in the same way as the historical event to the person interpreting it blurs, i.e., the relation of events to their interpretation. One gradually begins to see the enormous subjectivity of even the so-called "daily life" scenes.

LYON: May we turn to another topic? I was in Cambridge in March, but was unable to attend your production of Das kleine Mahagonny at the time. Could you say a few words about that?

SELLARS: Yes. To my knowledge, this is the first time that production has ever been done in English.

LYON: Where did you get the text? To my knowledge it doesn't even exist in an authentic German version, much less an English translation.

SELLARS: We took it from the musical score.

LYON: You mean the one edited by David Drews?

SELLARS: Yes. We solved a number of things with the production about the work itself. We double-billed it with Bach's Cantata No. 60, the dialogue between Fear and Hope after death, and I staged it with the same characters, so it was one evening of the same characters in the same situation, with an intermission. After the intermission the audience came back for the Bach, which was played on the same instruments as the Mahagonny, e.g., saxaphones. You suddenly became sharply aware of the religious connection of the work and of Bach's connection to Luther's German and Brecht's connection to Luther's German, and of Weill's deliberate quoting of ecclesiastical music. It was just shattering--amazing. I've always wanted to double-bill the Little Mahagonny and a Bach cantata. With Cantata No. 60, the Dialogue between Fear and Hope after death, we interpolated a couple of other things, so we ended up with a rather long cantata that lasted 45 minutes. One of the interpolations connected directly to Mahagonny came from cantata no. 20, and

it's one of the hardest points in the New Testament--the Lazarus and Dives problem of the unbridgeable gap that not even God himself can bridge when Dives the rich man is in hell, and Lazarus, the poor but righteous man whose sores were licked by dogs, is in heaven. The rich man calls for one drop of water, but not even God can bridge the gap. Well, it's the most harrowing music Bach ever wrote--a duet, "O Menschenkind, heraufgeschwind." Putting the Little Mahagonny in that context makes you realize it's very serious, and it's about very serious religious issues.

LYON: I once taught a graduate seminar on Brecht in which one of my graduate students, a Jesuit, did an analysis of Biblical paraphrase and direct citation in Mahagonny (the full-scale opera). It startled me to discover the huge amount of evidence with its strong religious connotations and denotations. That made me realize that it's one of the most serious works Brecht ever did.

SELLARS: In a way, it's the most serious religious drama of the century. Then again, it was in the air--in the work of Hindemith of this period, and certainly Schoenberg's Moses and Aaron. One finds that many composers and authors at this time, particularly in exile, had a very deep religious stance. The ultimate example is clearly Moses and Aaron, written in the most secular place on the face of the earth. I think these things really are in the Brecht oeuvre. To me Simone Machard and Mahagonny are the most clear-cut examples of them. It was a problem I've been working on recently, so I wanted to tackle both of them in the same spring, along with the question of "Does Brecht believe in angels?" I think he does.

LYON: In doing the visions in Simone, did you attempt to follow any of Brecht's theories. The critics all claimed to see many "epic theater" devices in your production. In other words, how much Brecht am I going to be seeing, and how much Peter Sellars? Did you learn some of the techniques you used from Brecht, or would you have done it that way without having known them?

SELLARS: I would stage any play this way. Any play with this subject matter could be staged this way. Part of my background is that I've studied Kabuki in Japan, and my connection to Oriental theater is an extensive one. In my staging of the Handel oratorios, there was a certain treatment of shall we say "religous drama" and its European history that

interests me, and so I've already come to certain points of view on that. I think there are rather more buzz-words connected with Brechtian theater than there have to be, because to me I would stage anything this way, not just Brecht. What you will see in my production is very traditional. Most of it comes out of fifteenth-century French manuscript miniatures, illuminated manuscripts and Book of Hours material. There's not a costume in the show that couldn't come out of such a miniature, even though all the costumes were purchased at local thrift stores. All of the proportions of the set come out of very specific Book of Hours constructions and proportions. The idea that the house has a sign above it that says EAT is exactly as in a medieval manuscript where there is a sign above the object that denotes its function. Again and again, the visual details and structure of the piece are based on a series of fifteenth-century visual and structural points of view. The irony is that I must explain to people that with all these "tricks," my shows are in fact more traditional than most shows they see. If you were to try and do a fifteenth-century production, you would end up with something looking very modern. Most things simply have their correlatives with the Gothic sensibility, and I felt this from Brecht--that he was intent on this wood-carving of the angel and the illuminated manuscripts pasted inside the pages of this play, and so I simply took the hint. So most of it comes from art work of Joan of Arc's lifetime. Though it looks like the latest in postmodern something, it's all very Gothic.

LYON: You confirmed to me what I've always believed--if you want to be innovative, avant-garde, return to a tradition no one knows, because most theater-goers know little about its traditions except from the nineteenth-century on.

SELLARS: Exactly. Even then, my sense is that the nineteenth-century is not well appreciated because people don't realize what the event of going to the theater in the nineteenth-century was. You would go, there would be a recital with a violinist and a pianist playing a Beethoven sonata, followed by a one-act play, followed by a temperance lecture, followed by the full play of the evening, with juggling at certain intervals, and then a dog act, and finishing off with a chamber music piece, or a farce, or whatever. If you look at theatrical playbills from the nineteenth century, you see that Edmund Kean performed Richard III sandwiched in between a half-dozen other things. If someone were really interested in going back and re-creating that stuff, you'd have something very wild on your hands. You'd have the kind of circus Brecht loved.

LYON: Why don't we do that someday?

SELLARS: Oh, I'm on the case.

LYON: That would be a real spectacle.

SELLARS: It's spectacular. And it includes the notion that you also change the bill every night. It's overwhelming. This brings me to the notion we mentioned earlier of why I had a 40-year old actress play Simone. The enemy of art is type-casting. Hollywood has imposed this on the history of theater. Before Hollywood there was no such thing as type-casting, and there was barely such a thing as an audition. If you wanted to appear in theater, you joined a company, and you carried someone's luggage and helped them with their makeup. Then if someone were sick, you went on. If you were any good, you were given a part next time, and so on. Gradually, you worked up this way. With Shakespeare and others, there's a readily identifiable tradition of the traveling theatrical company. In this way type-casting was out of the question. You had a play of any given historical period or dress, you had to give it to the people on hand--there they were. I think it was Hollywood that imposed this notion of type-casting on the history of theater. So we have come at this late date in the century to expect that the lovers are young and handsome. Of course, there's always been the tradition of the jeune première, but nonetheless we've come to expect certain correlatives. I find that the least interesting way to judge human beings is based on what they look like. So I've tried to oppose this in every single production. I think part of what helps me is my background in opera. Opera singers never look like the characters they're supposed to portray. For me, this is an advantage--I find that wonderful. By the end of the evening, the audience believes that this character is so moving that they identify with him.

LYON: You never have young lovers in opera, do you? The tenors always seem to be middle-aged.

SELLARS: Exactly. For me, Mme. Soupeau is supposed to be 80, Simone is supposed to be eleven--I split the difference and cast two 40-year olds. Simone's brother André is a black man. Fine. It comes to a very important level of the Japanese Noh drama or perhaps Islamic theater. There's no Islamic theater because it's profane, but every year there's a certain festival period where they do enact scenes from the life of

Mohammed. The only way they are allowed to do it is to represent objects and costumes. The props are Coke bottles, tin cans, and other things that would never be mistaken for the divine things, and therefore it's pure. You see this in Japanese Noh drama all the time. This connects in a very important way to the fact that I've gotten a lot of grief for using plastic glasses and costumes from local thrift shops. But it's a very important concept. In religious painting right up until Rembrandt, all of it was done in contemporary dress. It was known that Jesus lived at another period, but it was assumed that the virgin lived in a little Dutch house with all the accouterments. Looking at the Joan of Arc material in the fifteenth century, they're all dressed as if they're in the French countryside. The entire crucifixion sequence of Jean Fouquet is done in the fifteenth-century dress. In fact, this was the case in much of theatrical history, and it brings us to a very profound notion of what is history. Is history a present-tense event, or something in the past? In our century we've come into this real dilemma because of film and video and recording devices that allow us to isolate historical moments in a way that was never previously possible. We can literally differentiate this moment from that moment because we have it on tape, and we can say "There it is." Of course, God works in many wonderful and strange ways, and it's interesting to note that films are now corroding, and 30-year old tapes are now disappearing as the magnetic stuff is beginning to wear off. But even right up through the eighteenth-century, history was a continuous thing which was seen as not discrete from the present, but somehow participating in the present, and somehow only as important as its participation in the present. When staging this material, one automatically adopts that aesthetic.

