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Winter 1990

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AN DIE NACHGEBORENEN

... Ach wir, die wir
den Menschen bereiten wollten
für freundlichkeit
können selber nicht
freundlich sein -

Ihr aber, wenn es soweit sein wird,
dass der Mensch
dem Menschen ein Helfer ist,
gedenkt unsrer
mit Nachsicht

INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY COMMUNICATIONS

Volume 19

Winter 1990

Number 1

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All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor. COMMUNICATIONS welcomes unsolicited manuscripts c. 10-12 double-spaced typed pages in length conforming to the MLA Style Manual. Submissions on 5-1/4" formatted diskettes are acceptable provided files are converted to ASCII. Consult with Editor concerning submission of computer print-out.

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

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IBS Officers: Antony Tatlow, University of Hong Kong, President
John Rouse, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana
USA, Vice-President
Ward B. Lewis, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia
USA, Secretary-Treasurer

Foreign bank account: Deutsche Bank Düsseldorf, Konto Nr. 76-74146

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Cover: Title illustration from Wolfgang Roth's "Collagen zu Brecht Texten"
 (Berlin: Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv, 1973), referred to in Carl Weber's
 article in this issue.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Due to a variety of delays and technical glitches, this issue of IBS-Communications is being printed and sent out about six weeks behind schedule. The Editor apologizes for holding the readership in suspense; in any case, besser (ver)spät(et) als nie ...

There are several important items to which I would like to direct our readers' attention:

Please note that a nomination sheet for this year's election of IBS officers is included on p. 7. Although this issue of Communications is somewhat behind schedule, there is ample time to submit nominations to Secretary-Treasurer Ward Lewis (deadline: May 15th). The election ballot will be included in the next (summer) issue.

As indicated on the ballot, the current Editor of Communications (i.e., myself) is not running for re-election. The Steering Committee requests that anyone interested in being a candidate for the Editorship of Communications contact either me or Marc Silberman as soon as possible. In addition, IBS members who would like to recommend someone for the position of Editor should contact me or Marc Silberman directly (and at your earliest convenience).

Some GOOD news. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-Treasurer, (p. 8), Wake Forest University has agreed to pay for the cost of producing Volume 19 of IBS-Communications up to a limit of \$1500 (the normal budget for two issues). This allows money that would have been spent on the journal to be invested in the Brecht Yearbook (see note below), which is particularly helpful to the IBS given the substantial loss incurred in the production of Volume 14 of the Yearbook. The Editor would like to thank the following persons at Wake Forest University for helping to secure this grant for IBS-Communications: Prof. Larry E. West, Chair, Department of German & Russian; Dean Thomas E. Mullen; and Provost Edwin G. Wilson.

Under Marc Silberman's direction, the Brecht Yearbook is back on track and moving ahead at full steam. This issue contains a detailed report on the status and publication schedule of the Yearbook as well as a listing of the contents of all previous Volumes. Members are encouraged to use this material in promoting the Yearbook and (in particular) for soliciting/regaining institutional members (i.e., library subscriptions!). All questions regarding the Brecht-Yearbook should be directed to Managing Editor Marc Silberman, Dept. of German, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 818 Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706, tel. (608) 262-2192.

Please note the updated announcement for the 8th International Symposium of the IBS on the following page. The IBS has succeeded in obtaining (crucial) support from both the Stadt und Universität Augsburg for

the Symposium and is now searching for a program coordinator. Look for additional details in the next (Summer 1990) issue of Communications.

Finally: I would like to thank my student-aide Caroline Steele for her competent and patient assistance (as well as her knowledge of Spanish!) in preparing this issue of Communications. I am also grateful to Wake Forest University for an upgraded computer system and printer which will enhance the appearance of the journal.

--Michael Gilbert

* * *

ADDENDUM

The Editor regrets the omission of the photo credit for the picture on p. 31 of the last issue (Volume 18, No. 2) of IBS-Communications. The photographer was Mr. Steve Cagan, Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

EDITORIAL DEADLINE FOR COMMUNICATIONS VOL. 19/2: JUNE 1, 1990

PROVISIONAL ANNOUNCEMENT (#2):

E I G H T H I N T E R N A T I O N A L S Y M P O S I U M
O F T H E I N T E R N A T I O N A L B R E C H T S O C I E T Y

"B R E C H T U N D W E I M A R -- R E T H I N K I N G B R E C H T"

A U G S B U R G, W E S T G E R M A N Y

D E C E M B E R 9 - 13, 1 9 9 1

A CALL FOR PAPERS WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE NEXT (SUMMER 1990) ISSUE OF
COMMUNICATIONS.

All inquiries concerning the 8th IBS International Symposium should directed to: Prof. Bernd Mahl, Hainbuchenweg 23, D-7400 Tübingen, FRG tel. 07071/66132.

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

Surely the September 14, 1989 debut of The Threepenny Opera at Washington's National Theater needs to be signaled in our journal as the first viewing of a Brecht work by a President of the U.S. ... and coincidentally, at the same performance, by a Soviet ambassador!

Is Brecht now a classic?

Sting stung by theater critics

WASHINGTON (AP) — Theater critics stung Sting for his stage debut in "The Threepenny Opera," but some in the black-tie audience found the British pop star's performance dazzling.

"Slow and turgid stuff," complained The Washington Post's David Richards, who said Sting's "acting has little resonance and his singing voice is surprisingly thin."

Sting said that President and Mrs. Bush, who watched from box seats above the National Theater stage Thursday night, congratulated him backstage on his performance.

Soviet Ambassador Yuri Dubinin, who joined Bush backstage during an intermission, said he was delighted with the play.

The show is scheduled to open at the Lunt-Fontanne Theater in New York on Nov. 5 after a four-week run at the National.



Sting

Sincerely,

Lee Baxandall
Milwaukee, Wisconsin USA

[Editor's note: The following open letter by Heinz-Uwe Haus (Berlin/GDR) is no longer entirely "current" given the pace of developments in Eastern Europe, but it will undoubtedly be of interest to IBS members. Dr. Haus, recently a guest professor in the Professional Theatre Training Program at the University of Delaware (Newark), requested that it be published in German.]

OFFENER BRIEF ZUM AUßERORDENTLICHEN VDT [VERBAND DER THEATERSCHAFFENDEN]-KONGRESS AM 28./29.1.90

Wenn es der Koalitionsregierung [der DDR] auch in der Kulturpolitik ernst ist mit ihrer gesamtgesellschaftlichen Verantwortung in der Übergangszeit bis zu den freien Wahlen, dann sollte sie sich darauf konzentrieren, durch Abbau von Unterdrückungsmechanismen die notwendigen ersten Schritte für eine ungehinderte und freie Entfaltung in der Kunst und Kultur zu ermöglichen. Auch eine Bestandsaufnahme dringender Probleme wird von der interessierten Öffentlichkeit erwartet. Doch sollten in diesem Zusammenhang alle Versuche unterlassen werden, "Perspektivkonzeptionen" oder "Orientierungen und Entscheidungsvarianten" zu geben.

Das Bemühen des Ministeriums für Kultur z.B. in diesen Wochen, sogenannte "theaterpolitische Leitlinien" anzuempfehlen, birgt die Gefahr in sich,

Strukturen festzumachen noch bevor tatsächlich über das Ausmaß der Veränderung der Gesellschaftsordnung entschieden worden ist.

Die Mehrheit der Theaterschaffenden wird sicher dafür Verständnis, wenn nicht gar den Willen haben, daß zukünftig strategische Konzepte erst nach einer demokratischen Legitimation in die Diskussion und zur Ausführung gebracht werden können. Noch ist offen, für welche Kulturpolitik sich die Wähler am 6. Mai [now March 18] entscheiden und womit die neue Regierung beauftragt wird. Noch gibt es auch keine demokratisch legitimierten Interessenvertreter der Theaterschaffenden. Jetzt im Bunde mit dem Theaterverband (VdT), der nachweislich nicht nur im Oktober 1989 handlungsunfähig war, sondern ohnehin keine Basis in den Theatern hat, Festlegungen für die Theaterarbeit zu treffen, ist meines Erachtens politisch unverantwortlich.

Ob nach den Wahlen (nur vereinzelt oder schon wieder verbindlich) so wendig gedacht wird, wie es ein Verbandsfunktionär (in Theater der Zeit 1/90, 35) nicht lassen kann--"Wichtig wird, wie sich die besten und linken Kräfte unseres Theaters sammeln, um den Sozialismus gegen rechtsnationale und linkskonservative Tendenzen auch weiter zu verteidigen ... Die Theaterleute der DDR bringen ein bedeutendes Potential in diese Prozesse ein, ihre Tradition ist und bleibt ein revolutionäres, auf Änderung der Umstände und auf Parteinahme für den Fortschritt und den Sozialismus zielendes Theater"--bleibt erst noch abzuwarten.

Sicher hingegen scheint mir, daß nach Jahren der Sinnentleerung und Stagnation, woran auch dieser Verband aktiv Anteil hat, nicht eingehend genug geprüft werden kann, wofür ein "Theater des Antifaschismus, der Solidarität, des Antirassismus, des Antidespotismus und Antiimperialismus" reklamiert wird.

Dr. Heinz-Uwe Haus
Newark, Delaware USA
den 17. Januar 1990

Das Berliner Ensemble hat die streitbare
Friedenstaube des Picasso zu seinem Wahrzeichen
genommen: Stätte des Wissens um die menschliche
Natur, der gesellschaftlichen Impulse und der
Unterhaltung.



Bertolt Brecht, 1951

++ Künstler mit Brecht für den Fortschritt ++ Künstler mit Brecht ++

Flugblatt

OKTOBER 1989

Mit Freude nehmen die Mitarbeiter des Brecht-Zentrums der DDR den Vorschlag auf, einen Dialog über den Bestand und die Weiterentwicklung des Sozialismus in der DDR zu führen. Nach Brechts Meinung, die er bereits 1930 aufschrieb, ist „wirklicher Fortschritt nicht Fortgeschrittensein, sondern Fortschreiten“. Er fährt fort: „Wirklicher Fortschritt hat als Ursache die Unhaltbarkeit eines wirklichen Zustandes und als Folge seine Veränderung.“ Aus Überzeugung, daß eine solche dialektische Auffassung für Marxisten die einzig mögliche ist, möchten wir uns an dem öffentlich ausgerufenen Dialog beteiligen.

note veröffentlicht in dem Flugblatt Texte von Bertolt Brecht und Volker Braun sowie einen offenen Brief der Mitarbeiter des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs der Akademie der Künste der DDR, dem sich die Mitarbeiter und Mitarbeiterinnen des Brecht-Zentrums der DDR angeschlossen haben.



Auch die Kunst muß in dieser Zeit der Entscheidung sich entscheiden. Sie kann sich zum Instrument einiger weniger machen, die für die vielen die Schicksalgötter spielen und einen Glauben verlangen, der vor allem blind zu sein hat, und sie kann sich auf die Seite der vielen stellen und ihr Schicksal in ihre eigenen Hände legen. Sie kann die Menschen den Rauschzuständen, Illusionen und Wundern ausliefern, und sie kann den Menschen die Welt ausliefern. Sie kann die Unwissenheit vergrößern, und sie kann das Wissen vergrößern. Sie kann an die Gewalten appellieren, die ihre Kraft beim Zerstören beweisen, und an die Gewalten, die ihre Kraft beim Helfen beweisen.

Bertolt Brecht, um 1949



An alle, die hierbleiben wollen

In Anlehnung an Bertolt Brechts „Offenen Brief an die deutschen Künstler und Schriftsteller“ vom 26. September 1951 schlagen wir unseren Mitbürgerinnen und Mitbürgern vor, in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik für die Verwirklichung folgender Rechte einzutreten:

1. Völlige Freiheit für Literatur, Künste und Wissenschaften – mit einer Einschränkung.
2. Völlige Freiheit für Presse und elektronische Medien – mit einer Einschränkung.
3. Völlige Freiheit für vorhandene und zu bildende Organe und Organisationen jeder Art – mit einer Einschränkung.
4. Völlige Freiheit für Willensbekundungen der Bürgerinnen und Bürger in der Öffentlichkeit – mit einer Einschränkung.

Die Einschränkung: Keine Freiheit für Schriften, Kunstwerke, Pressebeiträge, Sendungen, Organe, Organisationen und Willensbekundungen,

- die den Krieg verherrlichen oder als unvermeidbar hinstellen,
- die den Haß auf andere Völker, Rassen, Glaubensgemeinschaften und auf Menschen mit anderen weltanschaulichen und politischen Auffassungen fördern,
- die physische Gewalt gegen Menschen androhen, anwenden oder ihre Anwendung propagieren,
- die die gegenwärtigen Grenzen in Europa in Frage stellen,
- die die Grundvoraussetzungen eines demokratischen und sozialistischen Gemeinwesens beseitigen wollen.

Was zu den Grundvoraussetzungen des demokratischen und sozialistischen deutschen Staates gehört, muß von uns allen bestimmt und entschieden werden.

Berlin,
12. Oktober 1989

Die Mitarbeiter des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs
der Akademie der Künste der DDR

NOMINATION FORM--1990 IBS ELECTIONS

It is time to elect a new set of officers for next biennium (1990-1992) Current officers NOT standing for reelection are IBS President Antony Tatlow and Communications Editor Michael Gilbert.

PLEASE take a moment to think carefully about this election. The IBS is at a crucial juncture (financially and otherwise) and needs active, competent leadership to sustain the standards it has upheld in the past and build the organization. All nominees will be contacted by Secretary-Treasurer Ward B. Lewis before their names are placed on the election ballot which will be included in the next (Summer 1990) issue of IBS-Communications (the ballot will also include short statements solicited from the nominees).

The deadline for receipt of nominations by the Secretary-Treasurer is MAY 15, 1990.

NOMINATION FORM, 1990 IBS ELECTIONS

President	
Vice-President	John Rouse
Secretary-Treasurer	Ward B. Lewis
<u>Communications</u> Editor*	

(*see Editor's note,
p. 2 of this issue)

N.B. The new Managing Editor of the Brecht-Yearbook (not an elected position) is Marc Silberman, University of Wisconsin-Madison (see the Yearbook report in this issue.)

MAIL THIS NOMINATION SHEET AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO:

Prof. Ward B. Lewis
Dept. of Germanic & Slavic Languages
University of Georgia
202 Meigs Hall
Athens, Georgia 30602/USA

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I B S O F F I C E R S ' R E P O R T S

IBS FINANCIAL REPORT (through November 30, 1989)

November 30, 1989	May 31, 1989
receipts: 7,158.50	
disbursements: 3,919.55	
balance: 3,238.95	balance: 4,450.09
Deutsche Bank Düsseldorf Konto-Nr. 7674146	
DM 935,24	DM 937,90

The IBS incurred a substantial loss of \$3,250. to the Visual Press at the University of Maryland. That really hurts, but additional (re)-printing expenses for Volume 14 of the Brecht Yearbook in Hong Kong will be manageable for a number of reasons: Wake Forest University, in recognition of Michael Gilbert's work as Editor of Communications, has pledged its support toward the expenses of printing and mailing the journal for one year. This amounts to about \$1500. In addition, four individuals have made personal donations totaling \$600.

The IBS is incorporated in the State of Maryland as a non-profit organization. And that it certainly is. This status does not mean, however, that the IBS is recognized as tax-exempt by the Internal Revenue Service, as was widely thought to be the case. Steps have been taken to gain this recognition, and an attorney and an accountant have contributed their time to the task. On May 10, 1989 the IRS submitted its "Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax" and we were assured of receiving tax-exempt status before August 25. This is, however, still forthcoming.

Membership statistics as of January 10, 1990:

USA/Canadian members -- 106

USA/Canadian institutions -- 39

Foreign members -- 23

Foreign institutions -- 14

TOTAL -- 182

VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT
(John Rouse)

My major news is a happy announcement: last August the IBS was elected an Associate Member of the Forum of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE). The Forum, as I reported last time, is the organization of interest groups and study areas within ATHE. Our Associate Member status gives us rights similar to those we enjoy with MLA; basically, we can mount as many panels as we want at ATHE conferences and hold business meetings. We can also announce calls for papers for both the ATHE and MLA as well as other news in our own section of the ATHE NEWS.

While our application was pending, we co-sponsored a panel with Theory and Criticism--one of the Forum members; there's a report on the panel elsewhere in this issue of Communications. Since then, about fifteen ATHE members have expressed interest in joining the IBS, and I hope we can involve them and more people in programming, at least at ATHE. However, it's more important than ever that anyone interested in theatre studies join ATHE and let me know that they've done so. To join, write ATHE, c/o Theatre Service, P.O. Box 15282, Evansville IN 47716 and request a membership application. This year's ATHE conference will be August 8-11 in Chicago; the 1991 conference will be August 7-11 in Seattle (see the "ATHE Report" in this issue). I badly need help in providing programming for 1991; it's too late for this summer. Please contact me if you have any suggestions.

Speaking of programming: We've finally managed to plan ahead for the MLA. We have topics for both 1990 sessions; see the announcements under "MLA Reports" in this issue. I also have two tentative requests for 1991 (!), so anyone who wants to suggest a panel topic must contact me soon. You don't need to have speakers lined up; I just want to hear ideas at this stage.

Next: We held our annual IBS business meeting at the MLA in December. For only the second time, we scheduled this as a Committee Meeting rather than squeezing it onto the end of a panel. We'll keep on doing this, so please remember to look in the list of "Allied Organization Meetings" in your MLA programs. Most of the meeting was devoted to the discussion of future Yearbook topics (see the Yearbook Report in this issue). In other business, we agreed that we need a new membership brochure; Patty Lee Parmelee will finish a proposed design by c. the end of January. We also discussed the ever-present need to increase our membership. The new Yearbook publication schedule should help, and we plan to actively recruit (and re-recruit) institutional members once the second new volume (Volume 15) comes out. We also hope to recruit new members during the 1991 International Symposium and have asked people auf Reisen to Japan (Darko Suvin) and Germany (John Rouse) to explore all possibilities. Anyone with travel plans who would like to try something similar should contact me.

Finally--I may be reached at the following temporary address until the end of August 1990: bei Föner, Goethestraße 82, D-1000 Berlin 12.