LYON: So here you used the aesthetic of history working in the present?

SELLARS: Exactly. And that seems to be what Brecht calls for in any case, and so one moves in that direction at the same time as one hopes to layer these images. I'm very greedy--I like to have everything. The restaurant, for example, is in Gothic proportion to the scale of the human being. We see a whole house, but only a few people fit in it. It represents "house," yet it's just a little room. So we have that scale situation going. At the same time, it's on wheels and moves at a couple of points in the evening as a medieval pageant wagon would. What we get just before the trial scene is a layered image of the sort one tries to go for in the theater and one thing Brecht had in mind. I have Edward R. Murrow giving a broadcast of the French surrender at Compiègne, which of

course happened in a railway car, and I have Pétain seated in the restaurant across the table from the German captain as we hear Edward R. Murrow describe the signing of the armistice. My sadness is that I have no projection surface on which to project the actual photograph of the signing with Pétain seated across the table from the German captain in the railway car. But at the moment when Murrow says "this is the railway carriage where the armistice was signed," the house suddenly starts rolling. I'm very upset not to be able to project in the slide, because when you see the photograph, it shows that the armistice was signed in the restaurant car of the train. So you see this rolling restsaurant with these two characters facing each other, and it's both the medieval wagon of the pageant and the railway car of 1940 and simultaneously at some level the post-modern theater of the 1980's.

LYON: I understand what you mean by "greedy," but do you think your audiences can assimilate that?

SELLARS: I have no problem with that because frequently in my productions, people come back two or three times. I layer stuff very thickly so that it's impossible ever to get all the details that are going on. But again, I believe that is what's wonderful about drama--every time you come back you have a different impression, and you see details that you never knew were there. It's like Brecht's famous question of describing a car accident. Any number of people witnessing it at that moment would come up with different versions. One of the things I love about this play is that it operates the way events operate in real life. There are either too many things happening at one moment to comprehend, or there's nothing happening for a long period of time. So we go back and forth between this. I've gotten blamed by people who say it is "show-offy" or that I'm trying to show my hand at brilliant staging, which I'm not--I'm just doing the staging this play requires. It doesn't interest me to show off my staging. I'm interested in the play. The play makes certain demands, and one tries to rise to them. At all events, one layers these images so that one hopes to get something that both speaks of the forties, of the fifteenth century, and of the eighties, and somehow also speaks of a larger theatrical continuum.

LYON: You anticipated my next question, which was to be, "Did you intentionally try to get something of the eighties in this production?"

SELLARS: I happen to feel that what's wonderful about drama is that it's the least materialistic of the arts, in that there is no object left over at the end. It exists in people's minds.

LYON: There's no artifact, except perhaps the costumes, or the set.

SELLARS: But the audience doesn't go home with them. There's no book. What the audience goes home with is something that lives in their memory.

LYON: There's still a text, but that's quite different from a production.

SELLARS: That's another subject. So I try to plant some kind of seed so that even while people are there and have no idea what's going on that's unimportant, a week later, a month later, a couple of years later . . . For me, the most important productions I've seen have been those which I've just hated while seeing them. I said, "Why do I have to see this?" Two years later I said, "That was an important production." In a play that deals with angels, you assume that a certain level of materialism is therefore not included. So from the very beginning of the evening we establish something like this. We read aloud the opening stage direction of "Simone Machard enters. She is a young teenager. Her skirt is too long, her shoes are too big." Then the audience sees a 40-year old actress not wearing shoes. Then they realize that two out of four is what they are going to see. Later, and I don't think many people pick up on this, she looks at her feet, which are being washed by Georges, and she says, "My shoes have holes in them--I won't get new ones until Easter," and suddenly we have a comment about the resurrection and about the frailty of the flesh and this whole other thing. By intentionally subverting the material elements of the play, one hopes to begin to place it on a spiritual plane where the real issues can begin to stand out. The fact that Simone won't get new shoes until Easter is not an accidental line. The play is too carefully written--there are no accidents. At the first rehearsal, I said to the cast, "We're going to be doing a play that Brecht didn't have published, and that is a bit of a sketch and not a complete work, and we'll probably have to change a lot and re-arrange things." As we worked in rehearsal, we saw that we could not change one thing, that Brecht knew exactly what he was doing, that every line connected to some other line somewhere else. This play was a terribly tight piece of construction. There are no excessive lines. There is no line that is not crucial to some level of this play, which is an amazing discovery.

LYON: I've long felt there was more to this play than most critics thought, but you confirm it by having worked through it. I've learned a good deal about it from you.

SELLARS: Well, I had the time to do that.

LYON: I personally cannot understand a drama thoroughly until I've seen it staged.

SELLARS: Well, you decide certain things while you read it, but then you hear people speaking it, and you say, "Wait a minute. This is completely different." The act of hearing it spoken aloud sometimes alters one's perception radically. Scenes that one had assumed were serious suddenly become comic, and scenes that one had thought were comic become incredibly serious. It's terribly elusive on the page. Just the first read-through alone before we even started working hard on the text revealed material none of us had any idea was there.

LYON: In my opinion, the spoken and performing dimension is something that makes a drama quite different from a novel or a poem on a page, where you have a complete work of art before you. The drama is not complete on the page.

SELLARS: No, it isn't, and Brecht was smart enough to know the ways in which it would extend itself.

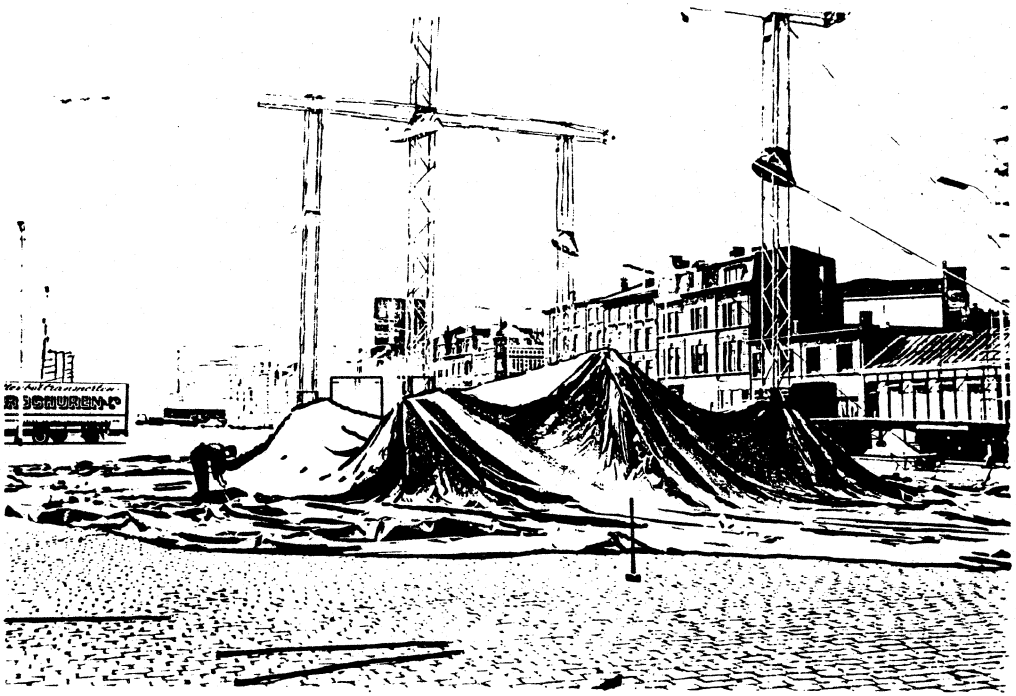
LYON: This is why there is something profound about Brecht's and Laughton's way of translating by acting out Galileo by speaking the lines that I described in my chapter on "Acting as a Mode of Translating."

SELLARS: I was very pleased with that chapter--I must tell you. Very often in these books, not sufficient attention is paid to the actual process of putting on a play.

LYON: Thank you for the compliment. I felt a bit limited in writing about such elements because I'm by no means an expert on the theater.

SELLARS: So are most people who do theater--they're very ignorant, so there's very good reason not to pay attention to most of them, and their productions show it. They're stupid and have no level of broad general culture or no notion that they're part of an ongoing continuum in the history of art, or anything. So it's frustrating to see them throw anything they can throw at it rather than having a series of closely-argued things with a long historical line or the notion that you're

actually interested in what somebody else once did. Right now, most theater is so narcisstic that they're not interested in anything that's not their own.