THE BRECHT YEARBOOK

The International Brecht Society has now shifted to desk-top publishing of the Yearbook. VOLUME 14 (1989) is the first volume to be completed in this format and was sent to all paid-up members in December 1989. Brecht in Asia and Africa contains papers from the 7th Symposium of the International Brecht Society, held in Hong Kong in December 1986. Seventeen articles survey Brecht productions and reception in China, Japan, Pakistan, India, Thailand, the Philippines, the Republic of South Africa, and Nigeria. It is an attractive volume of over 200 pages including photos from performances at the Hong Kong Symposium, book reviews, and abstracts of each article.

VOLUME 15 (1990) is now in the final stages of editing and will be sent to members in Spring 1990. Entitled Essays/Versuche, it includes provocative articles on Brecht's sources, on theoretical issues concerning the Epic Theater, and on interpreting Brecht's plays and poetry. Among the many contributors are Fritz Hennenberg, Jost Hermand, Hans-Harald Müller, Janelle Reinel, John Rouse, Darko Suvin, Carl Weber, and Clas Zilliacus. The volume concludes with reviews of recent books of interest to Brecht scholars and theater people by--among others--Albrecht Dümmling, Martin Esslin, Gilbert Badia, and Joachim Lucchesi.

VOLUME 16 is now in the planning phase and will be published in Spring 1991. The topic is "Revolution 1989: Whither Brecht?/Wohin Brecht?" and will focus primarily on where Brecht fits into the momentous changes now taking place in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (see announcement on the following pages). Directors, artists, actors, and scholars are invited to (re-)consider the role of Brecht's writings, theoretical reflections, and theater practice in the context of the major ideological and political shifts of the past year. In particular, those who have been or are active in the socialist democracies are invited to communicate their thoughts in any form that seems adequate: essays, literary pieces, drawings, etc. Interviews with theater people who have been involved with or are planning Brecht productions are welcome as well. Finally, the Yearbook editors would appreciate any contacts with scholars or theater people in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that IBS members may be able to facilitate. Deadline for submissions is October 1, 1990.

Marc Silberman is the new Managing Editor of the Brecht Yearbook. All questions and contributions to the Yearbook should be sent to:

Prof. Marc Silberman
German Department, University of Wisconsin
818 Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Drive
Madison, WI 53706 USA
Tel. 608/262-2192

THE BRECHT YEARBOOK/DAS BRECHT JAHRBUCH
VOLUME 14: "BRECHT IN ASIA AND AFRICA"

Editors: John Fuegi, Renate Voris, Carl Weber, Marc Silberman

Assisted by: Karin Reisser, Anne Voorhoeve (Associate Editors);
Kourosh Betsarkis, Bianca Raber

Consulting

Editor/Design: Antony Tatlow

CONTENTS:

Introduction (Antony Tatlow)

Establishing the General Terrain

Huang Zuolin: "A Brief Account of Brechtian Reception in China"

Senda Korea: "Greetings from Japan"

Antony Tatlow: "The Context of Change in East Asian Theatre"

Antony Tatlow: "Brecht and the Paradigm Change" (Keynote Address,
7th International Symposium, Hong Kong)

Carl Weber: "Brecht is at Home in Asia"

Brecht and China

Chen Yong: "Brecht and the Current Transformation of the Theatre
in China"

Xue Dianjie: "Brecht's Drama and the Modern Chinese Stage"

Li Jianming: "Brecht and the Chinese Theatre in the Eighties"

Wolfram Schlenker: "Paradigmenwechsel--auch in China: Neue Chancen
für Brecht auch auf chinesischen Bühnen"

Li Jiayao: "Characteristics of Narration: Brecht and Pingtan"

Brecht and Japan

Iwabuchi Tatsuji: "Brecht Rezeption in Japan aus dem Aspekt der
Theaterpraxis"

Brecht and Pakistan

Miriam Dessaive: "Brecht in Pakistan"

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Brecht in India

V. Dalmia-Lüderitz: "Brecht in Hindi: The Poetics of Response"

Brecht in Thailand

Chetana Nagavajara: "Brecht's Relevance--A Thai Perspective"

Brecht and the Phillipines

M.L.F. Torres: "Anticipating Freedom in Theatre"

Brecht and Africa

Astrid von Kotze: "First World Industry and Third World Workers--
The Struggle for a Workers' Theatre in South Africa"

Sandra Richards: "Wasn't Brecht an African Writer?"

(plus Book Reviews)

THE BRECHT YEARBOOK/DAS BRECHT JAHRBUCH VOLUME 15 (PROSPECTUS)

Fritz Hennenberg: "Bruinier and Brecht. Nachrichten über den
ersten Brecht-Komponisten"

Jost Hermand: "Vom schonenden Umgang mit schönen Dingen: Einer von
Brechts Vorschlägen zur Lebenskunst"

Carl Weber: "Vaudeville's Children and Brecht. The Impact of Amer-
ican Performance Traditions on Brecht's Theory and Practice"

Clas Zilliacus: "Hamlet, Brecht and Besson"

Shuhsi Kao: "Brecht et l'Autre chinois"

Janelle Reinelt: "Rethinking Brecht--Deconstruction, Feminism, and
the Politics of Form"

John Rouse: "Brecht and the Question of the Audience"

Barton Byg: "History Lessons: Brecht's Caesar Novel and the Film
by Straub/Huillet"

Hans-Harald Müller: "Brecht and Logical Positivism"

Patricia Anne Simpson: "Revolutionary Reading: The Circulation of
Truth in Brecht's Leben des Galilei"

Darko Suvin: "Brecht's Parable of Heavenly Food: Life of Galileo"

(plus Book Reviews)

REVOLUTION 1989:

Whither Brecht? / Brecht wohin?

The editors of The Brecht Yearbook invite submissions to Volume 16, scheduled for publication in Spring 1991. The topic will focus primarily on responses from stage directors, actors, writers, artists, and scholars concerning the impact on their work of recent developments in the Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union. In particular, where does Brecht fit in?

The momentous political events we have witnessed in 1989 also have repercussions for cultural practices. For those who consider Brecht's writings, theoretical reflections, and theater work to be a crucial contribution to changing the world, this situation raises a number of pertinent questions:

- does the change in climate affect our relation to Brecht?
- what is the relation of Brecht to Glasnost and Perestroika?
- do the shifts in ideology and political power cast Brecht in a new light?
- do we need to rethink Brecht's commitment and context?
- do we need to reevaluate our own past work on Brecht?

The editors encourage submissions in any form that seems adequate to communicate the issues we are addressing: essays, literary pieces, drawings, etc. Interviews with theater people who have been involved with or are planning Brecht productions are welcome as well. Finally, the Yearbook editors would appreciate help in facilitating contacts with scholars or theater people in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union who may be interested in cooperating with this project.

The Brecht Yearbook is published by The International Brecht Society. All questions and all material to be considered for publication should be sent no later than October 1, 1990, to the Yearbook's Managing Editor:

Marc Silberman
German Department
University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI 53706 USA
Tel. (608) 262-2192

BRECHT YEARBOOK

BRECHT-JAHRBUCH

BRECHT TODAY/BRECHT HEUTE, Vol. 1, 1971, eds. Eric Bentley, John Fuegi, Reinhold Grimm, Jost Hermand, Walter Hinck, John Spalek, and Ulrich Weisstein (Frankfurt/M.: Athenäum, 1971).
[no holdable copies]

Edward M. Beckman: The Function of Hope in Brecht's Pre-revolutionary Theater
Antony Tatlow: China oder Chima
Mordecai Gorelik: Rational Theater
Walter Hinck: Die Kamera als Soziologie
Leroy R. Shaw: The Morality of Combat: Brecht's Search for a Sparring Partner
Herbert Knust: Brechts Fischzug
Guy Stern: The Plight of the Exile: A Hidden Theme in Brecht's *Galileo Galilei*
Jost Hermand: Herr Puntilla und sein Knecht Matti
John Fuegi: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in Performance
Lee Baxandall: The Americanization of Brecht
Dirk Grathoff: Dichtung Versus Politik: Brechts *Coriolan* aus Günter Grassens Sicht
Andrzej Wirth: Brecht und Grotowski
Julian H. Wulbern: Ideology and Theory in Context

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Ernst Schumacher: Brecht und seine Bedeutung für die Gesellschaft der siebziger Jahre
John Willett: The Poet Beneath the Skin
Michael Morley: Invention Breeds Invention: Brecht's Chronicle of the Dialectical Principle in Action
Dorothee Söller: Dialektik und Didaktik in Brechts Keunergeschichten
Wolfgang Roth: Working with Bertolt Brecht
David Bathrick: "Anschauungsmaterial" for Marx: Brecht Returns to *Trommeln in der Nacht*
Frank K. Borchardt: Marx, Engels and Brecht's *Galileo*
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Norbert Schachtsiek-Freitag: Bertolt Brechts Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Hörspiels
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Lew Kopelew: Brecht und die russische Theaterrevolution
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Günther Stark und Günther Weisenborn: *Die Mutter* nach Gorki [Notes by Emma Lewis Thomas]
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Fred Fischbach: L'Evolution politique de B.B.
Karl-Heinz Schoeps: Bertolt Brecht and George Bernard Shaw
Charlotte Koerner: Das Verfahren der Verfremdung in Brechts früher Lyrik
Antony Tatlow: The Hermit and the Politician: On the Translation of Chinese Poetry
Jack Zipes: An Interview with Peter Stein
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Siegfried Unseld: "Seine Verleger hatten es nicht leicht mit ihm"
Michael Morley: Zu zwei Bücherlisten Brechts aus den fünfziger Jahren
Nick Wilkinson: *Mutter Courage* in West Afrika
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Jost Hermand: Mit der *Mother* auf Tournee

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Hans Joachim Schrimpf: Brecht und der Naturalismus. Zur *Biberpelz*-Bearbeitung
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Alexander Stephan: Georg Lukács' erste Beiträge zur marxistischen Literaturtheorie
Gerhard Seidel: Datenspeicher Bertolt Brecht. Bibliographie als Prozeß und System
James K. Lyon (Hrsg.): Der Briefwechsel zwischen Brecht und der New Yorker Theater Union von 1935
David Bathrick: Ein Ui kommt nach Cicero
Monica Olson: *Galilei* in Schweden
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Renate Fischetti: Über die Grenzen der List oder Der gescheiterte Dreigroschenfilm.
Anmerkungen zu Brechts Exposé *Die Beule*
Boris Singerman: Brechts *Dreigroschenoper*. Zur Ästhetik der Montage
Gunter G. Sehm: Moses, Christus und Paul Ackermann. Brechts *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*
Wend Kässens/Michael Töteberg: "... fast schon ein Auftrag von Brecht". Marieluise Fleißers Drama *Pioniere in Ingolstadt*
Betty Nance Weber: Marxismus, Brecht, Gesamtkunstwerk
Klaus Bohnen: Die *Gewehre der Frau Carrar*. Beobachtungen zum Stück und zu einer dänischen Aufführung
Giuseppe Bevilacqua: Zwei italienische Brecht-Inszenierungen
Heinz-Uwe Haus: Der zyprische *Kreidekreis*
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Gerlinde Wellmann-Bretzigheimer: Brechts Gedicht "Als ich im weißen Krankenzimmer der Charité". Die Hilfe des Sozialismus zur Überwindung der Todesfurcht
Eckhard Köhn: Das *Ruhrepos*. Dokumentation eines gescheiterten Projekts

Stephan Bock: Chronik zu Brechts *Garbe/Büsching*-Projekt und Käthe Rühlickes Bio-Interview
Hans Garbe erzählt sowie zu andere Bearbeitungen des Garbe-Stoffs von 1949 bis 1954
Uta Olivieri-Treder: Geziemendes über Brecht und Kafka
Marianne Kesting: Wagner/Meyerhold/Brecht oder Die Erfindung des 'epischen' Theaters
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Jost Hermand: Brecht-Winter in West-Berlin
Marilyn K. Torbruegge: *Turandot* in Columbus
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Margarete N. Deschner: Hella Wuolijokis Puntila-Geschichte. Ein Vor-Brechtsches Dokument
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 Interview with *Manfred Wekwerth* [Aufgezeichnet von *John Fuegi*]
Jost Hermand: Deutsche fressen Deutsche. Heiner Müllers *Die Schlacht* an der Ostberliner Volksbühne
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Katherine B. Eaton: *Die Pionierin und Feld-Herren* vorm *Kreidekreis*. Bemerkungen zu Brecht und Tretjakow
Röswitha Trexler [unter Mitarbeit von *Fritz Hennenberg*]: Was der Sänger von Brecht lernen kann oder Meine Auffassung von Kurt Weill
Roland Jost: *Panem et circenses?* Bertolt Brecht und der Sport
Rolf J. Goebel: Brechts *Dreigroschenroman* und die Tradition des Kriminalromans
Rainer Stollmann: Der Faschismus und das Private. Eine Analyse des *Anton Sittlinger* von Oskar Maria Graf
Volker Tetz: Trommeln in der Boettcherstraße
Margaret E. Ward: Eine *Brecht-Fibel* für Neuengland
Frank Trommler: Tom O'Horgan inszeniert *Arturo Ui* für La Mama
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Hans-Thies Lehmann/Helmut Lethen: Verworfenes Denken. Zu Reinhold Grimms Essay "Brecht und Nietzsche oder Geständnisse eines Dichters"

Christoph Trilse: Über Sprache im Theater oder Drama in der Sprache. Einige kritische Überlegungen, durch Brecht-Aufführungen angeregt
Arnold Blumer: "Die große Gangsterschau" in Kapstadt
Klaus Bohnen: Naivität bei Brecht? Aus Anlaß der Kopenhagener Erstaufführung von *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*
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Christakis Georgiow: A Letter From Cyprus
Heinz-Uwe Haus: Theaterspiel als Vorgriff und Aneignung von Lebenspraxis
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Kasimierz Braun: Modern Acting Theory and Practice
Luigi Squarzina: Brecht and Breughel: Mannerism and the Avant-garde
David Pike: Brecht and Stalin's Russia: The Victim as Apologist (1931-1945)
Patty Lee Parmalee: Brecht's Americanism and His Politics
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Sarah Bryant-Bertail: Women, Space, Ideology: *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*
Sue-Ellen Case: Brecht and Women: Homosexuality and the Mother
Renate Voris: Inszenierte Ehrlichkeit: Bertolt Brechts 'Weibergeschichten'
Joel Schlechter: Lotte Goslar's *Circus Scene*
Reinhard Hoffmeister: Im Gespräch mit Marta Feuchtwanger
John Willett: Bacon ohne Shakespeare?—The Problem of Mitarbeit
Heinz-Uwe Haus: In Memoriam Asja Lacis
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Volker Lilienthal: Journalisten als Kopflange—Aktualität und Nutzen von Bertolt Brechts Tui-Kritik
David Z. Mairowitz: Brecht's Women: A Synopsis/Proposal
Michael Morley: I. Future Fields of Brecht Scholarship
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Bernard Reich: Aus dem Nachlaß
Harris L. Gruman: The *Piscator-Kollektio*: Form and Content in the Political Theater
David Roberts: Brecht and the Idea of Scientific Theater
Carl Weber: The Actor and Brecht, Or: The Truth is Concrete: Some Notes on Directing Brecht with American Actors
John Rouse: Brecht and the Art of Scenic Writing
Maria Lima: ATINT Symposium "Brecht in Latin America"
Nancy C. Michael: The Affinities of Adaptation: The Artistic Relationship between Brecht's *Coriolan* and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*

MLA REPORT

MLA 1990: Chicago, IL

MLA 1991: San Francisco, CA

MLA 1989: Washington, DC

1989 MLA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY REPORT

In the matter of convention programming arrangements for Allied Organizations such as the IBS (cf. Communications 18/2, pp. 8-10), the following compromise decision was reached:

In the future, the MLA Convention program will be extended by three hours at the beginning and/or end of the traditional Convention schedule (December 27, 7:00 p.m. to December 30, 1:15) to accomodate a second sessions proposed by Allied Organizations. One session during "prime-time" remains guaranteed.

The Delegate Assembly also approved the new guidelines for affiliation and review--a matter of continued concern to the IBS.

1989 MLA-IBS SESSIONS

SESSION 1: "Is There a Brechtian Semiology?" (Summary Report)

Three papers were delivered. Jim Carmody discussed Roland Barthes' tendency across several writings to prefer the "still" to the movement of images and explored the consequences both for Barthes' own work and for theatre semiotics, which often demonstrates a tendency to discuss performance as a series of tableaux. Renate Voris developed a semiological hermeneutic, in particular examining Brecht's practice of making meaning by creating a montage of properties from different cultural systems with the bodies of the actors--a montage through which the characters' social identities are structured. John Rouse borrowed a notion of Patrice Pavis that Brecht stops "at the very threshold of postmodernism" to ground a discussion of the degree to which the postmodern view back through the threshold illuminates Brecht's modernism, his theatre of the sign, but also rebounds to illuminate the tensions between that theatre and a theatre of the signifier. The papers were followed by a brief but lively discussion, which included a feisty warning from Darko Suvin against an overly loving reliance on French Theory in constituting a semiotics of theatre, let alone a Brechtian semiotics.

--John Rouse

Paper Abstract: "The Politics of Form"
John Rouse, Tulane University

Brecht's was a theatre of the sign, still predicated on the meaning to be produced by the theatrical enunciation. It was precisely because Brecht remained committed to the content of the enunciation that he experimented so radically with the theatrical signifier. But this experimentation has over the past ten years been reexamined by a theatre of the signifier, in which the theatrical enunciation cannot be bound finally to a signified. This difference highlights the degree to which a struggle over the semiological use of the stage has become central, even definitive, to the differences between theatrical modernism and postmodernism.

Brecht used his concept of Fabel to bind sign with meaning: the Fabel is at once the signified of the narrative and specific narration of the story's events, a narration carried out through all the signifying systems of theatrical performance under the control of a text that, in performance, can no longer be separated from its enunciation of these systems. Here, on the very threshold of postmodernism, text and theatre can no longer easily be analyzed in separation. From a point of view on the other side of the threshold, ten years of a production practice where text becomes a supplement to theatre have revealed the degree to which, for Brecht, theater remains, finally, a supplement to text. But the look back at Brecht behind the threshold--that is, beyond it on another side--reflects back the degree to which the theatre has, for whatever space of time being, lost the power to speak the world by seizing the power to speak itself.