Internationale Nieuwe Scene

WHERE WE CAN TALK THE WAY WE WANT TO TALK

An Interview with KOLLEKTIEF INTERNATIONALE NIEUWE SCENE

Lieven Vandenbossche

Last year the militant traveling theater collective International New Stage (Belgium) toured Belgium and Holland with a tent adaptation of the play Mother Courage and Her Children, arousing considerable interest. The following is an interview with Hilde Uitterlinden and Charles Cornette, founders of the collective, now in its tenth year, and with assistant director Dora Mols. Contact address: Hertstraat 7, 2100 Deurne, Belgium.

Question: "A new tent, a new sound," says one reviewer in reference to your performance of Courage, thus focusing on the shift to Brecht by the I.N.S., heretofore the leaders of the Dario Fo tradition in Flanders. The move from Fo to Brecht--is this a step into a fundamentally different world of theater?

I.N.S.: Not at all. Although the two emerge from totally different cultural contexts, i.e., the Italian as opposed to the German dramatic heritage--for example, Fo, unlike Brecht, owes a great deal to the commedia dell' arte--they nonetheless have much in common. As for so many theater people who have become convinced of the need for a transformation of class society, Brecht's writings constitute for Fo an indispensible and inexhaustible source. Fo is thoroughly versed in Brecht's ideas and has adopted some of his suggested expressive devices and dramatic techniques. After all, the epic theater, which both dramatists oppose to the theater of psychological empathy, aims by no means at anything truly new, but rather at a continuing development--and for Brecht not least in regard to the establishment of a theoretical frame--of traditions harking back to the popular theater of the Middle Ages and earlier. That is why neither Fo nor Brecht concerns himself with individual psychological cases--even in Mother Courage one cannot speak of a Courage "case"--but rather presents the situation of entire population groups.

Question: The tent performance is to my knowledge a first-of-its-kind experiment in the line of Courage performances, and it evoked both positive and negative comment. Let's begin with the positive: although Brecht himself never expressly voiced the possibility of a tent performance, an essential aspect of his dramatic theory is the view that his political message lends itself to breaking free from the closure of bourgeois theater and moving into the open, onto the street.

I.N.S.: We had entertained the idea of the tent-as-performance-space for some time, long before the purchase of the tent materialized or even before a Brecht performance was considered at all. Which did not keep us from seeing it as a fortuitous confirmation when we came across a short essay by Brecht on the thoroughly liberating effect of the tent setting on the spectator's attitude. There are a number of reasons why we prefer the tent arrangement. Aside from the practical consideration that as a traveling troupe we are always forced to deal with the medium- or long-range programming of the official theaters, and at best can hope for only two or three performance evenings, we really can make only short-term plans because we want to take up social issues and consequently often change priorities according to the immediate socio-political situation. A further reason has to do with the com munication problems arising from theater architectonics and the accompanying rules of propriety that inhibit normal behavior. In contrast, we are the rulers in our tent: there we can talk the way we want to talk. Furthermore, because certain and possibly interested segments of the population do not attend regular theaters out of a sort of shyness, we would like to go to the audience, to society, ourselves. One method is "intervention," whereby, for example, we present a program during a strike on the spot; another is the tent performance, which by its very nature is a bit unsettling and unorthodox. A final reason may be the fact that the tent is available for other events, as for example was the case in Louvain, where there was a Peace Day organized by the peace movement in connection with a public awareness campaign. In this sense we would like to grow beyond the theater collective into a traveling meeting place in which theater becomes an occasion for coming together.

Question: In this connection skeptics have raised the point that such a tent enterprise is subject to the limitation that one can only go the larger cities, where the bourgeois cultural chic may come simply for a change of pace and to satisfy its curiosity.

I.N.S.: That entire line of thought is misdirected because, quite aside from our limited finances and lack of personnel, we do not need to go to the tiniest village as long as we manage to reach the public effectively with our message. For example, we stay in one location in a large city for a week. This allows us to make contact with the inhabitants of the neighborhood, practically to live together, to exchange impressions and opinions about the Courage performance. At the same time we present a program of lesser proportions in the outlying communities, in the hope that spectators there may then make it to the Courage performances themselves. In any case, with this approach there were 84 performances of Courage before a total of more than 30,000 spectators during the tour of Belgium and Holland, numbers that official theaters envy. However, we reach the average middle-class audience only spottily, although we would like to reach more. With its accustomed theater-going habits and expectations this audience does not come out, which itself reflects, of course, a kind of shyness that needs to be overcome.

Question: Criticism has often been raised regarding the irreconcilability of the high-level ideological content of almost every sentence in the play with the almost insurmountable acoustical problems of performance in a tent.

I.N.S.: We agree with this criticism to the extent that, particularly at the beginning of the tour, the transplanting of the play to the tent did not at all achieve what we had intended. This was due among other things to the fact that, because of our lack of an infrastructure, the play was rehearsed in an attic, and completely different acoustics came into play after the transfer to the tent. Furthermore, we had to contend with a variety of local conditions (lay of the land, street noises, etc.). So we have taken these criticisms very seriously and attempted to remedy the problems where possible by making appropriate changes in staging technique (microphone system, blocking, etc.). Director Carlos Medina, for whom the Courage production was the first job directing in a tent, tried to do full justice to the ideological content by making certain cuts that were absolutely necessary in the tent arrangement, for example in the early scenes, but consistently refusing to distort the dialog through any kind of tampering.

"The play is no longer a play that has arrived too late, that is, after a war. To our horror, a new war threatens. The great majority is not for war. But there are so many trials and tribulations. Couldn't they be taken care of by a war? . . . Aren't there some happy wars?

I would like to know how many of the viewers of Mother Courage and Her Children understand the play's warning today."
Bertolt Brecht, 1955

Question: Established Brecht interpreters may have frowned upon not finding Courage's covered wagon on the stage. (One reviewer wrote: "The I.N.S. scrambled the ingenious puzzle of the Berlin model in favor of their own rather daring interpretation.")

I.N.S: Let us make it clear from the start that in our opinion the so-called Brecht exegesis in this country is in bad shape, that Brecht interpreters, by opposing any attempts at experiment or change--quite at odds with Brecht's own thinking--represent a very conservative point of view; in brief, they believe that they honor Brecht by mummifying him. Brecht wrote for his contemporaries--with contemporary means (given fixed form by the Berlin Ensemble)--ethical and aesthetic criticism of his own time, and against this background it becomes clear what an extremely important function the covered wagon and the revolving stage had in 1949: Berlin, a bombed-out city. The people who came to the theater found a sublimation of their own world. Outside was the theater of war; inside, the revolving stage paralleled the turning of the world, and Mother Courage moved her wagon against this revolving movement. A brilliant idea of Brecht's, but one cannot expect today's audience to bring a similarly sharp spiritual and emotional focus to bear on the same staging. Medina, totally in keeping with Brechtian thought, quite consciously strove to break out of the traditional and expected model (i.e., a play about war is going to be performed--lights out--curtain up--covered wagon. . .). We in Western Europe are not involved in an actual wartime situation, though television confronts us indirectly day in, day out with the horrors of war in innumerable parts of the world. We live today on the trash heap of commercialism and the consumer society. Medina's Courage lives atop a patchwork of crushed containers, billboards and instruments of war: a timely translation of the 1949 revolving stage.

Question: So this is a rigorous updating of the 1939 play, the political message of which has lost none of its truth and universality for the militant collective I.N.S. Is it true that Medina has introduced a "Latin American accent?"

I.N.S.: As a Chilean Medina lived through the overthrow of the Allende regime in the coup d'état of 1973 and the events in the stadium of Santiago--

bitterly dark experiences to which he alludes in the play, and with which we, too, were confronted via television and the flood of refugees, experiences which we thus shared in a sense. Medina's main concern--how can the characters in the play appear as representatives of today's society, in 1983?--crystallized in the course of his rather intensive discussions and exchanges of ideas with us into an emphasis not so much on the external threat of nuclear war, though this is always there implicitly, as on the little inner war that we have to fight with ourselves every day amid the world-wide economic crisis and unemployment. He focuses on the task of articulating again and again our solidarity with our fellow men, instead of falling back into the politically dangerous syndrome of retreat into the private sphere, of opportunism or even fatalism.

Question: From the names Carlos Medina (director), Matthias Stein (set designer) and Heinz Joswiakowski (dramaturge), all connected with the Berlin Ensemble, it becomes immediately apparent this is something of a Belgian-GDR coproduction.

I.N.S: The first (strictly private) acquaintance dates from as far back as a 1958 performance by the Berlin Ensemble in Paris, an electrifying dramatic experience for us at that time. But in late 1979 the collective went on a study trip to Berlin with the intention of learning exactly where Bertolt Brecht's significance as a master teacher for our own theater work might lie. Our attendance at rehearsals and performances of various plays of Brecht and above all our meetings with actors and dramaturges of the Berlin Ensemble revealed a mutual critical interest and led in February 1981 to our first productive work together, a Brecht collage and song recital, "The Yes and No of B.B." At the same time we wanted to call attention to the fact that cooperative work on a peace project, beyond the division into "zones" and whatever iron curtains might exist, was eminently feasible in practice. Since neither the Berlin Ensemble nor the I.N.S. Collective wanted to stop with this one-time cooperative effort, another, more demanding project was initiated in 1982, a Brecht Week in which there would be, along with our Courage production, performances by the Berlin Ensemble, recitals by Ekkehard Schall and Renate Richter, film showings and so on. This series of programs was then proposed to the directors of the Holland Festival, who after initial enthusiasm turned it down in the end--for more than purely financial reasons, we suspect.

Question: In the Dutch language area Kouwenaar is an established Brecht translator with, among others, his versions of The Good Woman of Szechuan, Arturo Ui, The Life of Galileo, and last year Mother Courage and Her Children. Yet you declined to use his translation.

I.N.S.: In fact we gave considerable thought to this matter. On the one hand there was Kouwenaar's translation, which does full justice to Brecht's sentence construction and rhythm and is much praised for its clarity, but which we felt was "bookish" and "too distantly Dutch." On the other hand, Medina wanted to go as far as possible with the language and come up with a kind of universal European language consisting of linguistic influences and components from the countries and areas that Mother Courage roams through. This was a tremendous undertaking that could not have attained any satisfying results within the rehearsal time period. The dialect colored translation by the Flemish bard Wannes van de Velde, who had accompanied us on our travels since the founding of the Collective, proved to be the solution, as audiences repeatedly confirmed. In this version, in keeping with Brecht's wishes, conciseness and poetry go magnificently hand in hand. What could come closer to the view of cultural history that we promote than Wannes' motto, "a singer is a group?"

Question: During a wave of Brecht productions in Italy a few years ago, Dario Fo expressed his concern that it might not move beyond a big stage success that would not really disturb the establishment.

I.N.S.: A single play will indeed hardly bother the powers that be, but we see ourselves as belonging strictly to the workers' movement, which we seek to move in the direction of active political opposition, and of course only the workers' movement as a whole will be able to carry out that project successfully. In this regard one should always keep in mind the general political situation in which a play is performed. Performances of Fo and Brecht in the bourgeois theaters in this country make them virtually "safe," harmless. Hence our choice of the tent arrangment, because of the infintely greater potential for "public awareness" in the sense mentioned earlier. An outdoor production of Courage in Chile, due to the explosive political climate, the completely different state of consciousness and combativeness among the population, would produce a much more radical political effect, which would in turn disturb the leaders there much more than in Western Europe and Belgium, where the ruling class can afford a certain "tolerance." Nonetheless there is a

lot working against the Collective's efforts, not so much from the economic power circles as from the cultural authorities, or more exactly, from their non-existent cultural policy. (The grim truth: the theater budget for the entire Flemish-language community in Belgium is no higher than the theater budget of the city of Düsseldorf.) Apparently those in power are somehow afraid of the effects of the theater phenomenon in general, which grew out of historically determined necessity, to say nothing of the militantly political theater groups.

Question: Certain critics chide the "superficial," sensational "circus" direction inherent in a tent setting (most obvious example: the eleventh scene, in which the dead Kattrin slides down from a hunting net), which, it is argued, hardly does service to the seriousness of Brecht's political message.

I.N.S.: There is not necessarily anything inconsistent in this. Wasn't entertainment in the theater, enjoyment in gaining insight, a prime aim precisely of Bertolt Brecht? In our opinion the main concern here is that one take today's audience seriously. A completely traditional staging in which Kattrin, sitting on a tiny roof not even two meters high, is shot down pro forma by old-fashioned gunmen from a distance of two meters, is not accepted by anyone anymore. In view of the recently televised films of the intervention in Chad by highly trained French special forces, our own credibility can perhaps be saved by avoiding such anachronisms in the theater.

"The mercenaries of the new production.

These soldiers are not like the Chinese volunteers in Korea, of whom the West German Spiegel writes: 'The Chinese stormed into the U.S. mine field. The first wave of soldiers let themselves be torn to pieces by the exploding mines so that those who followed could get through. Pieces of dead and dying Chinese stuck in the American barbed wire. The astonished G.I.'s thought the attackers were under the influence of narcotics. (All were sober, it was revealed by examination of the prisoners.)'"
Bertolt Brecht, 1956

Translated by Thomas E. Ryan

BRECHT IN POLAND

Roman Szydlowski

It is just sixty years since the first news of Brecht appeared in Poland. In 1923 the journal Scena Polska (Polish Stage) published in its first issue a correspondent's report from Munich in which the author wrote enthusiastically about Drums in the Night (Trommeln in die Nacht), calling it half folk play and half ballad. On May 9, 1926, an interview with Bertolt Brecht by Regina Reicher appeared in the most prestigious Polish literary magazine, Wiadomości Literackie (Literary News). It was part of a series on "Young German Dramatists." One year later, in 1927, Wiadomości Literackie published an article by Izydor Berman on "Bert Brecht as Lyricist."

Much more important, however, was the first production of a Brecht play on the Polish stage at the leading theater of the country, the Teatr Polski in Warsaw, by Poland's most important director, Leon Schiller. He reached for The Threepenny Opera half a year after the Berlin world premiere, being attracted by both the progressive content of the play and its new form. The play was translated by the well-known playwright Bruno Winawer and the songs by the most distinguished revolutionary poet of that time, Wladyslaw Broniewski. Schiller's and Broniewski's sympathy for communism was widely known. The premiere of The Threepenny Opera on May 4, 1929, became a leftist event. After the first night a real storm broke out in the press. Bourgeois critics attacked the production, sparing no abuse. The reviewer of the right-wing Gazeta Warszawska wrote that Schiller could hire out the performance to Marxists for meetings and mass demonstrations against the state, and he found found its anti-religious tendency to be scandalous. The censor made more and more cuts in the text of the play until it was definitively banned after only thirteen performances.

This, though, was not the end of The Threepenny Opera on Poland's stage. The play opened in Lodz on February 20, 1932, produced by Karol Borowski. Having learned a lesson from Schiller's experience, he created a stylized and parodistic show of the "musical" kind. He toned down the edges and the sharp social accents of The Threepenny Opera, elaborating first of all the music and dance in the performance. This assured great success and appreciation both from the reviewers and the public.

Probably the best production of The Threepenny Opera in Poland before the War was offered by Waclaw Radulski in Lvov. The play opened there in 1933, and the reviewer of the most highly esteemed newspaper Czas (Time) wrote that "the Lvov production...comes close to the original form applied by Aufricht in the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm."

These three productions were the only performances of Brecht's plays on the Polish stage before the War. Occasionally articles and information about Brecht's work or translations of his writings appeared in the left-wing press. In 1932, Scena Lvovska published Izydor Berman's "The German Theater Today', containing comprehensive (though not too accurate) information on Brecht. In 1936 Berman published a further article in Sygnaly on German left-wing poetry in which he devoted a good deal of attention to Brecht's work. Poems were translated by Tadeusz Hollender. Sygnaly published in 1936 his tranlations of the "Legend of the Dead Soldier" and "On Poor B.B."

Then the contacts between Brecht and Poland were interrupted by World War II and the Nazi occupation of Poland. Only after the War was the silence of many years broken. The first harbinger of renewed interest in Brecht was a review by Jacek Frühling on a production of Puntilla published in 1948 in Odrodzenie. Already acquainted before the War with Brecht's work, he had visited Brecht in Herrliberg and seen the Puntilla performance in Zurich while working as a Polish diplomat in Switzerland. In Fall 1949, a group of Polish writers and critics visited Berlin, the capital of the newly created German Democratic Republic. There they saw Mother Courage; it made a great impression on them, and they published enthusiastic accounts in the Polish press. Early in 1950 new texts about Brecht's theater by Jan Alfred Szczepański, Ryszard Matuszewski and Wilhelm Szewczyk appeared. As contacts between Poland and the GDR became closer and easier, more critics, writers and directors went to Berlin and wrote about their impressions in the press (i.e. J. Piprek, Egon Naganowski and Erwin Axer).