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

Underneath the rule discover the abuse.
--Brecht

Within the staging by the IBS of an interdisciplinary debate on the question "Is There a Brechtian Semiology," my paper intends to approach the subject not by attending to it on a global scale, homologizing Brecht's activities into some kind of organic ensemble of knowledge and technical skills. Instead, it wants to address the question by studying one specific element only of a Brechtian mise-en-scène: Gestus.

The term Gestus, english gest, derives from the theatre (gesture proper) and contains its opposite, gist, belonging to the discourse of law (grounds for action in a suit; in German, Grundgestus). Brecht's central artistic principal, Gestus, weaves the two together: the discourse of the body and the discourse of law. Its intersection occurs, literally, in the performer (from perform, to carry out in due form), a body, so to speak "in recess," since the performer's space (as well as the spectator's!) is "in-between" spaces (inside/outside) and "in-between" times (past/future); her space is the borderline (Rampe), her time is the present. Hence, the concept

of Gestus functions as the third term within the logic of antitheses organizing the discourse on drama and theatre since the 18th century (verbal/visual, actor/spectator, stage/auditorium, theatre/world, etc. as well as body/language, concrete/abstract, knowledge/pleasure, etc.). "Der Schauspieler ... zeigt Gesten," Brecht reminds his readers, "welche sozusagen die Sitten und Gebräuche des Körpers sind" (GW, 17:997), and it not without meaning that he calls the ostension of the actor's body on stage "die Verleiblichung von Ideen" (GW, 15:47). Thus, in a single gesture of his poetics, Brecht insists on a certain "formalism" by which he means the deliberate and self-conscious orchestration of theatrical signifiers--linguistic and non-linguistic--in order to distance the signifier from the signified, the sign from the referent, and thus de-naturalize "received truths," to challenge what is perceived "natural" (poverty, for instance), to uncover the confusion and to discover abuses.

The chief concern in Brecht's writings are "relations" (functions), as opposed to substances. Discover the relation between ideas, things, thoughts, "characters," demands Brecht again and again. Isn't that the essence of a dramaturgical imagination? And of semiological activity? Following Roland Barthes, I define semiology very loosely as the study of signs and the relationship between them, with the aim to understand the laws--the ensemble of social as well as discursive laws of a certain epoch--that govern their interaction and produce meaning. The question that moves my work on Brecht is how his obsession with the body, with the duplicious body--its scenic realization being Gestus--is related to Brecht's use of literary and non-literary fragments in terms of implied models of history, language, and subjectivity. My thesis is that the category Gestus functions to displace a theoretical model (Marxism) onto a poetological one. The consequence of this move is dazzling: it renounces all dogmatism. Thus, Brecht's theatre should never be read as a "priestly" discourse (as Marxist dogma), as is often done by the scholarly literature, since in the theatre, as in any text, the origin of the speech-act cannot be located (s. Barthes, "Brecht and Discourse").

I take my evidence from The Threepenny Opera, analyzing its verbal and visual structure (in terms of thematics, aesthetics, and pragmatics), with the aid of an image from the Opera's 1928 production (a sketch by Caspar Neher and a reproduction of the Opera's final scene were handed to the audience at the MLA). I want to show (1) that the meaning of the Opera is not to be found in the relation of the words to the "world" (Weimar Germany), but in that constant relation woven between the words ("characters") by verbal and visual signs; (2) that the structure of the Opera can be reduced to the opposition between poverty and pleasure; that the subject of the Opera is poverty and the making of poverty; that together they are, paradoxically, the source of the Opera's pleasure; (3) that the revolutionary movement of The Threepenny Opera is not the representation of poverty on stage (since it has been a topos of the theatre at least since the drama of Sturm und Drang), but that the revolutionary aspect is its "formalism," the strategy to tie "poverty" to form, to aesthetics, and not just to content, to ideology. Walter Benjamin once wrote that if one wanted to summarize Brecht's oeuvre with one word, it would have to be poverty. What he means by that is not the obvious--hunger, suffering--but, I think, a certain "poverty of language." To clarify that notion, it might help to compare a Brechtian mise-en-scène to Erwin Piscator's, Brecht's great contemporary in the theatre of

Weimar Germany. Piscator and Brecht shared the concern with "the poor," the abused. Yet while Piscator virtually celebrated the subject through the use of an extra-ordinarily elaborate and expensive technology, Brecht, say, mourns it, in a language that resembles patchwork. Look at the image of the Opera's final scene: nothing but scraps, the waste products of industrialization: bits and pieces strung together from different cultural, social, and economic systems--from high drama and low comedy, opera and cabaret, film and painting, the domestic (die gute Stube) and the economic (the warehouse), etc. The dis-junctive arrangement pulls a dis-membered spectator on stage, one who seems at home everywhere and therefore nowhere. In other words, Brecht's theatre, in contrast to Piscator's, does not intend to put the "world" on stage. Instead, he wants to put a certain reading of the "world" on stage, including his own of course, in order to uncover time and history in the object itself--a mise-en-scène, the language of the body--Brecht's Gestus--a hat, a spotlight, etc., using methods inspired by semiology: "Das eine verstanden durch das andere (die Szene, im Sinn zunächst selbständig, wird durch ihren Zusammenhang mit andern Szenen noch als eines andern Sinns teilhaftig entdeckt)," he writes (GW, 15:361). Consequently, reading Brecht's theatre requires--Brecht himself said it a thousand times--a reading of the sign "twice over," a "double gaze" of sehen and of einsehen: the object inscribed in the subject/the subject inscribed in the object, or, to speak semiologically: to re-cognize the body's inscription in language/the inscription of language in the body, simultaneously: that is the essence of Brecht's concept of Gestus.

The implication for The Threepenny Opera is that whatever the ostensible subject may be, its chief concern is the (bourgeois) discourse on "the poor" itself, which is put on stage and torn to pieces, to be linked again by the most formal of aesthetic operations: rhythm. Organized around the duplicitous beggar-gangster-figure, it speaks almost exclusively of eating, drinking, joking, loving, and dancing (Macheath and Jenny)--pleasures of the body, reserved in his time almost entirely for the bourgeois middle class. The collision of signs exposes history in the form of a lack, a lack of a name for those who have historically been denied access to pleasure, access to knowledge, to power--"the poor." That category did exist in Weimar Germany, associated always however with the name "beggar," "thief," "whore." Thus, the relation between language and reality, at least as shown in The Threepenny Opera, is viewed woefully dis-junctive at best.

Thus, it is not without meaning that the "characters'" speech is dis-junctive as well. All of them seem "multi-lingual," Macheath for instance, who sounds like Al Capone at times, at other times like Schiller's Karl Moor, then again like the entertainer Hans Albers; when faced with death he jumps into the rhetoric of politicians ("Ladies and Gentlemen"), when taking his leave he speaks the discourse of a social and economic scientist (Scene 9), etc. This mixing of codes whose rule, again, in rhythm, has the effect of a multiple personality and of constant lying. Paradoxically, though, it offers the possibility of truth, namely that Macheath may not at all be the one "we" take him to be.

Thus, in contrast to Piscator, Brecht takes the means to represent history from the medium itself, language/theatre, strings its acoustical and optical signs together in a way that refuses final truths, fixed identities, and stable meanings, especially, since his mise-en-scène (text) refuses to

hide the seams, holes, tears, insists on their presence within the system. Like the offensive rag (textile) that has entered theatre history under the name of Brecht-Gardine. Not by accident does it associate a different "rag:" the "veil," which has served, at least since Goethe ("Der Dichtung Schleier, aus der Hand der Wahrheit"), as the symbol for the classical notion of art (truth).

That is the idea. Brecht's category of Gestus forms a paradigm them which unites his crucial intention to a true theatre, so that the proposition's evidence results not from sermon or argument but from the theatrical act itself (s. Barthes).

Paper Abstract:
"Describing the 'Scenic' in Scenic Writing:
Theatre, Photography, and the Analysis of Detail"

Jim Carmody, University of California-San Diego

Photography enables us to study *mise en scène* as a text, as an écriture scénique. However, such a study is complicated by the nature of the photographic medium itself. Almost from its invention, photography has been understood to function as both a medium of notation and of construction. That is, photography both reflects reality "as we know it" and creates new possibilities of seeing what has hitherto remained invisible. Brecht's experiments furnish a useful case study of the problems associated with using photography to study *mise en scène*.

Brecht used photography extensively in rehearsal to isolate and study details that would otherwise remain "invisible" in the flow of stage action. He also incorporated large numbers of photographs in his model books in an attempt to suggest suitable ways of staging his plays. Many of these photographs, however, became in time detached from the modelbook context and came to represent Brecht's visual style. As a result, individuals saw in them a catalogue of gestures and tableaux that constituted a Brechtian rhetoric of the stage whose figures they could adapt to their own uses. Thus, along with describing specific moments of staging, the photographs of the modelbooks constructed a Brechtian scenic language along with a Brechtian way of seeing--quite literally, they taught theatre artists to see in a way they had never seen before.

In his 1959 article "Seven Photo Models of Mother Courage," Roland Barthes reproduces a group of seven photographs taken by a photojournalist during the Berliner Ensemble's second visit to Paris in the 1950s. Barthes reproduces these photographs as a means of pointing to the importance of detail in Brecht's *mise en scène*. He also suggests that the existence of these photographs offers new possibilities for theatre criticism. It is therefore surprising that Barthes attempts no discussion of these photographs themselves. This silence can perhaps be understood from the perspective of Barthes' later theories of obvious and obtuse meaning, elaborated in The Third Meaning (1970), and of the studium and the punctum, which he discusses in Camera Lucida (1980). These later theories suggest that the subjectivity of the viewer unavoidably contaminates the study of photographic detail in

either a referential or rhetorical context. Thus, while photography may offer the kind of analytical opportunities suggested by Barthes, its technological value for a semiotics of mise en scène cannot escape being compromised by the semiotics of photography itself.

SESSION 2: "Pedagogy of the Oppressed: Freire and Brecht"
Participants: Judith Weiss, Darko Suvin

Paper Abstract:
"Brecht: Bearing, Pedagogy, Productivity"
Darko Suvin, McGill University

The concept of Haltung (bearing or stance rather than attitude) is identified as BB's central insight which unites all the periods and genres of his work and life. Eingreifendes Denken, thinking capable of intervention, was a Haltung. From c. 1928 on, one of the principal ways he thought of such socialized understanding or learning was pedagogy (discussed in part one), but this concept was dropped after his emigration in favor of production/productivity (part 2). (Wissenschaft, understood in German in a much wider sense than English "science," was finally recognized as inadequate because of the "Western" abuse of science and "Eastern" abuse of Marxism.) Using the Me-Ti and Keuner stories as well as the BBA notes published in R. Steinweg's Das Lehrstück and D. Haffad's Amour et société dans l'oeuvre de Brecht, BB's enmity toward Weltanschauung, a systematized doctrine, and his insistence on a learning that, using theatrical means, engages the whole body uniting emotion and reason, are shown. "Learning" meant a critical appropriation of a way of thinking, of a method, incarnated in the players' Haltung, as against official Marxism in Stalin's time. It included a stress on sublated negativity--asociality and death.

In Marx, there are two meanings of "production:" the economistic and the anti-alienating or creative meaning. Brecht largely and very originally moved from the first to the second meaning from 1940 on (see his Journal). In particular, he identified love as a paradigm of productivity. It involves making effigies, observation in feedback with speculation that sets up models, and with application. This throws a new light on his predilection for female, especially maternal figures, also for other emblems of nurturing, e.g., cultivation of a garden or a fruit tree. This Haltung of productivity was also called Kritik (cf. Kleines Organum and Kreidekreis). Parallels to Bakhtin, Derrida, Nietzsche, and feminist criticism are briefly noted, but in the end it is the psychophysical misery very much with us in the jungle of capitalist metropolises that keeps BB's Haltung alive for the foreseeable future.



1990 MLA CONVENTION:
CALLS FOR PAPERS/ANNOUNCEMENTS--

IBS-SESSION 1:

"DIE GROÖE KOMMENTIERTE BERLINER UND FRANKFURTER AUSGABE"
(Auswahl- und Anordnungsprinzipien, Fassungen, allgemeine
editorische Probleme, Sachkommentar, etc.)

Send 1-page abstracts and/or papers by March 31, 1990 to:

Prof. Siegfried Mews
Dept. of Germanic Languages
443 Dey Hall, CB #3610
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3610

IBS-SESSION 2:

"BRECHT AND MEDIA"

Please send proposals for papers or media presentations (250-word description) on any topics which relate Bertolt Brecht's theatre practice and/or aesthetic theory to the media (radio, film, television) to:

Prof. Marc Silberman
German Department, University of Wisconsin
818 Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Drive
Madison, WI 53706

Deadline March 31, 1990. We are particularly interested in proposals/presentations from individuals or groups who have practical experience in trying to adapt or implement Brechtian principles or Brecht's texts in the media. Anyone who wishes to participate must either become a member of the MLA or have the IBS petition for a special membership waiver.

A T H E--I B S R E P O R T

1989 ATHE-IBS panel: "Brecht and the Art of Scenic Writing"

The panel was co-sponsored by the IBS and Theory and Criticism, an ATHE Forum member. Jim Carmody's paper raised interesting questions about the degree to which production photography both documents isolated moments within a flow of time and, thereby, allows the construction of a stage rhetoric which can then have a life apart from the interpretive purposes for which they were developed. Frantisek Deak devoted his paper to questioning the very notion of "scenic writing," raising serious concerns about the incompatibility of the metaphor of "writing" with the actual object of observation for theater semiotics. The session was well-attended by theatre people from a variety of specialties, and the papers provoked a lively and extended discussion. The third scheduled speaker, Robert Israel, was unable to attend, but discussion consumed his allotted time and continued past the end of the session.

INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

— John Rouse —

The International Brecht Society (IBS) is pleased to have been granted Associate FORUM Membership. This status will allow us to sponsor limited programming at future conferences. In New York this year, Theory/Criticism was kind enough to sponsor an IBS panel on "Brecht and the Art of Scenic Writing."

The IBS, begun in 1968, promotes Brecht scholarship and discussion of issues raised by Brecht, his theatre, and his times. A registered non-profit corporation, our annual dues are \$15 for students and \$20-\$25 for other members depending on income. Members receive the journal *Communications* twice a year, plus a yearbook. The IBS holds its own international symposia; the next will take place in 1991 in Augsburg, FRG. We also sponsor programming at MLA conferences as an affiliate member.

If you would like to join the IBS, please write to me at Theatre Dept., Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118, 504/865-5360 or 861-3774 (H). I would also like to hear from anyone who has an idea for a panel or paper. We hope to facilitate discussion of Brecht's work — both its strengths and its limitations — the theatre and drama of his time, and Brecht's legacy to practical and theoretical theatre work. Beyond that, the IBS hopes to foster more general discussion of the social function and artistic character of theatre, and to address the questions that concerned Brecht, but in ways appropriate to our situation as well as his. To this end, we are interested both in panels of our own and in co-sponsorship with other FORUM groups.

ATHE

Association for Theatre in Higher Education

The Association for Theatre in Higher Education exists to foster interaction and the exchange of information among those engaged in all areas of theatre research, performance, scholarship and crafts.

This is accomplished through publications, conferences, advocacy and support services for theatre in higher education. ATHE establishes standards of excellence for organizations and individuals concerned with post-secondary theatre training, production and scholarship.

ATHE

Association for Theatre in Higher Education

C/O THEatre SERVICE
P.O. Box 15282 • Evansville, IN 47716

ATHE NEWS

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FOR THEATRE IN
HIGHER EDUCATION

Vol. 3 No. 5

NOVEMBER 1989

1991 — SEATTLE NEW DIRECTIONS

— Mark Heckler —

ATHE's Board of Governors, acting on the nearly unanimous recommendation of FORUM groups which met during the New York Conference, has selected Seattle, Washington, as the site of the 1991 conference. Reserve August 7-11, 1991, for an exciting new conference in an exciting new town. It's Northwest for '91 at the Seattle Sheraton Hotel and Towers.

For further information, contact Mark A. Heckler, Assoc. V.P. for Conference, Theatre Program, Siena College, Loudonville, NY 12211.

ATHE 1990 CONFERENCE

"THE Issues of the Nineties"
Chicago, Illinois
The Palmer House Hotel
August 8-11, 1990

Rooms: \$90, single and double.

Registration: \$65 "Early Bird," March 15-May 31; \$75 Pre-Registration, June 1-July 7; \$90 after July 8 and on-site

Reduced registration for ATHE Student and Retired members, & ATHE organizational representatives.

AT ISSUE — CONFERENCE '90

— Weldon Durham, V.P. for Conferences —

What are the issues now confronting the theatre in higher education? What are the issues likely to challenge educators in the decade of the nineties? At the Chicago conference in 1990 we'll continue a dialogue on already-recognized challenges to the profession. We'll also begin to define emerging issues and to outline an agenda for solving these newly defined problems.

Theatre educators occupy the frontier between theatre and the social order. Legislative currents at this frontier present us with two challenges: those who pay the bills want assessment of educational outcomes by means that assure them we do deliver an education. How are the outcomes of a theatre education properly assessed? This is a challenge likely to be with us for the next decade. Elected officials and expert consultants are examining the link between public funding for the arts and the manifest content of art so supported. Will state legislatures and the governing boards of private institutions follow this lead? How will we respond? By yielding silently to political power? or by giving greater public voice to our on-going considerations of the relevance of "content" in the formation of critical judgments? Will polarization between those demanding censorship and those protecting the freedom of expression determine the outcome of this debate? Can theatre artists and scholars illuminate the issue and affect the outcome by defining other axes of deliberation? How can the association stimulate the habit of dialogue and provide media for argument?

If legislative currents affect the way we work, so also do technological advances. How can theatre educators incorporate interactive communications technology into the theatre classroom? How technological can we become in teaching acting, for instance, before we breach the limits of theatre?

Elimination of gender and racial biases in what we teach and how we teach and how we relate professionally to one another proceeds too slowly. The association's conferences and publications will be media for promoting change in this regard. How can we organize our efforts and dedicate our resources to accelerate liberation?

Demographers predict a crisis in higher education in the nineties as faculty retirements peak and the number of doctoral-trained applicants declines. Will these conditions, if they transpire, re-define the professoriate in the first decade of the 21st century? How can ATHE affect the conditions under which theatre educators work? How can we assure that people with vision, talent, and intelligence prepare well and appropriately for careers in higher education? How can we assure that the best of these (and of us) are well compensated and honored for discharging appropriate workloads and for posting significant achievements as scholars, as artists, and as technicians?