In February 1952, Brecht visited Poland for the first time. The old friendship with Leon Schiller revived. Afterwards Brecht wrote to Schiller: "Lieber Genosse Schiller, ich danke Ihnen für den Empfang, den das polnische Theater uns in Ihrer Person bereitet hat. Als Gastgeschenk nehme ich neues Wissen über das Format und die Art der großen dramatischen Literatur Ihres Landes mit mir. Ihre Sulkowskiaufführung zeigte uns den Schwung, die große Anlage und die tiefe Menschlichkeit Ihrer Regie. Nun hoffe ich, Sie auch in Berlin begrüssen zu können. Wir könnten Ihnen dort die Ansätze zu einem neuen Theater zeigen." Subsequently Schiller did go to Berlin and later published in Pamietnik Teatralny a comprehensive report on Berlin theaters, especially on the Berliner Ensemble and Brecht's work. Then towards the end of 1952, the Berliner Ensemble came to Poland. The theater brought productions of Mother Courage, Mother and Kleist's The Broken Jug to Warsaw, Cracow and Lodz, Poland's most important cultural centers. The impact was tremendous. Appreciative articles and reviews appeared in the literary and daily press, and a lively discussion ensued about the style and methods of the Berliner Ensemble.

The time had come to introduce Brecht's plays on the Polish stage. In 1953 the first collection of Brecht's plays in Polish translation appeared (Puntilla, Mother Courage and The Caucasian Chalk Circle). In 1954 the Cracow Slowacki Theater presented The Caucasian Chalk Circle, staged by Irena Babel with excellent sets designed by Andrzej Stopka. In 1955 Puntilla was produced in Gdańsk by Jerzy Goliński. The most important event in the history of Brecht reception in Poland during the fifties, however, was the production of The Good Person of Szechuan at the Dramatic Theater in Warsaw in 1956. Directed by Ludwik Rene, with sets designed by Jan Kosiński, and Halina Mikolajska playing Shen Te/Shui Ta, it became the first great success of a Brecht play in Poland after the War. Unfortunately this popularity could not be sustained. The Dramatic Theater chose The Good Soldier Schwejk as its next Brecht production and, although a world premiere, it met with a negative response on the part of critics and the public. The Dramatic Theater became more interested in Dürrenmatt's plays and the first postwar "Brecht wave" in Poland was over.

That does not mean that Brecht was not played. On the contrary, over twenty premieres of The Threepenny Opera alone are sufficient proof. The best was directed in 1958 by Konrad Swinarski at Erwin Axer's Contemporary Theater (Teatr Współczesny) with an excellent Polly, Kalina Jedrusik. Even the Cracow puppet theater "Groteska" staged The Threepenny Opera. Other Brecht plays were introduced to the Polish audience. One could mention Fear and Misery of the Third Reich at the Jewish Theater (1960), directed by Konrad Swinarski who, after his apprenticeship at the Berliner Ensemble, became the foremost Brecht specialist in Poland. Ida Kaminski also played Mother Courage in the Jewish Theater.

The second wave of interest in Brecht and his plays came in the early sixties. It began with the unusual success of Erwin Axer's The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui at the Contemporary Theater in 1962 with Tadeusz Lomnicki in the lead role. The production ran over 250 performances and was the longest run of a Brecht play in Poland so far. Encouraged by the success of the Contemporary Theater, other theaters in Lodz, Wroclaw, Poznan, Bielsko-Biala, Katowice and Rzeszow also produced Arturo Ui. In the same year the National Theater in Warsaw staged an important production of Mother Courage. The title role was played by Irena Eichler, a leading Polish actress estimated highly by Brecht who had seen her in the role of Mrs. Warren and was convinced that she would be an excellent Mother Courage. Lidia Zamkov also directed and starred in a very successful run of Mother Courage at the Old Theater (Stary Teatr) in Cracow and again in Katowice. Other productions included Galileo Galilei, The Days of the Commune, Man is Man, The Visions of Simone Machard, Mother and Mahagonny. In 1963 a three volume edition of Brecht's plays was published in Polish including twelve of his central dramatic works. Two

years later the first study on Brecht's dramatic work in the Polish language appeared: Dramaturgia Bertolta Brechta by this critic, Roman Szydlowski.

The seventies were not favorable for Brecht in Poland. The battle surrounding his dramatic work was always connected to the country's political problems. At the time of the Nazi threat before the War, Brecht performances were a political demonstration against fascism. In the fifties and sixties they represented a new theatrical aesthetic to counter the official doctrine of socialist realism and the practice of the Moscow Art Theater as a model for the Polish theater. With the liberalization of cultural policy and the possibility of more imaginative creation during the seventies, both reasons disappeared. Polish theater turned to the drama of the absurd: Beckett and Ionesco, later Pinter and Bond. New translations were published: a fourth volume and two supplementary volumes included early plays, Lehrstücke and aphorisms and fragments. Yet with the exception of Galileo Galilei in Warsaw with Tadeusz Lomnicki in the lead role, Brecht's plays were not successful on stage.

Now comes the surprise: the eighties are beginning with a new Brecht wave, the third wave of Polish interest in his work. It is of course connected to the country's political situation. The events of 1980, the "Solidarity" movement, the introduction of martial law, give to Brecht's plays a new actuality. A younger generation is now involved in translating his texts, directing his plays, and many young people are eager to see performances of his plays.

Last season brought three good Brecht performances to Warsaw's theaters. The most important was Mahagonny at the Contemporary Theater. Erwin Axer is no longer the director, after retiring and handing over the rule to his pupil and assistent Maciej Englert. But sympathy for Brecht remains in this theater. The production was based on both texts of the "little" and "big" Mahagonny. The young poet J.S. Buras provided an excellent new translation of the text. Together with the young director Krzysztof Zaleski, they prepared a fine version, which also included songs from Happy End and two songs written especially for this performance based on Brecht's verses. The music--in the Brecht/Weill style--was written by the young composer Jerzy Satanowski. The performance had a good tempo, and the young actors sang and danced well, as is usual in Poland where for Brecht's plays the musical side is always better prepared. Moreover, the performance's thrust is clear. When Brecht wrote the play, Mahagonny was Munich and Germany of the twenties. Later it could have been the USA. In 1983, Mahagonny is Warsaw and Poland. And the question is: may we do everything that we might ("ob man alles dürfen darf?"). The performance's appeal has been tremendous; it was the greatest hit of the Warsaw season 1982/1983.

The season's second Brecht success was a performance by the title of "Heaven of Disappointments". It was prepared by Lena Szurmiej, a Warsaw Theater School student, with a group of young actors from several Warsaw theaters (National, Ateneum, Jewish Theater) and played at the Ateneum Theater. It consists of songs and lyrics written by the young Brecht. Robert Stiller's translations retain the tone of Brecht's poetry and give the impression of his original style. The young actors not only understand the text well, but they also sing in a cabaret style. The talented director found her work approved both by critics and by the audience. In addition, the music was appropriate: a small jazz band sat in the background and the instrumentation was similar to a twenties' jazz style.

The season's third Brecht performance was also prepared by the younger generation. Students at the actor's faculty of the Warsaw Theater School gave a performance of The Threepenny Opera which was young, rebellious, full of energy and temperament. The manager of the New Theater was so impressed, he bought the performance as is and the play has been running in the normal repertory.

Brecht is also played in Polish cities beyond Warsaw. Szczecin had a performance of Mother Courage (shown also on Polish TV). Kalisz played Die Kleinbürgerhochzeit. And next season a Warsaw theater is preparing the Polish premiere of Turandot. Brecht is now becoming an ally of Polish youth, and this gives a new sense to his plays.

NOTES ON BAAL--THE GREEK PREMIERE
(Athens Ensemble, September 1983)

Heinz-Uwe Haus

1. Just as it is unacceptable for us to paint an objective countenance onto subjective features--a sharp reproof by Wirth of Brecht's lifelong indecisive attitude toward his early works--neither should we uncritically introduce the "desire of the Text," which creates a method through the spontaneous appropriation of the text. Brecht's text is aggressive, and we must know against whom and how it is to be used. Romanticized rebelliousness was not sufficient cause to choose this piece for the opening of a new playhouse. Nor, indeed, as indefatigable Brecht critics conjectured at the outset of the successful performance, did the left-labelled troupe want to serve up unknown, obscene texts for the sensationalized "dinner theatre" crowd. Irresponsible self-indulgence and profane inconsequence celebrate their ego masses in Athens' bohemian circles too. Such behavior, after all, doesn't fall from out of the blue but is as earthly as Baal's infamous views on life. Egalitarian democracy by way of entrance tickets is as old as socialist utopias bent on didacticism. Such "common sense" aligns itself against Brecht and against everything and everyone that suggests perspectives for human coexistence, such as the path from anarchy to productivity, from "unbinding the emotions" to establishing the "rationality of the Real." The thoroughly productive potential of the piece and its title character, the unity of lyricism and social truth, the experimental interest of those involved in finding a topical reading: all this was an enticement to add an essential part of Brecht's work to his reception in Greece thus far. Experiences, visual and aural habits, and gestic material from a contradictory world familiar to young people who are living in the changing political and social situation of the "shift in direction," the socialist governments' watchword, were to be consciously conveyed.

2. Baal can not be comprehended by means of an abstract interpretation of the desire for happiness, although Brecht gives us a field for this interpretation in one of his many contradictory hints for understanding the text. We did, however, concern ourselves with the "enjoyable association of human relationships" that must go hand in hand with consciousness raising and social change. To see Baal as a

figure identified with "dropouts," "spontis," "Greens" or "alternatives" would pale his credibility. On the contrary, the viewer must be shown the "path to a materialism of 'appetites' in the social realm from the materialism of satisfying individual wants," as Claudia Albert formulates in her theses. The "everyday fascism" of Mech, Pschierer, the jobbers, Watzmann, of the soirée, the tavern and the police raid, makes Baal's abysses and desperate hope a learning experience for us.

3. Baal is a prologue for Brecht: the new linguistic strength of his poetry proclaims itself here as well as his program for the theater which develops a complementary perspective for content and form. If we look at Baal's "appetite," then we should always bear in mind how it functions in the historical process as well. This is the sensualist revolutionary who has been lost, who is always lost, if we stagnate in the revolt itself. Baal forfeits the consent of established society, enters as an outsider and compels an educated, affluent audience to pay up. Theater against the norm and completely without social consent achieves the desired shiver of a sellout: theater as immoral institution. The idle chatter and shallowness of this society consolidate again and again into a pogrom-like atmosphere. Baal's schemes, his attempts to come out of his isolation, are passed off by society as being harmless, in asmuchas society sanctions them. Even in the final round, it is still a game: of freedom and humanness. Baal is a brother of Azdak, Galilei, Papa--that is, "on the road" but to make our planet "habitable." Baal's vitality and imagination are not aphrodisiacs or men's room graffiti. His activity comes from the isolation in a society that produces the "dehumanized masses." Can he be blamed for seeing himself under poisonous skies? Brecht wrote in 1921: "That is the coldness that you find in your heart." As Walser stressed in his 1981 speech, if Brecht "had expanded upon nothing but his anarchy, he might not have suffered a bear market." The challenge for a new social order brings Baal fits, loathing and desperation about the "feverish sunsets of destruction."

Translated by Bonnie Lynch

notate

notate, the information and news bulletin of the Brecht-Zentrum in the GDR, appears six times a year

No. 5/1983 Topic: Brecht and Contemporary Drama

Christophe Funke on Brecht's impact in GDR theater
Heiner Müller in an exclusive interview with Werner Heinitz
Wolfgang Heise on Brecht's Lehrstücke
Matthias Braun on Helene Weigel's correspondence
Plus theater reviews and book reviews

No. 6/1983

Reports on the Brecht-Zentrum's public outreach programs to schools, factories and libraries
Reviews of Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe and Lukullus in East Berlin as well as the Caucasian Chalk Circle in Buenos Aires
Rudolf Vapeník on Brecht's visits to Czechoslovakia

No. 1/1984 Topic: Brecht and Music

Jürgen Schebera on the role of music for the impact of Brecht's poetry
Hella Brock, Kurt Schwaen and Jürgen Schebera on Der Jasager as student opera
Fritz Hennenberg on Brecht's collaboration with composers and performers
Joachim Fiebach and Alexander Stillmark discussing a Vietnamese production of the Caucasian Chalk Circle

Each issue of notate contains additional notes on Brecht activities in the GDR and around the world as well as short commentaries on GDR Brecht performances and book reviews. The bulletin can be ordered from Buchexport DDR, 7010 Leipzig, Postfach 160 (15 M/year).

Summary by Marc Silberman

mla

There were two sessions sponsored by the IBS at the 1983 Conference of the Modern Language Association in New York City. The following abstracts were provided by the speakers.

BRECHT AND PERFORMANCE

Love Songs For Hard Times

A recital of poems and songs

Words by Bertolt Brecht

Music by

KURT WEILL, HANNES EISLER and RAPHAEL CRYSTAL

Cast--Lorraine Archibald, Elizabeth Carlin, Karen Kimsey, Patricia Langford, Maggie O'Donnell, Kenneth Pearlstein, Marianne Rossi, Tamara Zook.

Devised and with additional material by Wal Cherry.

Material selected from Bertolt Brecht, Poems: 1913-1956 and the Collected Plays, both edited by John Willett and Ralph Mannheim.

Temple University Theater

Carol Poore: Summary of the discussion

After the piano finally arrived, the time allotted to this session was filled by the recital of Brecht's poems and songs, which were well-chosen and professionally performed. In the brief discussion which followed, speakers emphasized the importance of writing new music for Brecht's texts which would continue to be appropriate for the language, the necessity for more good American translations of Brecht, and the conviction that Brecht shouldn't always be performed "on college campuses earnestly," but also on Broadway. The women actresses who performed this recital pointed out in answer to a question that they had felt free in working with their director to develop their own interpretation of the material.

BRECHT AND WOMEN

Sammy McLean: Mother-Son Incest Bonding and the Attainment of the Good Community in Brecht's Later Plays

The application of psychoanalytic object relations theory in analyzing the development of Brecht's expression of his social idealism in five plays which contain major female figures portrayed explicitly as heroine-mothers from 1931 to 1945 reveals that Brecht's dramatic work contains psychological themes which determine its final shape: Brecht attains his revolutionary ideal by working through problems arising from mother-son incest bonding and realizing the potential afforded by this resolution. Pelagea Vlassova's and Teresa Carrar's bonds with their sons incorporate the affectional strength not only of mother to son but also that of a woman to a male complement and partner. By becoming active and symbolically nurturing heroine-mothers to the leftist collective, Vlassova and Carrar resolve the unconscious force of incestuous ties which had bound their lives psychically to their sons, the emotional strength of which in turn provides the nurturing vitality they are able to dedicate to the collective. Anna Fierling's search for business in the war is the conscious expression of her unconscious search for and her hope again to find her son, Eilif, "the dearest of all" to her. Shen Te's bond with her son-to-be retains the bond of the heroine-mother to the individual and converts this bond into a conscious commitment to the son. The socialized bond between Grusha Vachnadze and her acquired son represents a symbolization of the physically incestuous union which would have been required of Shen Te and her son-to-be in order to change and sustain the world in the image of the good person.

Philosophical Marxism provided Brecht provisionally with an intellectual structure both for the expression of his social idealism and for working through psychosexual problems of mother-son incest bonding: Vlassova's and Carrar's commitment to a tertium quid is both the means of repression for these women of their attachment to their sons and their sublimated expression of this attachment. Brecht then replaced the heroine-mother's commitment to the leftist collective with the heroin-mother's commitment to the individual: Courage's abiding and unresolved commitment to Eilif is the pivotal point of this development. Shen Te's conscious commitment to her son repairs Courage's unconsciously problematic incest bond with Eilif, and the symbolic union of Vachnadze with Michel both forms the exemplary basis for the reconstituted nuclear family in which the mother-son dyad predominates, and becomes the allegorical source for the emergence of the ethical community, Azdak's "Garden for the Children." Brecht develops toward and ultimately defines a solution for social revolution and the attainment of the good community which is based aesthetically on the process of the sublimation of unconscious psychosexual factors and founded ethically on the spontaneous behavior of particularized individuals.