A major function of ATHE is to provide, through its publications and its conferences, opportunities for faculty development. New theatre educators and artists experience something like culture shock as they arrive in our ranks from graduate school and from the work force in the commercial and not-for-profit professional theatre. How can ATHE help them coordinate their research and creative interests with the imperatives of career development in academe? Conversely, how can ATHE help assess and promote the disciplinary innovations suggested by those new to the profession?

College and university theatre emerged less than a century ago as a part of its founders' efforts to escape "bondage to the box office." Yet theatres on campuses everywhere are now justified in terms of attendance figures and funded, at least partly, by box office receipts. How do we reconcile our mission to entertain and instruct an audience with our mission to educate and train students who major in theatre? What is the appropriate relationship between the theatre curriculum and the theatre production program? How can the theatre production program and the theatre curriculum best serve the campus and the larger community?

These are some of THE issues of the present and foreseeable future. The Chicago Conference of ATHE, August 8-11, 1990, will address these and other concerns relative to the professional effectiveness of theatre educators. Plan to participate. Plan to be there.

CONFERENCES & SYMPOSIA

Conference Paper Abstract:

"Und als der Krieg im vierten Lenz ...": Brecht and the Two World Wars"

Karl-Heinz Schoeps, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

(This paper was presented at the Twentieth Annual WISCONSIN WORKSHOP sponsored by the Department of German, University of Wisconsin-Madison, September 29-October 1, 1989; 1989 conference theme: "1914/1939--German Reflections of the Two World Wars.")

In this paper, some aspects of what amounts to a central theme in Brecht's life and work are discussed, using Brecht's theoretical pronouncements and poetic works as a basis. At the beginning of World War I, Brecht was a patriotic young man writing inspirational poems and articles, including his "Augsburger Kriegsbriefe" in the München-Augsburger Abendzeitung. He was proud to live in those times which "purify people and give them inner strength;" his poem "Der belgische Acker", glorifying the deeds of German soldiers, even comes dangerously close to later Nazi Blu-Bo poems. But starting in 1915, gradual disillusionment set in which culminated in his poem "Legende vom toten Soldaten" of 1918. Brecht himself was drafted for a short time as a medic and spent his time in the ward for venereal diseases in the military hospital in Augsburg. When communist revolutions broke out toward the end of World War I, Brecht was an interested observer but not a participant. After his conversion to Marxism in the mid-twenties, one of his first works which branded capitalist wars as exploitation was his poem for children "Die drei Soldaten" (1932), with illustrations by Georg Grosz.

Exiled in Scandinavia and the United States during the Nazi period, Brecht followed events in Europe and the Soviet Union with great interest. He defended the Hitler-Stalin pact, arguing that Stalin simply had no other choice and needed time to prepare for the inevitable war against fascism. The outbreak of World War II came as no surprise to him since war was pre-programmed with the Nazi takeover in 1933; in 1939, the internal war of aggression against the German people had only turned into an external one against other nations. Brecht hoped for an uprising of the people against the oppressive rule of fascism, and when there was none he hid his disappointment in a barrage of verbal obfuscation. For him the basic mistake that allowed fascism to arise was the failure of the people to occupy positions of power after WWI. In the USA, he was active in anti-fascist activities of German exiles and argued against those who advocated collective punishment for the German people, notably Thomas Mann. Unlike Mann, Brecht always differentiated between Hitler and his henchmen and the German people. He therefore rejoiced in German defeats but commiserated with the sufferings of his compatriots.

His theories of capitalist wars and the nature of fascism are also reflected in his plays and poems, notably Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder, Die Verurteilung des Lukullus, Schweyk im zweiten Weltkrieg, Die Gesichte der

Simone Machard, and Kriegsfibel. After his return to Berlin in 1948, he was stunned by the destruction of property and people. In poems and pamphlets, he exhorted his countrymen and fellow writers to oppose war, and especially the rearmament of West Germany under an American nuclear umbrella because he feared that a third world war would eliminate the whole of Germany: "The great Carthage conducted three wars. It was still powerful after the first, still inhabitable after the second. But after the third it was no more to be found" (GW 19, 496).

CONFERENCE: "THE CLASSICS IN CONTEMPORARY THEATRE"

February 23-25, 1990, University of California-San Diego
Symposium Director: Jim Carmody, Theatre Arts Department,
University of California-San Diego

Keynote Speaker--Jonathan Miller, Artistic Director, The Old Vic Theatre
Company: "Directing the Classics in Today's Theatre"

Among the Symposium participants were Anne Bogart (Univ. of California-San Diego/Trinity Repertory Theatre), Sue-Ellen Case, (Univ. of Washington), Robert Falls (Goodman Theatre, Chicago), and John Rouse (Tulane University).

The conference sessions focused on such issues as "Classics, Culture, and Tradition," "Contemporary Experimental Theatre and the Classics," "Traditions National and European," "Creating an American Classical Repertory," and "Art History and Contemporary Scenic Design."

From the Conference Program: "Questions of how our society relates to and uses the classics are pivotal issues in current debates throughout the intellectual and artistic communities. In this symposium we will explore our relationship to the classics and how this relationship is reflected on the contemporary stage ... Although it will take place in a university setting, the symposium will not be a traditional academic meeting. Most participants will be theatre artists--directors, designers, and writers. Our goal in hosting this event is to provoke artists and scholars to reassess how we describe and produce our work with classic texts ... Some of the issues to be addressed:

- Which authors and plays make up our classical canon?
- As artists, do we approach a classic in the same way that we approach a nonclassic play?
- If we have a concept of fidelity in the contemporary theatre, how is it useful?
- In a multicultural society, what does it mean to call a play a classic or to refer to "the classical tradition"?
- How does the concept of universality affect our understanding and evaluation of the classics?
- Assuming classic plays have value for our culture, how do the unavoidable processes of translation and adaptation mediate that value?
- When we translate or adapt a classic, where do we begin? With text, author, culture, production history?

- How does our visualization of the past influence our treatment of classic texts?
- What American theatrical traditions have evolved around the classics?

* * *

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES & SYMPOSIA OF INTEREST TO IBS MEMBERS:

INTERNATIONAL KURT WEILL SYMPOSIUM March 22-25, 1990, Duisburg, West Germany

In conjunction with the North Rhine-Westphalia Kurt Weill Festival; co-sponsored by the Salomon-Ludwig-Steinheim-Institut für deutsch-jüdische Geschichte and the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., in cooperation with the Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Düsseldorf and Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester. Sessions/presentations/exhibits of specific interest to IBS Members:

Exhibit "Kurt Weill und die Literatur," Heinrich-Heine Institute, Düsseldorf

Session 1 (23 March) "Weill in Germany and America: 1933 and Beyond"

"Fragwürdiges in der deutschen Rezeption," Stephen Hinton, Technische Universität, Berlin

"I am an American!" Kim Kowalke, University of Rochester

"Der 'alien American' Kurt Weill und seine Aktivitäten für die War Effort der USA 1940-45," Jürgen Schebera, Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR

Session 2 (23 March) "Weill's Place in 20th-Century Music"

Respondents include Albrecht Dümling, West Berlin, and Joachim Lucchesi, Akademie der Künste der DDR, Berlin

Presentation of a Kurt Weill Bibliography, David Farneth, Archivist, Weill-Lenya Research Center, New York

Session 3 (24 March): "Weill's Early Career"

"Weill in Berlin: Musical Training and Experiences," Tamara Levitz, University of Rochester

"Kurt Weill und andere 'Brecht-Komponisten'," Jost Hermand, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Session 4 (24 March): "Content, Structure, and Musical Language"

"Kurt Weills Musiktheater und die Tradition der deutschen Romantik," Andreas Hauff, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz

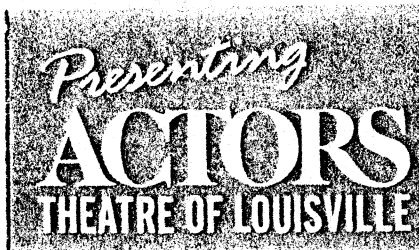
"Structure and Affective Content in the Music for Der Jasager," Ian Kemp, University of Manchester (England)

PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT:

1991 ACTORS THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE "CLASSICS IN CONTEXT" FESTIVAL: THE WEIMAR STYLE

Classics in Context is an annual Louisville festival of arts and culture. Each fall more than fifty organizations participate in programming that explores the life and times of artists and their art. Past festivals have focused on "The Romantics," "The Victorians" and "Art & Revolution in Russia" (the 1990 Festival theme is "Commedia dell'Arte and the Comic Spirit"). Persons interested in further information on the 1991 "Weimar Style" Festival should contact the Actors Theatre of Louisville, 316 West Main Street, Louisville, KY 40202-2916, tel. (502) 584-1265 (Jon Jory, Producing Director; Alexander Speer, Administrative Director; Michael B. Dixon, Literary Manager.)

(graphic)



INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY:

"The Reception of German and Austrian Exile Literature"

In conjunction with the Society for Exile Studies/Gesellschaft für Exilforschung. For information, contact Prof. Dieter Sevin, Dept. of Germanic and Slavic Languages, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN 37235, tel. (615) 322-2611.

SEVENTEENTH AMHERST COLLOQUIUM ON GERMAN LITERATURE:

"Against Fascism: German Exile Literature as History" April 26-28, 1990, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Participants include Sigrid Bauschinger, Reinhold Brinkmann, Robert Cohen, Gert Mattenklott, Jürgen Schebera, Sylvia Schlenstedt, Alexander Stephan, Guy Stern, and Michael Winkler. The Symposium includes a screening of the film Hangmen Also Die, a recital of songs by exile composers including Kurt Weill and Paul Dessau, and an art exhibit, "A New Objectivity," featuring works by M. Beckmann, O. Dix, G. Grosz, J. Heartfield, and others. For further information, contact the Dept. of Germanic Lang. & Lit., Univ. of Mass. Amherst, MA 01003, tel. (413) 545-2350, or the Goethe-Institut Boston, tel. (617) 262-6050.

SIXTEENTH NEW HAMPSHIRE SYMPOSIUM ON THE GDR:

"Reform in the GDR--Elements of Continuity and the Forces of Change,"
Conway, New Hampshire, June 20-27, 1990

Multi-disciplinary seminars are planned on the following topics:

- the GDR within a changing Europe
- influence of the reform movements in the socialist countries and Western European developments on the GDR
- socialist values and concepts of socialism in the GDR
- perceptions and treatments of the past
- civil society and the state
- the institutional framework reconsidered: trends in literature
- visuals arts and cultural policy
- ongoing issues and new developments

For further information contact Prof. Margy Gerber, Dept. of German, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403, tel. (419) 372-7137.

INTERDISCIPLINARY SEMINAR IN GERMAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY:

"The Past in the Present--
Postwar Confrontations with German Fascism"

For further information, contact: Prof. Robert C. Holub, Dept. of German, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720.

Entitled "The Past in the Present: Postwar Confrontation with German Fascism," this seminar is co-sponsored by the University of California, Berkeley and DAAD, and will take place July 9 to August 17, 1990 at UC Berkeley. Eligible participants are graduate students and PhD candidates with an active interest in German intellectual and social history. DAAD is offering a number of scholarships of \$1,200 each (plus a travel subsidy where applicable). Applicants for these scholarships must be US citizens and currently enrolled or teaching at US universities or colleges. Approximately twenty students will be accepted into the seminar and will enroll in the UC Berkeley Summer Session; there is a \$450 course fee (subject to possible increase). The deadline is March 15, 1990; applicants will be notified by the middle of April. Application forms for the seminar and scholarship may be obtained from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), 950 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022. Telephone: (212) 758-3223; telefax: (212) 755-5780

DAAD INTERDISCIPLINARY SUMMER SEMINAR FOR FACULTY AND RECENT PhDs

The title of the 1990 seminar, being held at the University of Pennsylvania and co-sponsored by DAAD, is "The Kaiserreich Recast: Culture, Politics, Modernity." Scheduled for June 18 to July 20, 1990, the seminar will focus on the linkages between social, cultural and political developments in Germany between 1890 and 1918. Eligible participants are faculty members from universities, colleges and junior colleges and high school teachers working on advanced degrees.

(Graduate students and PhD candidates are not eligible.) DAAD is offering a number of scholarships of \$2,500 each. Applicants for these scholarships must be US citizens currently affiliated with an American institution of higher education. Approximately 15 faculty members will be accepted into the seminar for which there is a \$50 course fee. The deadline is March 1, 1990; applicants will be notified by the middle of April. Application forms for the seminar and scholarship may be obtained from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), 950 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022. Telephone: (212) 758-3223; telefax: (212) 755-5780; BITNET: DAADNY@NYUACF. Applications must be returned to the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, ATT: Prof. Frank Trommler, 745 Williams Hall/CU, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104. For further information about seminar content, please call the University of Pennsylvania German Department at (215) 898-7332.

**"CHINESE THEATRE ARTS AT THE SHANGHAI DRAMA INSTITUTE"
FINE ARTS STUDY TOUR IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**
June 3-July 16, 1990

Sponsored by the Center for Continuing Education & Extension,
University of Minnesota, Duluth

Shanghai Drama Institute

The Chinese Theatre Arts tour will spend five weeks at the Shanghai Drama Institute before traveling for one week. The Institute is an arts academy of higher education, training theatrical personnel for the state. The Institute was established in 1945, and has been classified as one of the key institutes under the Ministry of Culture.

In the past forty years, the Institute has turned out approximately 4,500 undergraduates and graduates, whom are now found in all parts of China. Among them are well-known actors and actresses, directors, playwrights, stage designers, and drama theorists.

The Institute is comprised of four departments: Acting, Stage Design, Drama Literature, Directing. 400 graduate and undergraduate students are on the campus yearly. The Institute currently has more than 180 experienced faculty, including 54 professors and associate professors.

The Institute publishes a school-run journal, *Theatre Arts*. An art gallery was opened to the public to display the achievements of professors in stage design and to promote exchange with the outside community.

The Shanghai Drama Institute is situated in Jingan district, the city center of Shanghai, China's largest and most cosmopolitan city. The Institute is within five minutes walking distance to the U.S. Consulate, the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the theatre district, which includes the most popular shopping area and modern hotels.

Interested persons should contact Mr. Terry Anderson, Program Director, 403 Darland Administration Bldg., 10 University Drive, Duluth, Minnesota 55812-2496, tel. (218) 726-6535, FAX (218) 726-6336.

CHRISTA WOLF SEMINAR, JULY 9-27, 1990,
DICKINSON COLLEGE, CARLISLE, PA

Geleitet von Dr. Therese Hornigk, Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR

Themen, die u.a. in diesem Workshop diskutiert werden sollen:

- Biographie und schriftstellerischer Werdegang: Paradigma einer deutschen Kriegs- und Nachkriegsgeneration
- Christa Wolf als Literaturkritikerin
- Geschichte und Historizität als Erfahrungshorizont Wolfscher Prosa
- Zum Verhältnis von Vision, Illusion und Utopie in den Werken Wolfs
- Traditionslinien (z.B. Projektionsraum Romantik und Antikerezeption bei C. Wolf)
- Wolf und A. Seghers, I. Bachmann, V. Woolfe, u.a.
- Von der erlernbaren Fähigkeit "ich" zu sagen: Überlegungen zum weiblichen Schreiben bei C. Wolf
- Motive und Metaphernwelt in der Prosa C. Wolfs
- Zu Problemen von Rezeption und Wirkung Wolfscher Prosa

Anmeldetermin bis spätestens den 1. April 1990. Fragen richten Sie bitte an:

Dr. Gisela Roethke-Makemson
Department of German
Dickinson College
Carlisle, PA 17013
tel. (717) 245-1737

KURT WEILL 1990

The most recent issue of the Kurt Weill Newsletter contains an extensive calendar listing of events both in the USA and abroad for the "Kurt Weill Year 1990" (the 90th anniversary of the composer's birth). Also included is a guide to major performances/festivals and a summary of current recording, broadcast, and publishing projects. As one might anticipate, the Brecht-Weill Threepenny Opera is the work most frequently programmed (with over twenty productions listed); copies of the calendar and Newsletter are available from the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, Inc., 7 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003.

A CONSUMMATE MAN OF THE THEATRE:
THE DESIGNER WOLFGANG ROTH (1910-1988)

Carl Weber, Stanford University

At the end of the Berlin theatre season of 1953-54 Brecht opened his production of The Caucasian Chalkcircle, with scenery and costumes by Karl von Appen. This first-night has since been recognized as a seminal event in modern theatre history, and Appen's design has become familiar to all students of stage design. Yet, there was another performance during the same season which at the time had comparable impact on Berlin's theatre community: a production of George Gershwin's Porgy and Bess, which had premiered on Broadway and was now touring Europe, with a cast that included Leontyne Price, William Warfield, and Cab Calloway, a "stellar" cast, as today's theatre critics no doubt would claim. The acting, singing, and dancing was a revelation to German audiences who had never witnessed an all-black cast perform, but there was, alas, an unforgettable set; one of the most impressive moments of the production happened when, during the hurricane scene, the front wall of a house on Catfish Alley magically opened to reveal the frightened crowd within. I still can feel the thrill and joy I experienced at Berlin's Titania-Palast while I was watching these stirring performers on the stunning stage. The playbill credited the scenery to one Wolfgang Roth. I remember wondering who this American designer with such a very German name might be; little did I know that he was in town and hadn't failed to pay a visit to his old friends Brecht and Weigel who were my employers.

It wasn't until ten years later that I met "Rothi" (as he preferred to be called by his friends; he loathed the Wagnerian sound of "Wolfgang") in person at his apartment on Manhattan's East Side. And the year after, in 1965, we collaborated for the first time on a production when he designed sets and costumes for the world premiere of Gyula Hay's play Gaspar Varros Recht which I directed at the Wuppertal-Theater. We spent several weeks together that summer, visiting Hay at Ascona in Switzerland where the Hungarian playwright was living since the Kadar government--after commuting his death sentence--had finally released him from imprisonment for his central role during the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

This project marked the beginning of a long friendship. During its twenty-three years I learned much from Rothi, about the theatre, about design, about the cabaret and the circus, about America and, of course, about his times with Brecht. When Rothi died a year ago, in November 1988, I lost a friend as well as an esteemed collaborator. We also lost the last designer still alive who had worked closely with Brecht, and the International Brecht Society lost one of its earliest members.