Sue-Ellen Case: Homosexuality and the Mother

I began the paper by subjecting the word "mother" to contemporary resonances of meaning and contrasting this usage to the former connotations of gender stability, fertilization by heterosexual intercourse, unigender child-rearing practices, etc. I then sketched out several contemporary uses of the term "mother" in psychoanalytic discourse and in describing modes of literary or linguistic production--particularly the use of the term "mother" in the "discourse" of desire" as Julia Kristeva has described it.

Then I located the function of the term "mother" in Brecht's work, particularly in reference to gender, heterosexuality and the discourse of desire. I found that the contemporary concerns the term presently connotes could be found in Brecht's early homosexual plays (Baal, Jungle of Cities, Edward II), which compounded the notions of gender, alternative sexuality and desire with a unique kind of discourse I term the Rimbaudian project. I linked the contemporary political alliances with these issues to similar political alliances in the twenties, specifically the homosexual reform movement. While valorizing the project of these early plays for their present political applicability, I also critiqued them for their inherent misogyny.

Finally, I identified the rise of a central mother figure within Brecht's development as associated with the former, conservative values which the term implied. I concluded that the rise of this stable, asexual, instrumental mother figure suppressed the earlier experiments in discourse and desire and brought with it the material cleanliness, extreme assiduity of language, asexual political commitment, etc. of the Epic style as a compensation for what had come before. I suggested that at this point in history, the earlier, homosexual plays have more political value than the later, post-mother plays.

Carol Poore: Discussion of the papers

Discussion of the first paper centered around the question of whether it was appropriate to apply Freudian categories to literary characters in the same manner as to real people, and how such a procedure could advance our understanding of a literary work. Mr. McLean's answer was that he was concerned with showing the "unconscious" interplay between characters in plays such as Die Mutter, but that he did not mean to assert that this was the most important content of the plays. However, the general response was that such a methodological approach would have to be integrated into an overall interpretation of the works in order to prove its usefulness.

Discussion of the second paper centered around the definition of "homosexual" and "heterosexual" plays. It was questioned whether Brecht's first three plays could be called "homosexual" plays simply because they portray homosexual relationships. The paper stated that these early plays are more relevant to the psychosexual revolutionary times of the present than are Brecht's later plays, in which the traditional mother figures represent a freezing of revolutionary possibilities. However, one respondent pointed out that Brecht was not holding up either Baal or "the mother" as totally positive figures. In reply, Ms. Case asserted that in the earlier plays, we have a liberation from utopian hopes for the future, whereas in the later plays there is both a hope for the planned socialist society and also a model of the traditional repressed mother whose hopes for the future lie in her (planned) children. [Note from the person writing this summary: Unfortunately, there was not time to discuss the idea of a "liberation from hope," which this reviewer found unconvincing.]

THE
INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

INVITES PROPOSALS FOR PRESENTATIONS AT THE

1984 MLA CONVENTION IN WASHINGTON, DC

DECEMBER 27 - 30, 1984

THE TOPIC OF THE IBS SESSION WILL BE

"RE-VISIONS OF BRECHT: ADAPTATIONS AND RADICAL PRODUCTIONS"

(4-5 papers)

PAPERS DEALING WITH ADAPTATIONS OF BRECHT PLAYS BY OTHER PLAYWRIGHTS OR WITH INNOVATIVE PRODUCTIONS OF BRECHT PLAYS ARE WELCOME. INTERESTED PERSONS SHOULD SUBMIT AN ABSTRACT OF THEIR PROPOSED PAPER (NOT MORE THAN TWO TYPEWRITTEN PAGES IN LENGTH) TO EACH OF THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZERS OF THE SESSION. THE DEADLINE FOR THE RECEIPT OF ABSTRACTS IS MARCH 20th, 1984. (late proposals may be considered though chances for acceptance are less likely)

Michael Evenden
438 Byllesby Avenue
Meadville, PA 16335

Merle Krueger
Foreign Languages
14N-233a
MIT
Cambridge, MA 02193

John Rouse
Department of Theatre
Tulane University
New Orleans, LA 70118

the Brecht Company

Das große Brecht-Liederbuch

BRECHT
A BIOGRAPHY
RONALD HAYMAN

notices

Martin Walsh, director of the Brecht Company (Ann Arbor, Michigan), announces that in conjunction with his production of St. Joan of the Stockyards in March, 1984, a symposium is being planned. "Capitalism, Crisis, and Salvation: St. Joan of the Stockyards in Its Own Time and in Ours" will bring together economists, historians and Brecht specialists to discuss the background of the play. The Symposium is supported by the Michigan Council for the Humanities. Walsh also reports that he is working on a radio version of Brecht's Lucullus to be broadcast on National Public Radio in late spring.

Brecht and Punk

V-Effect is the name of a three-piece music ensemble which claims as inspirations the Sex Pistols, free jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman, Mao's "On Liberation" as well as Brecht. Their recent album Stop Those Songs also suggests the Talking Heads, early Bob Dylan and Salinger's Catcher in the Rye as influences. V-Effect brings together the improvisation of jazz with the frenzy of punk, creating a unique musical line from which to agitate and analyze. Everything from workplace power dynamics to upper-middle-class consumer fetishes is under scrutiny in their stinging, strident and often clever songs. Recorded in Zurich, New York and live in West Germany and Czechoslovakia, some of the songs sound like archival recordings from the Weimar Republic. Available from Rift Records, P.O. Box 839, New York, NY 10002.

The Brecht Chansonettes, Ina Wittich and DeVina Barajas, announce that they will be leaving the San Francisco Bay Area for a year to live and sing in West Berlin. They can be reached now at Lietzenburger Str. 94, 1000 Berlin 15, FRG (030/8817804).

The Brecht Yearbook for 1984

After careful consideration of the work submitted for this year's volume the editors have decided to expand somewhat the scope of the volume and to include some pieces that were not directly germane to the stated theme of the volume: Brecht and Women. The selection process has been cumbersome and much too slow, and the editors feel a need to substantially shorten the procedure. Those submitting essays are now asked to send directly one copy of the by airmail to each of the three editors. Please keep your own original copy so that nothing needs to be returned to you. Each editor will send in a report to the University of Maryland and an accep-

tance or rejection notice will be sent out, as promptly as possible, from College Park. The tentative theme for the next volume (1985) will be: "Brecht and Performance," and submissions on this theme are invited. The theme is not an exclusive one, however. If you have an essay on a different subject, we will be willing to consider it. Materials sent during the summer months (June, July and August) have less chance for prompt consideration. Materials reaching the editors after January 1, 1985, cannot be considered for inclusion in the 1985 volume. (John Fuegi)

Just published

Reclam Verlag (Stuttgart) announces the most recent volume in its series of anthologies devoted to new interpretations of great dramatists, available this spring: Walter Hinderer (editor), Brechts Dramen. Neue Interpretationen, 368 pp. Contents include:

Im Widerspruch der Meinungen: Ein Vorwort
Reinhold Grimm
Der katholische Einstein: Brechts Dramen- und Theatertheorie

EINZELINTERPRETATIONEN

Wolfgang Frühwald
Bertolt Brechts *Baal*
Jan Knopf
Trommeln in der Nacht
Gisela E. Bahr
»Und niemals wird eine Verständigung sein«: *Im Dickicht der Städte*
Klaus-Detlef Müller
Mann ist Mann
Uwe-K. Ketelsen
Kunst im Klassenkampf. *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe*
Gert Sautermeister
Zweifelskunst, abgebrochene Dialektik, blinde Stellen. *Leben des Galilei* (3. Fassung, 1955)
Walter Hinck
Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder. Ein kritisches Volksstück
Gert Ueding
Der gute Mensch von Sezuan
Theo Buck
Der Garten des Azdak. Von der Ästhetik gesellschaftlicher Produktivität im *Kaukasischen Kreidekreis*
Walter Hinderer
»Das Gehirn der Bevölkerung arbeitet in vollem Licht«: *Die Tage der Kommune*

GESAMTDARSTELLUNGEN

Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer
Die Einakter
Ulrich Weisstein
Von reitenden Boten und singenden Holzfällern: Bertolt Brecht und die Oper
Rainer Nägele
Brechts Theater der Grausamkeit: Lehrstücke und Stückwerke
Alexander von Bormann
Gegen die Beschädigung des menschlichen Denkvermögens. Brechts antifaschistische Dramen
Wolfgang Wittkowski
Aktualität der Historizität. Bevormundung des Publikums in Brechts Bearbeitungen
Christiane Bohnert
Daten zu Leben und Werk
Bibliographie
Die Autoren der Beiträge

Sammy McLean has an essay on Brecht forthcoming in the volume The Psychoanalytic Study of Literature, ed. Maurice Charney and Joseph Reppen (Hillsdale, N.J.: The Analytic Press, 1984).

Reinhold Grimm has an article forthcoming in Michigan German Studies on "Luther's Language in the Mouth of Brecht."

Fritz Hennenberg announces the recent publication of his three volume opus on Brecht's songs, Das große Brecht-Liederbuch, bringing together 121 Brecht melodies with music for voice and piano or guitar as well as comprehensive notes, annotations and variants for each song. Commposers include Franz Bruinier, Kurt Weill, Hanns Eisler, Paul Dessau, Rudolf Wagner-Régeny and Kurt Schwaen. The three volume collection published by Henschel Verlag in East Berlin costs 120 M. in the GDR and 160 M. elsewhere.

Barnes and Noble (US) and Harvester Press (UK) announce the publication in early summer 1984, of To Brecht and Beyond: Soundings in Modern Dramaturgy, by **Darko Suvin**. Contents include:

Part 1
1. On Individualist Dramaturgy
   Appendix: Some Semantics as Frozen History
2. Brecht vs. Ibsen: Breaking Open the Individualist or Closed Dramaturgy
Afterword 1982 to Part 1: Looking Backward at Lukács

Part 2
3. Politics, Performance, and the Organizational Mediation: The Paris Commune Theatre Law
4. The Mirror and the Dynamo: On Brecht's Esthetic Point of View
5. Salvation Now, For All Flesh!: Structures of a Slaughterhouse World ("Saint Joan of the Slaughterhouses")
6. Brecht's "Caucasian Chalk Circle" and Marxist Figuralism: Open Dramaturgy as Open History
7. Brecht's "Coriolan," or Leninism as Utopian Horizon: The City, the Hero, the City That Does Not Need a Hero
8. Beckett's Purgatory of the Individual, or the Three Laws of Thermodynamics--(Notes for an Incamination Toward a Preliminous Exagmination Round His Temporizing Dedramaturgification)
9. Reflections on Happenings Appendix: Happenings--An Exchange Between Lee Baxandall and Darko Suvin
Afterword 1982 to Part 2: Looking Forward From Brecht

Report on the Yale Conference on Kurt Weill
While the focus of the four-day International Kurt Weill Conference (November 1983) consistently rested on the composer and occasionally on Lotte Lenya, the life and

works of Brecht also received scholarly attention throughout. As early as the opening concert, the first in a series of four presented by the Yale School of Music, the rarely performed Weill-Brecht cantata "Vom Tod im Wald"--its haunting melody never published--set the tone. During the Conference itself John Rockwell's paper "Weill's and Brecht's Operatic Reform and Its Context" and John Fuegi's disquisition "Weill, Brecht und das Geld" commented, respectively, on the artistic collaboration and the financial arrangements between the composer and librettist. Professor Fuegi, on the basis of studying the contracts, felt Weill was disadvantaged vis-à-vis Brecht, and he also provided indications suggesting that the collaborative share of Elisabeth Hauptmann, as a co-worker of Brecht on the Threepenny Opera and other Weill-Brecht works, was far greater than had hitherto been assumed. A further paper by Michael Morley detailed the complex interaction between Weill and Brecht in arriving at the concepts of "Gestus" and "Gestische Musik." Other speakers dealing with related works or newly discovered music by Weill were David Drew, Fritz Hennenberg, Henry Marx, Margo Aufricht, Guy Stern, Kim Kowalke (on newly discovered works).

The Conference was co-sponsored by the Kurt-Weill Foundation and the Yale Music Library. The Weill Foundation oversees performance rights for Weill's compositions and administers a Weill-Lenya Research Center in Manhattan. It will also publish a newsletter and a yearbook, the first issue of which will be devoted to papers read at the Conference. For more information, contact The Kurt Weill Foundation, 140 West End Avenue, Suite 1-R, New York, NY 10023 (Telephone: 212/ 873 1465).

Bielefeld, December 12, 1983

Lieber Herr Silberman,

...Unfortunately two errors crept into the translation of the Caesar essay which must be corrected (Vol. XIII/1):
p. 8, l. 1, should read "I had only realistic motifs," not "I had no realistic motifs;"
p. 13, l. 3, should read "Both agree in the negation of...," not "Both agree in the choice of..."
Many thanks for taking care of the competent translation and for the smooth collaboration.

Sincerely yours,

Ihr Harro Müller

Harro Müller

CONTRIBUTORS

Sue-Ellen Case teaches directing in the School of Drama at the University of Washington in Seattle. She has written on women and theater and the GDR dramatist Heiner Müller.

VèVè Clark is Assistant Professor of Francophone African and Caribbean Literature in the Romance Languages Department at Tufts University. She has written on Haitian Literature, African oral expression and Black World theatre.

Heinz-Uwe Haus is a director in the German Democratic Republic. Recently he spent several months in Greece staging Brecht plays.

Jost Hermand teaches German at the University of Wisconsin. He has published extensively on modern German literature.

Justin Hill is a student of algebraic topology at the University of Texas at San Antonio, an artist and a Brecht fan.

Kathleen L. Komar teaches German and Comparative Literature at UCLA. She has published on modern American and German prose and poetry.

Bonnie Lynch is a student of German at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

James K. Lyon teaches German at the University of California-San Diego in La Jolla. He is well known for his work on Brecht in America.

Sammy McLean teaches Comparative Literature and German at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Carol Poore teaches German at Brown University in Providence (Rhode Island) and publishes on German and American literary relations.

Lory Poulson is a graphic artist in Berkeley, California where she was in the cast of the 1979 production of Heiner Müller's Cement. The images for the collage on the title page: "The Legislative Body," 1834, Daumier (altered); "Women: A Pictorial Archive from Nineteenth Century Sources" (Dover Publications).

Thomas E. Ryan studied German at the University of Texas at Austin and now lives in South Carolina.

Wolf Siegert teaches German in Vanves (France) and has just published two books on Die Tage der Commune.

Roman Szydlowski, who died suddenly in Fall 1983, was the doyen of Brecht critics in Poland.

Lieven Vandenbossche (alias Ernst Retouché) is a writer for the political-literary weekly magazine De Nieuwe in Belgium. Contact address for the Kollektief Internationale Nieuwe Scene: Hertstraat 7, 2100 Deurne, Belgium.

membership

I would like to join the International Brecht Society. Dues payment enclosed.

Send to: Karl-Heinz Schoeps
Secretary-Treasurer, IBS
Dept. of Germanic Languages
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois 61801 USA

( ) US $10 Student member (to 3 years)
( ) US $15 Regular member earning less than US $20,000
( ) US $20 Regular member earning more than US $20,000
( ) US $ 30 Institutional member
( ) US $ 30 Sustaining member

Name _____

Address _____

_____

- -

INFORMATION FORM

Send to: Marc Silberman
Editor, Communications
Division of Foreign Languages
University of Texas at San Antonio
San Antonio, Texas 78285 USA

I want to report:

____ work in progress
____ project completed
____ own publication
____ other's publication
____ book
____ article
____ dissertation/thesis
____ translation/reprint

Title or subject _____

Author/Translator _____

Address/Institution _____

Publication Information _____

Completion expected by (date)_____ Signature _____

Please send at least one copy of publication/typescript to:

Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv
Chausseestrasse 125
DDR-104 Berlin
German Democratic Republic

- - - - - - - -

forthcoming

in Volume XIV/1 (November 1984)

Sieglinde Lug on Brecht's good women

Bernard Dort on the site of Epic representation

John Emigh on Brecht and Euripedes

John Rouse on re-viewing Brecht's plays

and much more. . .

JOHN WILLETT

BRECHT

IN CONTEXT

One of the world's leading authorities on Brecht presents a detailed and wide-ranging account of one of the most significant men of this century.

Through chapters on Brecht's relationships and attitudes to contemporary politics, music, art and cinema, as well as such figures as Auden, Kipling and Piscator, John Willett goes far beyond Brecht's theatre work and looks at him as an all-round writer and man of his time.

Hardback £12.50

Also available

Baal
The Caucasian Chalk Circle
Fear and Misery in the Third Reich & Señora Carrar's Rifles
(coming soon)
Mother Courage and Her Children
The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui
The Threepenny Opera
and others

methuen

Marc Silberman
Editor, Communications
Division of Foreign Languages
The University of Texas at San Antonio
San Antonio, Texas 78285 USA

Shuhsi Kao
909 Sierra Bonita
Los Angeles, CA 90046