* * *

The greatest surprise to anyone who came to know Rothi well was his versatility as an artist, the many talents this little bundle of energy--

Rothi was a short man with a slight hunch to his shoulders--managed to harbor in himself. He was a painter and a sculptor, a stage-, light-, and costume-designer, an interior decorator, a singer, a clown, and also a writer, as his cabaret texts and the regrettably still unpublished memoirs amply evidence. His wit was refreshing, if sometimes scathing, but he also was capable of great self-irony. He had a sharp mind, but he could be hot-headed and occasionally unreasonable in his responses. He was a warm and very giving friend but he also could be bitchy and sometimes vindictive and unforgiving. A friend who knew him well liked to call him "Rumpelstiltskin;" a student of his referred to him as "the greatest little man I've ever met." He once wrote of himself: "If I seem to have contradicted myself... , I am only proving what a good student of Brecht's I am." (1) And indeed, he was. How, then, did he become that student of Brecht's?

* * *

Wolfgang Roth was born February 25, 1910, as the son of a Jewish waiter in a Berlin working class district near the Warschauer Bridge in the eastern part of the city. Accepted into the Berlin Academy of Applied Arts at a young age, he soon aspired to become a stage designer. He managed to meet Traugott Müller, Erwin Piscator's designer at the first "Piscator Bühne," and must have impressed the already famous man with the portfolio he showed him, though Roth maintained, when telling of their first meeting, that he had mainly talked and sung songs for him, accompanying himself on the guitar, during a long night spent at Müller's apartment; the man wasn't much interested in looking at sketches, according to Roth. Be that as it may, the seventeen-year-old was invited to join the "Piscator Collective," and became an assistant of Müller. He always referred to Traugott Müller as "my teacher," and Müller's famous statement: "All my life I've been working for the abolishment of scenery" became Roth's credo as well.

It was through Müller that he met Brecht in 1928. Roth wrote about it: "Brecht was then preparing a production of The Threepenny Opera in the theatre which is now the home of the Berliner Ensemble. Brecht introduced me to Caspar Neher, his designer, for whom I began work as a second assistant on The Threepenny Opera. From 1929 to 1932 I worked on and off at the Piscator-Theater where a unit of playwrights, composers, writers and film people functioned as Piscator's advisors and dramaturgical assistants. Brecht was head of the writers group and his influence was very strong." (2) He continued to connect with Brecht projects during the following years. In the early 1930's he designed a political musical revue with texts by Brecht and music by Weill and Eisler, Wir sind ja sooo zufrieden; in the cast were Ernst Busch, Lotte Lenya, Peter Lorre, and Helene Weigel. He assisted Theo Otto on the art direction of the Brecht-Eisler-Dudow film Kuhle Wampe and co-designed with Otto for Brecht's staging of Die Maßnahme at the Großes Schauspielhaus in 1930. He also assisted Neher during the controversial Staatstheater production of Mann ist Mann which Brecht directed in 1931. And, according to Roth, Brecht planned to do a marionette show with him based on his poem "Die drei Soldaten"; but then both had to flee from a Berlin now dominated by Hitler's storm troopers. They didn't meet again until ten years later in New York. Though they spent much time together during Brecht's several visits

from Santa Monica, and discussed plans for The Duchess of Malfi and The Visions of Simone Machard, their discussions didn't result in an American Brecht project designed by Roth. Yet, as he remembered in his notes on Working with Brecht: "Brecht became a friend of mine as did his family. We regularly exchanged English crime and mystery stories and went to American movies together. He loved wild west and gangster films and also Chaplin comedies. We went to boxing matches which were a great theatrical experience for Brecht." (3) Roth had been living in New York since 1938 and knew the city well; he must have been not only a companion but also a guide to Brecht.

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The theatres of Piscator and Brecht were not the only outlet for Roth's aspirations in his early years as an artist. During the same period he was a designer and, eventually, a performer with several of the many cabaret theatres which were thriving in Berlin before the Nazis closed most of them. He designed and built the usually minimal scenery for many programs, he wrote songs which he himself performed with his guitar, and he played in skits, developing his talents as a clown. The most prominent of these theatres was the "Katakombe" where he worked closely with the still well-remembered Werner Fink, probably the most sophisticated among the many talented comedians which the fertile ambience of Berlin nurtured in the twenties. Being an active member of the Communist Youth Organization, Roth also created portable scenic elements and props for agit-prop groups which often used Brecht texts and Eisler songs in their programs.

Hitler's appointment as chancellor and the subsequent Reichstag fire (used as the pretext to outlaw the Communist Party) abruptly put a stop to the budding career of the twenty-three year old designer. Roth fled from Berlin, first to Vienna and then to Zurich, where he spent five years under the frequent threat of being deported according to the strict immigration laws of neutral Switzerland. His friend Theo Otto had also left Germany and was the resident designer at the Zurich Schauspielhaus, the theatre which became the home of many leading German theatre artists who escaped from Hitler's Germany. Roth first worked as an assistant to Otto and then became a designer for the Corso Theater, a house presenting musical revues and variety shows. Here he perfected his skills as a clown and performed at the Corso as well as, presumably, for a time, with a travelling circus. Because his residence permit was being extended for shorter and shorter periods, Roth decided to apply for a U.S. visa; in 1938 he arrived in New York. Glad as he was to have escaped from a Europe that was ever more threatened by Hitler's aggressive policies, he nevertheless was confronted with all the problems of a newly arrived alien: he didn't speak English and he had to start his career all over again. He learned the language and had a remarkable American career, but, just as he never lost a heavy Berlin accent in his English, there was in his design work always a distinctly Central European flavor, a style, if you like, that showed the strong influence of his teachers: Traugott Müller, Caspar Neher, and Brecht.

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Roth, like so many immigrants, first survived in America by doing all kinds of menial jobs; then he began to apply his talents to interior design and for many years this seems to have been his main source of income. It took some time until his first Broadway success, a production of Androcles and the Lion in 1948, which brought him recognition among the audiences and his peers alike. He continued to work on Broadway, his biggest "hit" being the by-now legendary Porgy and Bess produced by Blevins Davis and Robert Breen in 1952. Roth based his design on paintings by Horace Pippin; the production's commercial success enabled him to acquire a beautiful old house from the 1820's in Bucks County (Pennsylvania); here he later spent much of his time painting, sculpting, and evolving his theatrical designs. Among other Broadway productions were, for instance, the very short-lived Leda Had a Little Swan, by B. Gascoigne, directed by Andre Gregory in 1956, and the successful Strider, in Robert Kalfin's production of 1980. He also designed for opera: in New York, for the Metropolitan and City Operas (for instance, the Met's Don Pasquale in 1955), as well as in Vancouver, Cincinnati and other cities.

Some of his most interesting designs were done for off-Broadway productions or companies in New York. His Brecht on Brecht (1962), at the Theatre de Lys, was at the time a trend-setting production of Brecht's discovery by the American non-profit theatre. Of special impact were his collaborations with a fellow refugee, George Tabori, for the American Place Theatre where he designed the productions of Tabori's plays Cannibals (1966) and Pinkville (1971), both directed by Martin Fried. During the seventies he became one of the designers for the Chelsea Theatre Center, first at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and then at the Center's theatre on West 43rd Street. Among the productions he designed for this adventurous and important group were Ice Age by T. Dorst (1978), Rum and Coca Cola, a Trinidadian play (1979), and Donna Rosita by G. Lorca (1980).

With the growth of the Regional Theatre movement, Roth worked increasingly outside of New York, for theatres in Washington, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Winnipeg, etc. And during the seventies, he occasionally returned to Europe, designing for theatres in Germany and Switzerland, for instance: a Dreigroschenoper, directed by Martin Fried at Munich's Residenz Theater; a German production of Tabori's Kannibalen at the Schiller-Werkstatt in Berlin; and Alban Berg's Lulu in Goetz Friedrich's staging at the Zurich Opera.

For a few years, he even was the artistic director of his own company, "The Littlest Circus," a pantomime entertainment, which first appeared on Broadway in 1959; later it toured all over the U.S. and was also seen on TV. "It had no animals but presented a cast of clowns, jugglers, and musicians." (4) As one would expect, Rothi was one of the clowns. In the seventies he returned a last time to performing; in a "Kabarett" program he presented material from his Berlin of the twenties and the early thirties, texts by Brecht, Mehring, Tucholsky, Ringelnatz and himself, to the tunes of Eisler, Weill, and others; this program was done in New York and several American cities. There he stood on stage, recited or sang in his quite high-pitched, cutting voice, swiftly drew cartoons while commenting on the politics of the

period, and improvised his sarcastic narration about a Berlin that watched Hitler's brownshirts advancing. With the same crackling vocal delivery he had earlier recorded songs and ballads from the German medieval, renaissance and baroque traditions for the Folkways label.

Aside from his many designs for the stage, Roth was an amazingly prolific painter and sculptor. There were exhibitions in New York, and also one in Milan, where his paintings, collages, and wood-and-wire sculptures were shown. His fascination with clowns and love for the circus provided recurring themes for his work, as did Brecht's writings. A collection of collages based on his friend's texts ("An die Nachgeborenen") was published by the Academy of Arts in East Berlin in 1985.

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There were times when New York audiences might well have assumed there were at least two Wolfgang Roth's, one painting and designing, another one singing and performing. He was truly a consummate man of the theatre, with a remarkable imagination and a creative tenacity that was quite unique in its total refusal to compromise.

This combination of fantasy and persistence made working with him such a refreshing, stimulating and--in a very invigorating way--trying experience. When we began to discuss a project, Rothi's quick grasp of the dramatic demands of the text showed how well he had understood Brecht and learned from him. Our first meetings were always about the play, not yet about design ideas or--God forbid--"solutions." In a long process, many routes were pursued for a while, several options explored and developed up to concrete set design sketches--and then everything was thrown out again, and we started anew from the text. His design and my directorial concept evolved in what could best be called a "dialectical" fashion, and for an extended time everything was kept in flux. When Rothi felt he had arrived at valid answers, however, he could fight tooth and nail to protect his creative solution from any infringement caused by budgetary or other reasons, such as a change of mind on my part. Yet, he was flexible enough to accept a well-founded argument or a practical way to save money--as long as such changes could be adopted without encroaching on the basic idea, the integrity of his design concept. Since both of us had learned much of our art from Brecht, we usually saw eye-to-eye--even if it occasionally took patient or heated discussion to convince him of a specific idea which didn't strike him as fitting. Then he used to snort, "well, you're the boss!" and agreed. The irony intended was obvious; no "boss" in the world could have forced on him choices he felt were wrong; he'd rather walk away from a project--an attitude which was hard to understand for many in the American theatre where compromise so often spells survival. Rothi's bluntness, the very "Berliner," aggressive sarcastic remarks he loved to make, were another cause of occasional friction with American theatre people who are used to avoiding conflict wherever possible, or at least coat it with studied civility.

After our first project, the Hay play at the Wuppertaler Bühnen, it took several years until we again had a chance to work together. When I began to direct in America, I soon discovered that many producers or general

managers in New York and elsewhere were reluctant to work with designers who had the reputation of being "difficult," and Rothi had such a reputation. But then, other producers loved and respected his stubborn integrity as an artist and didn't simply dismiss it as cantankerous. When the Chelsea Theatre Center approached me about doing the American premiere of Peter Handke's at the time very experimental play Kaspar in 1972, I insisted on Rothi as designer; Robert Kalfin, the artistic director of the company, agreed. From this decision resulted not only an exciting and generally acclaimed production of the Handke play--acclaimed especially for the stage design and costumes by Roth--it also led to a friendship and long-time collaboration between Roth and Kalfin. They did several projects together, with Kalfin either producing or directing, the already mentioned Strider and other Chelsea productions among them. In fact, the very last production Roth designed but couldn't finish due to his final illness, Goldoni's The Mistress of the Inn at New York's Roundabout Theatre, was directed by Kalfin.

After Kaspar, we worked on many more projects; the majority didn't mature into actual productions, an experience so familiar to all New York directors and designers. Produced were the American premiere of Gerlind Reinshagen's Heaven and Earth, 1977, at the Off-Center Theatre, a New York Off-Broadway house, and Heinrich von Kleist's The Broken Pitcher, 1982, at another Off-Broadway theater, the Martinique. We collaborated on Brecht projects, such as A Man's a Man and Schweyk in World War II, for which, alas, the necessary financing couldn't be secured by the prospective producers. And we turned down some after we discovered that the production conditions would enforce unconscionable compromises, as in the case of a Mother Courage project. The last play we worked on together was Carl Zuckmayer's The Captain of Koepenick, to be played by Eli Wallach, and the design for it was practically completed; the premature death of the producer, Peter Witt (another former Berliner) in 1984 was the end of that project. Then I accepted an appointment at Stanford University and the geographical distance made our further collaboration difficult--most regrettably. We kept in touch, however, and still hoped that another chance for a shared adventure in the theatre might come about.

It was indeed always an adventure to work with Rothi because he embarked on each project with the curiosity and eagerness we know from children in search of adventure. And as much as one could anticipate many of his design choices, knowing his personal style and idiosyncracies--a strong preference for the color white and for bright lights among them, adopted from Traugott Müller and Brecht, no doubt--he never failed to surprise with completely unexpected, even quirky, ideas and imaginative touches. He was himself greatly amused by them and exuberant when he explained them, often hitting his knee hard with his hand to stop the occasional stutter that was triggered when he was excited. Theatre, the arts, like life itself, first of all had to be fun for him. As Brecht always insisted, "es muß Spaß machen!" ("it has to be fun"). He never lost this sense of fun and his humor, even when he lost sight in one eye in the seventies, due to a cataract. After a short period of adjustment, he again observed the world and created the art with the same zest and productivity as before. In a way, he seemed to be indestructible, but in the end he wasn't.

He died on November 11, 1988 of bronchial pneumonia, barely five months after having suffered a severe stroke.

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For four years, Rothi was my colleague on the faculty of New York University's School of the Arts. It is very regrettable that he didn't continue teaching young American designers since 1971; there was so much he knew and had to give which no one else in this country shared. I sincerely hope that the large body of work he left behind will be properly catalogued, stored, and made available to students of the theatre and of design. Roth was one of the important designers of his time, fusing traditions from the German theatre of the twenties with the American design that emerged from the classic period of the Broadway musical, a form that Brecht admired in many respects. It was this fusion that made Wolfgang Roth's designs unusual and unique.

Notes

1. Wolfgang Roth, "Working with Bertolt Brecht," in Brecht Heute. Jahrbuch der internationalen Brecht-Gesellschaft, Jahrgang 2 (1972), 135.
2. Ibid., 131.
3. Ibid., 134.
4. Wolfgang Saxon, "Wolfgang Roth, 78, Set Designer For Operas and Broadway Shows" [obituary], in The New York Times, November 14, 1988, D-13.

ich sitze am Strassenrand
der Fahrer wechselt das Rad
ich bin nicht oben, wo ich hingehöre
ich bin nicht oben, wo ich hingehöre
warum sehe ich den Fahrerwechsel
mit Ungeduld?

TODO ESE JAZZ SOBRE BRECHT/
ALL THAT JAZZ ABOUT BRECHT*

Joseph Rosenberg, Texas A & I University;
Artistic Director, La Compania de Teatro Bilingüe/
Bilingual Theatre Company, Corpus Christi, Texas

Nowadays the influence of Bertolt Brecht upon theatrical presentation seems to be enormous. Nearly anything that seems presentational, epic in its teaching application, or which uses choral techniques of interrupting the action to provide the playwright's social viewpoint leaves little doubt in the minds of some that Brecht had either a direct or at least an indirect influence upon the presenter. Frequently, perhaps even most of the time, there is some connection, because Brecht is seen as the individual who encapsulated such theories about the purpose of production in his essays. The fact that the ideas he expressed about epic theatre and the Verfremdungseffekt are as old as Greek theater does not change the fact that he modernized these ideas, that is: related them to modern life, and gave them modern theatrical form. We acknowledge our enormous debt to Bertolt Brecht for finding a way to express his great compassion and Promethean desire to right abominable wrongs.

If sometimes influences have been ascribed to Brecht that are not actually his, it is (of course) the fault of critics rather than of Brecht. This has sometimes been the case in attempting to relate his theories to several Latin American plays. The error stems from a certain kind of insularity, an assumption that the criteria that determine attitudes in Amero-European theatre apply to all theatre. It must be pointed out that all which seems similar in some way to Brecht's idea of distancing the public from empathy with the central character of the play for the purpose of having that character's predicament serve as a lesson in social history (i.e., the Verfremdungseffekt) may not necessarily stem from a direct or indirect influence of Brecht upon a particular playwright. A case in point is Historias para ser contadas (Stories for the Theatre) by Osvaldo Dragun of Argentina. A description follows.

Historias para ser contadas consists of three comic fables for the theatre. All are of the kind of fantasy that abrades the reality-oriented conscience, and are didactic in purpose. The first of these is called "The Man who Died of a Gum Abscess" ("El flemon"). It deals with a street vendor in Buenos Aires and the fact that he suddenly finds it difficult to yell about his wares because of an irritation in his mouth. The irritation turns into a swelling, the swelling into an abscess, the abscess into the cause of his death. He dies because he cannot stop long enough to take proper care of his gum abscess and because dentists want his money and do not care about him, and because his wife wants his support and does not care about him, either. He dies in the street. Nobody who passes by notices or seems to care.

* This paper was originally presented in the IBS-sponsored session on "Brecht and the Other Theatres of the South," MLA Convention, New Orleans, Louisiana, December 1988.

The second fable, entitled "The Man Who Felt Responsible for the Epidemic of Bubonic Plague in South Africa" ("El hombre que se sintio responsable por la epodemia de peste bubonica en Africa del Sur") deals with Mr. Average Man who struggles to support his family and suddenly falls into a job which he can only keep by suggesting a way to beat the competitors for the sale of meat to the natives of South Africa. In desperation he suggests the use of rat meat, the only cheap meat left on the market; it's either that or lose his job. He is sure his bosses are too humane to actually consider this; however, they congratulate him for his astuteness and give him a raise. The meat goes to South Africa, the natives eat it and die of the bubonic plague. The bosses blame Mr. Average Man and fire him for his inhumane attitude. Mr. Average Man is destitute. Furthermore, his wife rejects him because he became so inhumane during the time of his success. He feels sorry for the natives of South Africa. But what troubles him most is that he doesn't know what he would do if faced with the same choices again, because, "after all, five million pesos are five million pesos."

The third playlet is entitled "The Man Who Turned Himself Into a Watchdog" ("El hombre que se convirtio en perro"). A man who has been unemployed for a long time is so desperate that, when he is told the only opening is for a watchdog, he takes the job. Little by little he takes on some of the characteristics of a dog, to the point that his wife, during a moment of tenderness, withdraws the hand he wants to kiss because she feels instinctively that he is going to bite her. Enraged, he quits his job and decides to assert his humanness; but after a few months of unemployment he is driven to take another job as a watchdog. He sacrifices everything for his wife, until one day he learns that she is pregnant and doesn't want the baby because it might turn out to be a dog. The fable ends with the cast as actors (i.e., their real selves) addressing the public and saying that if, one day, a member of the public were obliged to take the job of watchdog, well, that would be another story.

The play is performed by three actors and one actress who, in the course of its forty-five minutes, go in and out of sixty-two roles to act and to comment on the social situation. They take on the characteristics of each role in view of the audience. Reactions have varied through the more than five-hundred performances by La Compania de Teatro Bilingüe. Poor Mexicans, intellectuals, blacks in the United States, and prisoners have tended to consider the play a lesson in social realism. Rich Hispanics have decried it as communist propoganda. Middle-class American intellectuals and critics have tended to see it as agit-prop. Clearly the experiential range of the public was always part of the lesson.

Now: Many critics have referred to this and other scripts of Dragun as "Brechtian." Brecht, I feel, would have been proud of such a thorough disciple who put his methods to such excellent use. The problem is that, when Dragun wrote Historias para ser contadas he had never heard of Brecht and had not been in a position to be under Brecht's influence, not even indirectly. Specifically, Dragun, both publically and to me as his translator and director, has flatly denied any influence of Brecht. Rather, he states in the preface to his works, and has reiterated many times since, that he was strongly influenced by the sianete, a kind of entertainment akin to vaudeville that is an integral part of the tradition of Argentine theater. At the time that he wrote Historias para ser contadas he had been a swimming

coach recently turned actor/playwright. He developed the play for his small company of actors out of a good ear for market place gossip. As he heard the old people talk, he suddenly felt liberated. He felt their technique opened up the whole theatrical process. By means of gossip, he could have four actors take on a great number of roles of any variety, unhampered by any of the casting conventions usually encountered in the theatre; all they had to do was tell and act out a story.

As to the matter of social reference and didactic purpose spoken to the public by the actor as him-/herself, this was the least innovative of the techniques Dragun employed, because he was raised with it. Latin American theatre has for a long time been strongly social theatre for reasons similar to what made Brecht write social lessons for the stage. The sense of hopelessness and helplessness before seemingly meaningless cruelties, the anger against oppressors and against those who take advantage of the downtrodden (as felt by the Germans after World War I), the apparent meaninglessness of life despite all ideals about how it might be lived, have been part of the Latin American heritage for painful centuries. Latin American playwrights did not need to import a technique to deal with these problems. They simply had to (and still have to) address the senselessness of national life the best way they could, and the direct way of using theatre as a public forum came about as a consequence. It is no accident that serious theatre in Mexico frequently ends in a "debate," which is a dialogue between those who presented the play and those who witnessed it, and this debate usually deals with socio-political problems. As a director of plays in Mexico, I have participated in dozens of such debates after presentations of Historias para ser contadas and many other plays. The critic Mario Benedetti has described the situation well: that while there have certainly been European influences, it would also be useful to attempt to evaluate Latin American literature and theatre vis-a-vis influences that the indigenous life and culture has produced.

My personal observation of Latin American theatre, mainly in Mexico, but in other Latin American countries as well, is that it falls into three categories. The first is the boulevard type of theatre, mostly warmed over and frequently unimaginative Broadway musicals catering to the comfortable middle-class and dealing with middle-class comfort as a fragile thing not to be broken. This is the theatre that makes money. The second kind is the theatre of intellectual elitists, usually people somewhat erudite about European and Amero-European literature. Very few of these people venture out of their enclaves either physically or emotionally. They deal with the rest of the country as if it were somewhat primitive and provincial, sometimes with compassionate condescension, more often with distaste. They are very serious about their theatre, but since their theatre does not recognizably deal with life outside their intellectual enclaves, their theatrical tastes seem to turn from one European movement to another as if they were mere fads. This group currently finds Brecht much in vogue. Then there is the third class of theatre, poorly attended and performed in inadequate places; I saw a magnificent play of this type entitled Un kilo de pueblo in a "palenque," or cock-fighting arena, in Lima, Peru. Admission to these plays is either free or for a nominal admission charge. This kind of theatre is the true theatre of public forum. Usually it goes unheeded by those who attend theatre of other kinds, but occasionally it abrades the national conscience, as did El extensionista by Felipe Santander ("The Government Man," my translation),

and everybody tries to identify himself with it after failing to sabotage it.

Recently "Brechtianism" has been discovered by the theatrical elite of Mexico City, just as other European approaches to theatre have been discovered, taken up with reverence, and then discarded. For this elite, Brecht has been performed, usually badly, rarely quite well, as was the case with Luis de Tavira's presentation of The Good Woman of Sezuán under the auspices of UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México). Apart from actual Brecht, critics attached to this elite tend to see numerous "Brechtian influences," sometimes even to the amazement of the playwrights and presenters involved. A few years ago when La Compañía de Teatro Bilingüe presented Schubert's Last Serenade by Julio Bovasso at the Teatro Galeón of the Belles Artes Nacionales, we were very happy to receive a good review from Bruce Swansey in El proceso, Mexico City's equivalent of the Saturday Review. In it, he revealed to me and the members of the company some of the things we never reckoned with in the production. I translate:

"The heirs of Brecht are numerous. Some have understood epic theatre as an unfurling of methods of attracting the attention of the spectator, that is to say, of a set of pliable rules. Others have understood that such a display of possibilities is at the service of transforming the scenic apparatus and not simply remolding it. For that reason it was interesting to be present at the performances of two plays of 'teatro chicano' and one of 'teatro norteamericano' by La Compañía de Teatro Bilingüe of Texas in the Galeón Theater... Reality is discovered, not reconstructed. The action consists of attitudes, which, at the end, upsets established order in subversion among the actors, causing the reader, a kind of lion tamer, to flee."

Well and good; we do not gainsay Swansey. We thank him for pointing out to his readers that our short stay merited their immediate attention, especially since we presented a kind of theatre new to Mexico. We did use the presentational technique. We did unfold tyrannies to the point where those who had come to comply in acting out their appointed destinies finally rebelled and overthrew the tyrant, just as Swansey wrote. We are glad to know that we are indebted to Brecht for this. But we did not realize how much. We thought we were presenting a farce in the tradition of Chaplin and Molière, masters of social farce. And we thought we had thrown in a curve or two that we ourselves had originated!

SOME NOTES ON BRECHT
AND THE BRAZILIAN DICTATORSHIP

Leslie Damasceno, Princeton University

As in most of Latin America, Brecht has been a major influence on the Brazilian theatrical scene from the 1960s until the present. This influence has been threefold and intertwining: 1) since the 1950s, Brecht has been one of the most frequently presented foreign playwrights, a particularly significant fact given the use of Brechtian plays during the years of military repression (1964-1979); 2) readings and interpretations of Brechtian technique and theory have informed both theory and presentation of political theatre since the early 1960s; and 3) Brechtian theories have found an intentional complement and parallel in the revalorization of specifically Brazilian theatrical traditions of popular and cabaret forms that have marked the alternative political theatre of this period.

Keeping these factors in mind and concentrating on the manner in which the Brazilian productions and assimilation of Brechtian ideas have answered more to the spirit of Brecht than to the letter, I'd like to describe briefly three theatre experiences done or conceptualized during the first period of the dictatorship, 1964-1968. In retrospect, these years are known as the "golden age of protest culture:" the dictatorship installed by the 1964 coup had not yet defined its path, to the degree that, within some sectors of the left, there was hope for a relatively quick return to democracy. This hope was smashed with the December 1968 implementation of an Institutional Act that abrogated all civil rights, effectively instituting a state of siege that lasted until the amnesty of 1979.

For the participants of the cultural left, the period 1964-68 was aluded to as the political impasse--a moment of stagnation and indecision--and they wasted no time in taking advantage of available cultural spaces and carving out new ones. Founded in the 1950s, Teatro Oficina came to the forefront of theatrical invention in the late 1960s. In response to the growing repression of the dictatorship, and under the leadership of its primary director, José Celso Martinez Correa, Oficina developed a political aesthetic of aggression in its work noted for its inventive inversions and grotesque caricatures of the stereotypical "exotic-erotic" images commonly held of Brazil (which, it should be noted, were not only held abroad, but also by many Brazilians). This is evidenced in Teatro Oficina's 1967 staging of Oswald de Andrade's O Rei da Vela (The Candle King). An extended parable of imperialism and cultural corruption, O Rei da Vela tells of the rise and downfall of Abelardo I, a businessman who has captured the candle monopoly (symbolizing both economic underdevelopment and unreliable cultural illumination), and whose fortune is based on usury and pandering to the oligarchy. The dramatic action and double-edged moral revolves around the replacement of Abelardo I by Abelardo II, who, having assessed the rise of the multinational corporations, usurps Abelardo I's place by employing more sophisticated models of exploitation.

Written already in 1936, it is highly doubtful that Andrade's text was influenced by Brecht. The use of parable, grotesque realism, farcical pacing of episodes interspersed with poetic asides and other techniques of estrangement can all be seen easily in the cabaret or vaudeville traditions of Brazilian theatre as well as traced to the cultural-cannibalistic aesthetic of the Brazilian modernist movement on the 1920s. (1) Celso's staging emphasizes these characteristics, as some have said, to the point of excess (e.g., the presence of huge mushroom-like phalluses on the stage).

The question of excess in the production was addressed by Bernard Dort in a response to a production of O Rei da Vela in Paris in 1968. In a review aptly entitled "Theatre in a Trance State," (2) Dort remarked on the "referentiality" of the production, pondering that it was, without a doubt, meant for a Brazilian public:

Where we might suspect that José Celso Martinez Correa and his actors plunge into and are lost in bad taste, the spectators of Sao Paulo and Rio are not fooled: they know that is their own vulgarity that is being staged. But that's not important. The essential thing remains that this grotesque and daring "disguise," far from distancing us from historic reality, brings us back to reality through theatrical means. It's impossible not to remember the Threepenny Opera. Brecht also tried to put before the public of 1929 the image that the public put forth of itself in its "culinary entertainments."

Then Dort adds: "But maybe Brecht and Weill remained a little timid, little prisoners of the 'good taste' of our occidental theatrical tradition. Teatro Oficina went further: all the way to the grotesque grimace and obscenity." Dort ends by calling the work "theatre of insurrection," a furious and desperate theatrical appeal to revolt.

However, many theatre people in Brazil found Zé Celso's aesthetic of aggression reactive, if not reactionary. Fernando Peixoto, a member of Teatro Oficina at the time and Brazil's most active Brecht scholar, remembers with relief the decision to stage Galileo Galilei in 1968. For Peixoto, this would put Oficina back on the right track, where theatre would be a critical, not simply reactive, reflection of society. Galileo was chosen as a text that would defend critical scientific knowledge, believing in reason as an instrument in the battle against repression. Despite that intention, in practice, the carnival scene was privileged to the extent that, in Peixoto's opinion, it ended up contradicting the text. The actors jumped out into the audience, coercing the public up onto the stage. In successive productions, the carnival scene became longer and more elaborate until it was, in stage time, way out of proportion to the original text. Concomitantly, Galileo was played as a Rabelsian character: gluttonous, sensual, and mercurial in a way that heightened the frenzy of the carnival scene.

Although Peixoto's criticism is accurate, he also admits that Galileo presented a hypnotizingly vigorous force emblematic of the times. The overriding tone of the production was an exacerbated climate of oppression, starting with the reading in English of Brecht's 1946 statement before the House Committee on Unamerican Activities and ending with a metal grate

slashing down on the stage apron, separating the players from the audience. While behind these bars torture victims were scene in penumbra, Galileo danced along with the other actors to a hit rock & roll song, generally oblivious to the tortured or to the sounds of heavy military bombardment that punctuated the music.

The dress rehearsal for Galileo took place literally on the eve of AI-5, December 12, 1968. In that respect, it is easy to understand how what Peixoto hoped would be a critically analytical response to the political impasse of 1964 would explode into such frenetic energy, as if in presentiment of even darker days ahead. In fact, I believe that this also sheds some light on the privileging of the con-man/trickster Galileo over that of the sage, an emphasis that echoes Brecht's own changes in rewriting the play in 1945.

Although Teatro Oficina's aggressive readings of Brecht are the main subject of these notes and were perhaps the most interesting direct intersections with Brecht during this period, it should be noted for further study that Brecht was a significant influence on the two other most important groups of the time, Teatro Arena and the Grupo Opinião.

The didactic function prevails in the process of identification at the heart of the Teatro de Arena's coringa, or joker system, which is Augusto Boal's conceptualization of Brechtian epic theater. In his book Theater of the Oppressed, (3) Boal speaks of the four techniques he adopted for Tiradentes, a 1967 musical he co-authored with Gianfrancesco Guanieri (4): the distancing of actor from the dramatic character; grouping the actors according to the perspective of the narrator; a deliberate eclecticism of genre and style; and the presence of music.

The innovative element of the coringa is the use of the joker figure in juxtaposition with the fixed figure of the hero/protagonist. The joker functions much like the Brechtian narrator. A wild card that can jump into the game at any moment, assuming the role of any character (except the hero) in order to explicate, comment, or provide narrative continuity, he presides over the production. The hero figure, on the other hand, is played straight: the actor never steps out of character, striving to maintain an illusionistic identification with the audience. Boal explains his adherence to the "inviolate hero" by referring to Brecht: "Brecht sang: 'Happy is the people who need no heroes.' I agree. But we are not a happy people; for this reason we need heroes. We need Tiradentes." (5)

Aware of the danger of mystification in this system's treatment of the hero, Boal elaborated an intricate dramatic structure to keep the historical myth in analytical perspective; according to the system, a play was invariably to be structured in seven parts--a dedication, a short explanation, an episode, a chorus, a commentary, an interview, and a closing exhortation. However, like many a myth bred in response to hard and confusing times, the coringa system suffered from an overly rigid structure that burnt out its own inventiveness. (6)

The alliance of Brechtian technique with popular forms of national theater was essayed by the Grupo Opinião in 1966, with its production of Se correr o bicho pega, se ficar o bicho come (If you run, the beast will catch you, if you stay he'll eat you). (7) Written in verse by Oduvaldo Viana

Filho and Ferreira Gullar, O Bicho draws heavily on the traditions of "literatura de cordel," the small booklets of popular verse sold in weekly fairs throughout Brazil, to treat thematically the impasse of development and democracy in the post-coup period. These booklets often tell fantastic tales of scoundrel-tricksters ("malandros"), interweaving yarns of their exploits of survival and triumph with social critique and political commentary.

O Bicho's con man, Roque, pursues his goals in a small town in the Northeast part of Brazil where the social hierarchy, economic depression, and rewards of rural politics are sustained by hired guns. All the characters in the play are equally corrupt and corruptible, and the dramatic situations of moral compromise are played out on political and sexual levels. Roque's financial and love problems are resolved: towards the end he gets the girl and discovers he is the heir to his ex-boss's plantation. However, recognizing this as an unsatisfying theatrical ending to the play, Roque steps out of character and proffers a choice of three endings to the audience --the enigmatic and final ending being the announcement of the restoration of the Brazilian Monarchy.

The play's structure is episodic, merging the situational progression of scatological farce in the Northeast with the author's concept of episode and structure in Brechtian epic theatre. This was not an altogether successful undertaking, as the play's most cogent critic, Luis Carlos Maciel, demonstrates. Maciel challenges the use of Brechtian technique, pointing out that in Brechtian epic theatre the action is multiplied and explicated, but not dispersed, as in O Bicho. (8) He also laments the problematic politicization of the "malandro," seeing it as a sign of the times that con-artistry represents the highest possible level of consciousness.

Indeed, the work of all three of these important groups during the first period of the dictatorship stressed a heightened theatricality in their treatment of character. Stated in other terms, it signified a renewed urgency in relation to the quest for national identity, or character, that has long preoccupied Brazilian cultural activists. Despite Boal's short-lived attempt to create an ethically coherent hero, is the anti-hero who has prevailed, one whose lack of character (or bad character) and alienation point to the contradictions and conditions of a tenuously developing nation.

Back in 1960, when activists still hoped for a socialist revolution, Viana Filho made an observation about Brecht that, along with the carnivalesque and use of the popular, goes far to explain the Brazilian artist's affinity with Brecht. In an article entitled "Alienation and Irresponsibility," he comments: "Brecht doesn't measure man ethically by his courage, by his honesty, by his sincerity--the ethical measure of man, for Brecht, is alienation. In this sense, we are all of bad character. That's what is fundamental." (9)

Notes

1. For further discussion of this production see David George, "The Rein-
terpretation of a Brazilian play: 'O Rei da Vela,'" Ideologies and Litera-
ture II: 8 (Sept.-Oct., 1978), 55-64.
2. Cited in Dionysos: Teatro Oficina (Rio: MEC/SNT, 1982), 78.
3. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985). Besides containing
Boal's theories on the theatre of the oppressed and descriptions of his the-
atrical practice--elements that have been extremely influential in pol-
itically-committed theater worldwide--this book also gives Boal's compar-
ative ideas on Hegel, Brecht, and Aristotelian theater.
4. Tiradentes is a historical analogy in which dramatized history--the un-
successful insurrection against the Portuguese crown led by Tiradentes in
1791--is clearly analogous to the attempt and failure of the Goulart govern-
ment to withstand foreign pressures in 1964.
5. Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed, 190.
6. For further discussion on the problems of the coringa system and of the
inevitable mystification of the hero (despite Boal's technical precautions),
see Anatol Rosenfeld, "Herois e Coringas" in Mito e o heroi no moderno tea-
tro brasileiro, (Sao Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1982).
7. Opinio ("Opinion") formed right after the military coup of 1964 from
the nucleus of the disbanded CPC (Center of Popular Culture), a radical
group who used theatre to politically mobilize throughout the student and
intellectual community, expanding into working class and rural sectors.
8. This discussion is elaborated in "O bicho que o bicho deu," Revista Ci-
vilizacao Brasileira No. 7 (1966), 289-298.
9. "Alienacao e irresponsabilidade," Vianinha: Teatro, Televisao, Politi-
ca, ed. Fernando Peixoto (Sao Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1983), 62.

PANORAMA DE LA CREACIÓN COLECTIVA EN EL NUEVO TEATRO COLOMBIANO

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I. INTRODUCCION

La creencia de que la Creación Colectiva es un invento movimiento del Nuevo Teatro Colombiano, o una "presunta moda pasajera impuesta," carece de argumentos sólidos y serios si hacemos una breve retrospectiva, sobre algunos de los momentos más relevantes que conforman la historiografía del teatro hasta nuestros días. En éstos, sin lugar a dudas encontraremos latente la presencia constantemente activa del trabajo en equipo, a través de distintas formas de organización y producción del hecho teatral.

Si nos remitimos por ejemplo, a ese gran fresco multicolor de expresiones teatrales antitéticas, llenas de vigor y rigor, que tienen lugar en el largo período de la Edad Media (Siglo V al XV), donde se logran gestar los grandes Misterios cristianos, hasta el Carnaval con su polifonía profana o bufa, pasando por las representaciones de la Comedia Pastoril, la Farsa, la Sátira, las Alegorías y Moraldades religiosas, veremos que tanto los monjes que dialogan con Dios y el pueblo sabio en su necedad que lo hace con el Diabolo, financian y elaboran sus espectáculos con la plena participación creadora, tanto de los monasterios, como de los gremios y corporaciones artesanales, a través de una rica distribución del trabajo especializado. (+)

No otra cosa aconteció en Italia durante los siglos XVI y XVII, cuando los actores deciden lanzarse a tomarse las plazas públicas, en búsqueda de la reconquista del trabajo dramático del actor y del grupo mismo, trabajo que les había sido usurpado y enajenado por una forma incompetente de creación y producción, presente en los dramas de discursos rimbombantes e intrascendentes, escenificados por demás a altos costos, en escenarios grandilocuentes llenos de oropel, en concordancia con los intereses de la casta dominante del momento. Ahora, la particularidad renovadora de este movimiento que se conocerá en lo sucesivo como la Comedia dell'arte, estará precisamente en la capacidad y maestría del actor para entrar en el juego de la improvisación, a partir de una serie de estructuras temáticas abiertas, conocido como Canovacho, el cual está previamente codificado o acordado por los actores antes de la representación.

Pero al mismo tiempo, que esta ejemplar forma de creación colectiva ponía contra la pared a este teatro acartonado, conseguía irradiar su influencia sobre otras propuestas teatrales de Europa, hasta tal punta que invade los cimientos del teatro del Siglo de Oro español, con un Lope de Vega y un Calderón de la Barca a la cabeza, quienes se preocuparon por llevar a la escena de sus populares Corrales, la problemática de su tiempo presente tal como lo exigía el público de su época, del cual se hace vocero testimonial el propio Lope de Vega en su manifiesto estético, "Arte nuevo de hacer comedias."

Asimismo, conseguirá penetrar hondamente en el gran movimiento insular del teatro Isabelino, desatado por una pléyade de dramaturgos que forjan sus obras al calor del trabajo con los actores; no otra cosa nos puede explicar la serie de versiones y modificaciones que van teniendo los textos de Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare y Ben Johnson, entre otros.

Años más tarde, sucedería otro tanto en Francia, reflejado nítidamente en el modo de creación y producción dramática de un Molière, quizá el último bastión de la Comedia dell'arte allí, donde actores y dramaturgo desarrollan una relación de mutua ingerencia en el producto artístico final.

Como podemos ver, en estos cinco interesantes momentos del teatro, a veces aislados a pesar de su contemporaneidad, como sucedió con el teatro del Siglo de Oro y el teatro Isabelino, logran coincidir perfectamente en la generación colectiva de sus respectivos espectáculos, aún obedeciendo a estéticas bien particulares, pero que guardan como rasgo esencial el empleo de estructuras dramáticas y de producción abiertas.

Pero con la aparición del Melodrama burgués del Siglo XVIII, y su posterior evolución hacia el gran Drama, en el siglo XIX y principios del XX, el arte del actor nuevamente vuelve a ser neutralizado y desplazado, al entrar el Naturalismo recalcitrante e hipnótico, a tal punto extremo, que el éxito de los dramaturgos retóricos, se medía por la cantidad de lágrimas derramadas por los actores en trance, pues llorar y reír abundantemente en escena, era la "exigencia" típica del público momento, impuesta por el gusto burgués en los diferentes teatros europeos y asiáticos.

Sin embargo, como rechazo a este ^{sembrado} panorama, empieza a producirse progresivamente, la mayor revolución estético-teatral de nuestro siglo, en ambos continentes, donde toman parte diversos movimientos vanguardistas, empeñados no sólo en la ruptura del Naturalismo fotográfico, sino también en la recuperación del lenguaje teatral, y en la función social de la obra de arte y por ende del trabajo en conjunto. Por ello, dentro de este marco nos es común ver a un Alfred Jarry propinando una de las primeras arremetidas con su célebre, "Ubú, Rey," en París, en 1896; años más tarde en la Unión Soviética, Meyerhold realizará montajes experimentales de textos clásicos nacionales y europeos con actores jóvenes, aplicando su técnica biomecánica y retomando los aportes de renovadores del espacio escénico como Gordon Craig y Adolphe Appia; mientras tanto en Alemania, Bertolt Brecht tras abandonar el movimiento Expresionista, emprende con Erwin Piscator y Max Reinhardt, la formación de una nueva dramática alemana, que explore nuevos temas y medios formales para revelar los contenidos del momento presente, a un nuevo público de un país que está casi a la puerta de constituirse en la segunda nación socialista, aspiración que será brutalmente frustrada.

Mas sin embargo, a pesar de la extrema persecución, el proyecto continuó desarrollándose, aunque por vías estilísticas diferentes: Piscator lanzaba su Teatro Político, persupuestado en una especie de mostrario de la maldad capitalista y de la bondad socialista, concretizado en proclamas revolucionarias, paros, huelgas, discursos, mítines, guerras, así como un sin número de partes de victoria o derrota, registrados en pizarras estadísticas; quedándose en términos generales en el plano político-agitacional, llevando consecuentemente al espectador a la catársis.

En tanto el Teatro Epico de Bertolt Brecht, echando mano de las tradiciones orientales y de los más extraordinarios momentos del teatro occidental, no sólo presenta el estado de las relaciones sociales entre los hombres, sino que mediante el empleo del Efecto de Distanciamiento, incertado en estructuras dramáticas abiertas, posibilita e incita al espectador a la transformación de la realidad, mediante la diversión y el aprendizaje, al alejarlo del ilusionismo.

Aquí cabe recordar, las especialidades que se desarrollan en esta nueva dramaturgia, es decir, lo que el actor da al dramaturgo, lo que éste entrega al actor, lo que el músico proporciona al espectáculo, así como las propuestas del escenógrafo, utilero, luminotécnico, vestidor, etc.

Por lo anteriormente señalado, vemos que al teatro--por su especificidad--es y ha sido siempre, salvo escasas excepciones, un hecho de creación colectiva.

II. LA CREACION COLECTIVA

No es nuestra pretensión hacer una amplia exposición para definir este concepto, que para algunos es sobrentendido y para otros no deja de ser polémico. Intentaremos brevemente ubicar este fenómeno en el contexto teatral colombiano.

En nuestro movimiento confluyen fundamentalmente dos formas de organización del acontecimiento teatral: el Teatro Tradicional-Comercial representado en la Compañía, (1) donde se manifiestan unas relaciones de orden jerárquico: Empesario-autor-director-actores y finalmente el público; en tanto el Nuevo Teatro, que irrumpe en la década del sesenta, rechaza abiertamente la jerarquización en la organización y producción del espectáculo, y asume el trabajo de manera colectiva a través de la estructura de Grupo; a la cual nos referiremos a continuación.

El trabajo del actor en un grupo exige una plena participación, y su campo en la elaboración de los montajes aumenta, al abandonar su papel de simple subordinado del gusto del director o autor, convirtiéndose en un elemento determinante de la creación, producción y difusión del espectáculo; por ello sus responsabilidades son mayores. Ya no le bastará crear personajes "vivos" para la escena, sino que en determinadas etapas de la mise en scene, debe asumir las veces de director y/o dramaturgo.

Sus funciones serán múltiples: propone temas, sugiere imágenes, improvisa, diseña escenografías-vestuario-utilerías, escribe... y actúa frente a unos espectadores. Por esta versitilidad en su oficio, Santiago García define acertadamente como "un actor del nuevo tipo ... un sujeto creativo ... capaz de resolver las tareas de actor-creador-promotor" (2).

Dentro de esta nueva organización del hecho teatral (cambio de estructura) irrumpe la creación colectiva como uno de los métodos de trabajo para dar respuesta a las inquietudes sociales, temáticas, y formales de los actores y del público del momento. Este fenómeno, en buena parte, está motivado fundamentalmente por la falta de una tradición teatral, así como por la carencia de textos cuyos temas y tratamientos dramáticos respondieron a las

exigencias y necesidades de los grupos en gestación. Era palpable, el interés por desarrollar una dramaturgia nacional que diera cuenta de lo nuestro, de nuestra idiosincracia, de nuestra historia, de los conflictos y contradicciones que conforman ese largo camino hacia la búsqueda de nuestra identidad. Es en este sentido que los grupos deciden crear sus propias obras.

Los grandes acontecimientos sociales que se sucedían en el país, tales como el asesinato del caudillo liberal Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, el 9 de Abril de 1948; la caída del General Rojas Pinilla en 1957; y muchos otros momentos álgidos de nuestra historia, a no dudarlo, han sido materia prima generadora de textos críticos que denuncian las verdaderas causas de los fenómenos sociales contemporáneos.

En la creación colectiva, asimismo, se plantea una nueva relación con el público, en la que éste--"sin olvidar sus intereses"--aporta y critica al producto artístico mediante un proceso dialéctico que afirma o modifica sus presupuestos estéticos, del cual resultará un nuevo proyecto. Es así, que en este marco los espectadores ya no serán "convidados de piedra," al ser su papel más activo y participativo, dejando de lado la identificación con las personajes, al entrar a discutirlos en unas circunstancias dadas en la escena. Estas tesis son asimiladas directamente del Teatro Epico alemán, propuestas por Brecht, que plantea la mutabilidad del comportamiento de los hombres "en condiciones político-sociales que son siempre posibles de transformar." (3)

El teatro como proyecto colectivo es una creación de todos, en el cual no se eliminan las especialidades, sino por el contrario se fomentan y conviven. Por ello es frecuente hallar al interior de un grupo, un dramaturgo que bajo estas premisas recoge las propuestas de actores, escenógrafos y demás miembros en campos específicos, hasta lograr configurar el producto teatral, resultante de la serie de interrelaciones que se gestan en el proceso de trabajo como expresión globalizadora del Grupo.

III. LAS PRIMERAS EXPERIENCIAS COLECTIVAS

Algunos investigadores coinciden que en Colombia, vanguardia del movimiento del Nuevo Teatro en América Latina, la primera creación colectiva tiene lugar en el año de 1969 con la obra BANANERAS del grupo de Teatro Acción, con textos y dirección de Jaime Barbin. El proceso seguido en esta experiencia lo podríamos describir así: primeramente se investiga el tema de la matanza de las bananeras, en 1928, en sus aspectos político-sociales, luego se hace una propuesta de fábula primaria; y posteriormente se desarrolla la etapa de improvisaciones, de las que irá surgienda a través de la aplicación del eje paradigmático (selección) el material que va a constituir, tanto el texto escrito, como el discurso de montaje.

Ahora, los rasgos característicos de las primeras experiencias colectivas reside en el marcado interés de los grupos hacia los grandes acontecimientos sociales, tales como: las huelgas, los movimientos populares, las migraciones campesinas a la ciudad, el gran período de la violencia en Colombia, y muchos otros; los cuales son abordados desde perspectivas estéticas distintas. Otras fuentes de enorme valor a las que se recurre, son: la novela, las leyendas populares, crónicas periodísticas, poemas, canciones y

demás manifestaciones de nuestra cultura. A mediados de la década del setenta, proliferan grupos que asumen la creación colectiva como método de trabajo; algunos de manera ligera y apresurada, mientras otros por su experiencia teatral la llevan a cabo con mayor rigurosidad. Entre las primeras aparecen notables vacíos manifiestos en el afán de querer expresarlo todo, quedándose en la mera exposición y denuncia superficial de los hechos, al no existir la preocupación, tanto en el tratamiento del contenido como de la forma, por develar las causas profundas que generaban los acontecimientos enunciados. Esta concepción inmediateista, conllevó no sólo al empobrecimiento artístico del hecho teatral, sino que simultáneamente se encargó de alejar a los espectadores de las salas de teatro, pues los intereses de estos grupos obedecían más a unos presupuestos ideológicos que estéticos. Aparece entonces el Teatro Pancarta, conocido también como Teatro Panfleto y/o Agit-Prop (agitación y propaganda). Estos experimentos están innegablemente influenciados por las tesis de Erwin Piscator (1894-1966), y su Teatro Político, quien revolucionó la escena mundial con audaces montajes, en los que proclamaba que el discurso ideológico debía estar por encima de todo propósito artístico. A este respecto, valdría traer a cuento el momento en que el gran director encargó a Gasbarra escribir una Revista Histórica Teatral gigantesca, que abarcara en forma resumida los períodos revolucionarios culminantes en la historia de la humanidad, desde la Rebelión de los Espartanos, hasta la Revolución Rusa, dando a la vez a través de formas didácticas, un estudio de todo el materialismo histórico. Gasbarra entregó poco después a Piscator el texto "A Pesar de Todo"; obra que se representó con motivo de la celebración de un aniversario mas del K.P.D. (Partido Comunista Alemán), en 1925. (4)

Tanto en Colombia como en el resto de América Latina, abundan ejemplos bastante elocuentes: el grupo "Cuatro tablas" del Perú lleva a escena "Oye," una serie de recuento histórico del país; "S + S = 41", del grupo Ollantay de Ecuador, donde se habla de los acontecimientos de la guerra de 1941, involucrando en las acciones a personajes altamente esquemáticos, tales como Superman y Sherlock Holmes. Por otro parte, en nuestro país, no dejan de ser harto reveladores algunos títulos de obras como: "Colombia, pueblo valiente, pueblo combatiente," "Campesino, campesino," "Los cuentos de Lobocombia," "Hasta cuando siempre," "Cada vez que hablas se te crece la nariz, Pinochet," "Patria te adoro en mi silencio mudo," "Arr," "Oye, Colombia oye."

Por el contrario, quienes han sido más exigentes, abordan el acontecimiento teatral de manera metódica y procuran ahondar en él a través de un trabajo de investigación concienzudo. Una vez superada esta etapa, entran el terreno propiamente teatral contando quizá con la más importante herramienta de la creación colectiva, nos referimos a la improvisación. En esta punto aparecen propuestas de personajes, situaciones, acciones dramáticas, conflictos ... que sugieren disposiciones escénicas (arregement), concatenación de las acciones, y otros ... que van estructurando el espectáculo teatral. De esta vía metodológica han resultado obras que han aportado significativamente a la configuración de una naciente dramaturgia nacional; en ellas podemos apreciar constantes temáticas, cuyas diferencias están en el tratamiento dramático, el cual es portador de los propósitos artísticos de cada grupo.

A continuación, nos vamos a referir a las obras más representativas en el tratamiento de acontecimientos históricos nacionales: Sobre la Revolución de los Comuneros, cabe destacar las siguientes obras:

NOSOTROS LOS COMUNES

Creación colectiva del Teatro La Candelaria. Estrenada en 1972. Una de sus particularidades era el campo de improvisación que manejaban los actores a partir de unas pautas y diálogos preestablecidos, un tanto a la manera del "canovacho" de la Comedia dell' Arte.

Dentro de la dramaturgia de autor, señalamos: EL GRITO DE LOS AHORCADOS de Gilberto Martínez y LA GENTE DEL COMUN de Joaquín Casadiego Martínez. En cuanto al tema de la Masacre de las Bananeras, tenemos:

SOLDADOS

De Carlos José Reyes, basada en capítulos de la novela "La Casa Grande," del escritor colombiano Alvaro Cepeda Samudio. Esta obra fue la primera que escenificó La Casa de la Cultura (hoy Teatro La Candelaria), en el año de 1966, con dirección del autor. Años más tarde el Teatro Experimental de Cali reelabora esta texto en colectivo y realiza varias versiones.

BANANERAS

Creación colectiva del Teatro Acción, en 1969, con la dirección de Jaime Barbin.

LA HUELGA GRANDE

Grupo de Teatro Escalinatas con dirección de Orlando Gómez. Estrenada en 1972.

LA DENUNCIA

Teatro Experimental de Cali. Representada en 1974, bajo la dirección de Helios Fernández.

De la problemática de la Violencia en Colombia mencionamos:

EL ABEJON MONO

Creación colectiva del Teatro La Mama, bajo la dirección de Eddy Armando y Arturo Alape. Estrenada en 1971, Basada en las supersticiones religiosas de los campesinos guerrilleros.

GUADALUPE AÑOS SIN CUENTA

Del Teatro La Candelaria, con dirección de Santiago García. Estrenada en 1975. Trata de las luchas de las guerrillas liberales en los Llanos Orientales, comandadas por Guadalupe Salcedo, en los años 40 y 50, quien se convierte en personaje símbolo de ese momento histórico, siendo tratado en la fábula como una estructura ausente. La obra obtuvo el Premio Casa de las

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Américas, en 1976, y ha sido montada en México, Angola y los Estados Unidos. Por su constante vigencia y popularidad alcanzadas dentro y fuera de las fronteras nacionales, la obra ha sido considerada como una de las más significativas surgidas en el proceso de creación colectiva, y un verdadero clásico latinoamericano.

Estas, constituyen a nuestro juicio, los grandes primeros aciertos del teatro en colectivo.

Otras obras de indudable importancia, inscritas en este largo proceso de creación teatral, son las siguientes:

TUPARAMOS 1780

Ceración colectiva del Grutela de Cali. Dirección de Danilo Tenorio. Estrenada en 1972. El grupo otma como pretexto la vida y revuelta de Tupac Amará para hacer referencia al momento presente.

LA CIUDAD DORADA

Trabajo colectivo de la Casa de la Cultura (hoy Teatro La Candelaria). Estrenada en 1973. Participo en el proceso de trabajo el poeta Nelson Osorio. El interés del grupo estuvo en el tratamiento de las migraciones campesinas a la ciudad, producidas por la ola de violencia política. Dirección de Santiago García.

I TOOK PANAMA

Teatro Popular de Bogotá. Textos de Luis Alberto García y dirección de Jorge Alí Triana, esta obra se estrenó en 1975. En ella se procura develar los mecanismos implementados por los EE.UU para lograr la separación de Panamá de Colombia, en aras de sus intereses imperiales.

CUANDO LOS BLANCOS NO FUERON MALOS

Creación colectiva del Teatro Experimental Colombiano--TEXCO--, con textos y dirección de Mario Castaño. La obra está basada en los genocidios y represión de los que fueron víctima los indígenas pertenecientes a la comunidad Cuiba. Estrenada en 1977.

LA GUERRA Y LA PAZ

Representada por el grupo de teatro GESTO, con dirección de Jorge Herrera, en 1977, donde se trata la temática de la Guerra del Vietnam.

LA PRIMERA INDEPENDENCIA

Teatro Popular de Bogotá. Textos de Luis Alberto García. Estrenada en 1977. Se refiere tanto al período de nuestra independencia, como a la Patria Boba.

LOS DIEZ DIAS QUE ESTREMECIERON AL MUNDO

Creación colectiva del Teatro La Candelaria. A partir del texto del libro homónimo del escritor norteamericano, John Reed, sobre la Revolución de Octubre, el grupo al tiempo que recrea este gran acontecimiento, muestra contemporáneamente la crisis de una forma de producción teatral. La obra fue estrenada en 1977, y obtuvo el Premio Casa de las Americas en 1978. Dirección de Santiago García.

MAMA QUINAYMANA

Del teatro Experimental CODHE, con dirección de Carlos Parada. Basada en la leyenda del Conde de Cuchicute. Presentada en 1977.

LA INCREIBLE Y TRISTE HISTORIA DE LA CANDIDA ERENDIRA Y DE SU ABUELA DESAIMADA

Tomando como base el texto homónimo del escritor colombiano, Gabriel García Márquez, el grupo EL LOCAL hace un riguroso trabajo de investigación sobre el autor y del contexto donde se realiza la historia. Estrenada en 1977. Dirigida por Miguel Torres.

EL PODER DEL JUEGO

A partir de la obra "Erase una vez un rey" del grupo ALEPH de Chile, el Teatro Experimental America Latina--TEAL--hace una creación colectiva ubicando en nuestro medio los personajes, su lenguaje, y sus vivencias. Estrenada en 1978. Dirección de Carlos Sánchez.

JOSELITO CARNAVAL BUSCA SU COSA LATINA

Del Teatro La Mama. La obre parte de la historia del personaje JOSELITO de los Carnavales de Barranquilla, y está estructuradora en tres módulos que se desarrollan autonomamente, en los cuales se plantea los conflictos y contradicciones del protagonista, cuya esencia es la búsqueda de su identidad. Se representó por primera vez en 1978. Dirección de Eddy Armando.

BLACAMAN

Creacion colectiva del ACTO LATINO, tomando como base el cuento homónimo del escritor Gabriel García Márquez. Presentada en 1978.

PESADILLA O LA HISTORIA DE UN COMUN

Teatro Experimental América Latina--TEAL. Estrenada en 1979. Trata de la historia de un hombre del común que sufre una pesadilla donde se reflejan sus problemas y conflictos, expresados en la marginalidad. Dirección de Carlos A. Sánchez.

LA RACION DE ARLEQUIN

Grupo TEATROVA. Del estudio de la Comedia del Arte surge esta creación colectiva. Textos y dirección de Carlos Parada. Estrenada en 1980.

DOMITILLO, EL REY DE LA RUMBA

Creación colectiva del grupo Teatro Estudio Calarcá--TECAL. Afronta la temática de problemas como la vivienda y el desempleo, mostrando a unos personajes en situaciones críticas que los tiene al borde del marginamiento total. Obra de teatro callejero, estrenada en 1980, bajo la dirección de Crispulo Torres.

LA CABEZA DE GUKUP

Teatro Taller de Colombia. El grupo crea una historia fantástica, donde se vaticina la victoria de la Esperanza (Reino de la Libertad) sobre La Opresión Milenaria (Reino de la Barbarie). Estrenada en 1980. Textos de Juan Carlos Moyano.

HISTORIA DE UNA BALA DE PLATA

Montaje del Teatro Experimental de Cali--TEC, con textos de Enrique Buenaventura. Estrenada en 1980. El grupo se plantea en estos momentos hacer una Trilogia del Caribe. Esta primera obra parte de la leyenda del emperador Cristóbal Jones. Dirección de Enrique Buenaventura.

GOLPE DE SUERTE

Creación colectiva del Teatro La Candelaria. Esta obra es el resultado de las investigaciones que el grupo adelantó sobre el tráfico de drogas, el lavado de capitales, y el desarrollo del capitalismo en Colombia. Para la estructuración de la historia, la base fundamental la constituyó el estudio y aplicación de las funciones actanciales que se presentan en el Cuento Maravilloso. Este aportó significativamente a revelar los intereses y funciones sociales de los diferentes personajes. Estrenada en 1980. Dirección de Santiago García.

JUAN PUEBLO CUENTERO

Teatro GESTO. Basada en el período de la Independencia colombiana, desde la "Patria Boba" hasta la Batalla de Boyacá. Representada en 1980.

DIALOGO DEL REBUSQUE

Escenificada por el Teatro La Candelaria. A partir de los textos de Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas, como "Historia de la Vida del Buscón, llamado Don Pablos, ejemplo de vagamundos y espejo de tacaños," y otros escritos, Santiago García, emprende una propuesta dramática en la cual está presente tanto el momento histórico español, como nuestra realidad contemporánea. Estrenada en 1981, bajo la dirección del autor.

LA CARRETA COMBATE ENTRE EL SUENO Y LA RAZON

Del Grupo de Teatro Experimental Latinoamericano--GRUTELA. Estrenada en 1982. La obra cuenta la historia de un campesino que ha olvidado su pasado pretexto que sirve al grupo para presentizar las causas de la violencia como constante en la historia de nuestro país.

EL ENMALETADO

Montaje del grupo ESQUINA LATINA de Cali. Nace de la investigación sociológico de los aspectos de la violencia política nacional, y en particular la del Valle del Cauca. La obra incluye aspectos del género policíaco. Estrenada en 1982, con la dirección de Orlando Cajamarca.

VIVA EL CIRCO

Grupo Nuevo Teatro de Pantomima. A raíz de un taller de investigación sobre la pantomima, el grupo halla pequeñas estructuras que les posibilita contar historias breves teniendo como referencia lo cotidiano. Presentada en 1982. Dirección de Misael Torres.

OPERA BUFA

Teatro experimental de Cali--TEC. Es la segunda obra de la trilogía del Caribe, la cual asume el asunto de las dictaduras centroamericanas. Textos y dirección de Enrique Buenaventura. Estrenada en 1982.

MISTERIO BUFO

A partir de los textos de Dario Fo, el Teatro Experimental América Latina--TEAL--propone una historia que estructura y da coherencia a una serie de cuadros que conforman la pieza. Dirección de Carlos A. Sánchez. Estrenada en 1982.

BIOFILO PANCLASTA

Teatro Gesto. La base de esta obra la constituyen las crónicas del escritor y periodista santandereano, J.A. Osorio Lizarazo, sobre la vida del anarquista colombiano, Ramón Lizcano. La obra fue estrenada en 1983, con textos y dirección de José Assad.

LA TRAS-ESCENA

1984. Esta obra de La Candelaria, escrita y dirigida por Fernando Peñuela, presenta un conjunto de acciones y situaciones en que se ven involucrados un grupo de artistas, es un régimen de facto.

PEQUEÑO PODER

1985. Teatro Estudio Calarcá--TECAL. Con una historia sencilla y ágil, el grupo recrea los acontecimientos del 9 de Abril de 1948. Dirección de Crispulo Torres.

CORRE CORRE CARIGUETA

1985. Santiago García, director del Teatro La Candelaria, crea esta obra a partir del texto anónimo "Tragedia del fin de Atau Wallpan." Dirección del autor.

LA VIDA TIENE MAS-CARAS

1986. Los integrantes del grupo El Callejón del Gato, realizaron una serie de improvisaciones centradas sobre el período de la "violencia" en Colombia, dando como resultado un embrión de texto que se fue desarrollando con los aportes del público y de los actores mismos. Texto y dirección de Alvaro Rodríguez.

LOS TIEMPOS DEL RUIDO

1986. El Teatro La Mama, aborda la problemática de la ciudad a partir de un incidente callajero, donde se permite mostrar y revelar los distintos intereses y contradicciones de los personajes atrapados y enajenados por la rutina, lo que les impide pensar y elegir su propio destino. Dirección de Eddy Armando.

EL MUNDO PERFECTO

1986. Teatro Quimera. Tomando como punto de partida algunos textos del escritor libanés, Jalil Gibrán, el grupo crea un argumento y estructura que da la coherencia a la obra. Dirección de Carlos A. Sanchez.

LA BODA ROSA DE ROSA ROSAS

1986. De Hugo Afanador del Centro Cultural "Gabriel García Márquez." El acontecimiento que sirve de telón de fonda es el asesinato del líder liberal Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, el 9 de Abril 1948.

EL VIENTO Y LA CENIZA

1986. Con textos y dirección de Patricia Ariza del Teatro La Candelaria, al igual que "La Tras-Escena" y "Corre Corre Carigueta," esta obra se basa fundamentalmente en el período de la Conquista y consecuentemente en el proceso de Aculturación.

TODOS DE LA UNA

El grupo El Taller de Cali crea en 1986, a partir de historias populares de Pedro Rinales en especial, una interesante historia sobre el arte del timo. Dirección de Guillermo Piedrahita.

III. METODOLOGIA

Con el objeto de permitir una comprensión más amplia de la creación colectiva en nuestro país, reseñaremos brevemente, las dos propuestas metodológicas básicas para el estudio de este fenómeno artístico en el teatro.

El crítico cubano, Eduardo Vázquez Pérez (5), distingue tres formas de creación en la elaboración del texto literario para el espectáculo:

- 1) La que parte de un texto ya elaborado para el teatro. Proceso de montaje que se inicia con el estudio mismo del texto, por parte de todos los integrantes del grupo en conjunto.

- 2) La que en la preparación del texto sólo interviene un grupo de los integrantes del colectivo, y luego se prosigue en forma similar a la interior en mención.
- 3) La que tanto el texto, como la puesta en escena son elaborados por todos los miembros del grupo. Esto no incluye que el tratamiento final de la pieza sea encargada a uno de los integrantes del colectivo, pero sólo después que el grupo ha improvisado el material producto de la investigación en todas las áreas.

Vásquez Pérez, ubica en esta última forma a la mayoría de los conjuntos que realizan este tipo de teatro en América Latina. Por su parte, Beatriz J. Rizk (6), investigadora teatral, estudia la experiencia del Teatro La Candelaria con la obra "Diálogo del Rebusque" que inicia una nueva forma de asumir la creación colectiva. "El grupo--dice--partió de un texto ya escrito en su integridad por el director Santiago García en el montaje trabajó según lo estipulado por Vásquez Pérez, en la primera categoría."

A nuestra manera de ver, La Candelaria continúa dentro de esta perspectiva cuando el colectivo aborda la investigación de los temas de La Conquista y la Aculturación. En este proceso, tras una indagación del asunto en cuestión, algunos actores hacen propuestas dramáticas que son confrontadas por los demás integrantes mediante improvisaciones, que las afirman, niegan o enriquecen, fruto de una relación dinámica de trabajo.

Una segunda propuesta, la formula el T.E.C., expuesta en el "Esquema General del Método de Trabajo Colectivo" (7), las más elaborada a nivel teórico en América Latina, que podría sintetizarse así:

1) La Investigación.

Esta primera etapa desde el momento mismo de selección del tema, hasta la formación de comisiones que se ocupan de estudiar los distintos aspectos político-económicos y sociales, con el objeto de precisar el marco contextual general del proyecto artístico. Igualmente acontece cuando un grupo toma punto de partida un texto ya escrito.

2) La Elaboración del Texto.

(Véase propuesta de Vásquez Pérez)

3) Las Improvisaciones.

El método sugiere varias clases de improvisaciones, que en la praxis constituyen distintas formas de acercamiento o distanciamiento del texto elegido.

En este punto, el actor trabaja como autor al proponer imágenes para desarrollar situaciones o personajes presupuestados en el libreto.

4) El Montaje.

Esta nivel da por terminadas las improvisaciones, iniciándose un proceso de selección de los diversos lenguajes contemplados en el discurso del espectáculo teatral.

5) El Público.

En algunos debates se ha llegado a plantear, que en el Nuevo Teatro importan más los procesos de trabajo que los resultados; se dice por ejemplo, que cuando las obras se presentan ante el público, aún no están "terminadas."

De ahí que en ese proceso de confrontación, entre escena-público se generan nuevas versiones, que posteriormente serán polemizadas y transformadas dentro de una relación dialéctica permanente: "... una nueva praxis exige necesariamente una nueva teoría y viceversa" (8) valga citar los casos de obras como "Soldados" y "A la diestra de Dios Padre" de T.E.C.

IV. REFLEXIONES.

A manera de reflexión podríamos decir, que la creación colectiva como estrategia de trabajo del Nuevo Teatro Colombiano, ha contribuido significativamente al desarrollo de una dramaturgia nacional. Mas sin embargo, no debemos dejar de señalar ciertas falencias que se presentan en algunas instancias o lenguajes del espectáculo. Entre las cuales citaremos:

La dependencia o subordinación del texto escrito al género literario; el poco desarrollo de la dramaturgia del Actor, por tener que estar al frente, muchas veces, de la totalidad del quehacer teatral, lo cual necesariamente conlleva el descuido de su entrenamiento técnico y por ende de su oficio; la débil consistencia de los personajes como núcleos dramáticos; así como el abandono el plano estético-formal al recargarse el privilegio hacia el plano contenidista.

Pero igualmente la creación colectiva, ha ido generando nuevas dinámicas durante estos últimos años, en las que se puede apreciar una notable cualificación, a través del desarrollo de las especialidades, en algunos campos específicos, como el caso del autor y del director, básicamente.

En este sentido, "podríamos entonces pensar que la etapa que vivimos actualmente con los trabajos colectivos y los aportes del actor a una nueva dramaturgia nacional, son apenas los aportes previos--tentativas--y significativos a una gran dramaturgia que vendrá más adelante," como ciertamente lo afirma Carlos José Reyes (9).

Por ello consideramos, que este tema no ha sido analizado, ni debatido lo suficientemente; a pesar de la gran cantidad de polémicas de que ha sido objeto; de ahí la necesidad imperiosa de proseguir en su indagación a partir de la praxis misma del movimiento teatral colombiano.

Notes

(+) Los subrayados pertenecen al texto.

1. Forma que no logró establecer cimientos profundos en nuestro medio, lo cual permitió un desarrollo más holgado del Nuevo Teatro, al contrario de países como México y Argentina, donde la Compañía signó la actividad teatral.
2. Santiago García, Teoría y Práctica del Teatro (Bogotá: Ediciones Ceis, 1983).
3. Bertolt Brecht, Escritos sobre Teatro (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva Visión, 1980).
4. Erwin Piscator, Teatro Político (La Habana, Cuba, 1973).
5. Eduardo Vázquez Pérez, "El teatro de creación colectiva en América Latina," en El Teatro Latinoamericano de Creación Colectiva (La Habana, Cuba).
6. Beatriz J. Rizk, "El Nuevo Teatro Latinoamericano: una lectura histórica" (Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literature, E.U.)
7. Cuadernos de la CCT. Nos. 3 y 4, págs. 97 e 156. Sin fecha de edición.
8. Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, Semiótica y Estética: "Acción Social y Procedimiento Dialéctico en el Teatro" (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1976), 45.
9. Carlos José Reyes, Quehacer Teatral 2 (Bogotá, Colombia, 1984).

P R O D U C T I O N R E P O R T S

T W O " B R E C H T I A N " H A M L E T S

BESSON'S HAMLET IN HELSINKI

Clas Zilliacus, Abo Akademi, Finland

Elseneur/Helsinki, 1979

Helsinki, le 29 octobre, juste mois après la première. Besson est revenu pour quelques répétitions. Nous en profitons pour passer en revue les coupures de presse, pour juger nos juges. Il y en a un bon paquet.

L'Hamlet suédois de Besson a stupéfié, on l'a encensé et on l'a sifflé. C'est sa première mis en scène dans le Nord. Les comptes rendus critiques vont du ravissement à la réserve; à mi-chemin se manifeste une attitude de perplexité polie. Pour la critique l'Hamlet "à la Besson" sera d'un accès plus facile en 1985; ou le Lilla Teatern reprend la pièce dans une version finnoise. Dans l'intervalle, les années ont accompli leur oeuvre souter-raine.

Sans doute cette dernière version est-elle différente de la version suédoise; plus nette et avec ponctuation plus marquée. La fable est exposée sous une lumière plus forte; le jeu a aussi plus d'autorité. Mais il n'est pas sans importance que la renommée de Besson au milieu des années 80 soit parvenue jusqu'ici. Cela facilite la tâche de la critique, en Finlande. Ce qu'on sait en Europe, on le sait chez nous aussi.

Mais nous nous trouvons maintenant six ans plus tôt, et la critique a alors cet avantage que confère l'ignorance. Elle risque moins de rapporter ce qu'elle a entendu sur Besson, elle a plus de chance de rapporter ce qu'elle en a vu. Sur elle pèsent moins les trompeuses séductions de l'interprétation d'autrui que de la sienne propre; elle parle davantage de ce qu'elle a pu découvrir par ses propres moyens. Elle jouit d'un espace de liberté, la liberté de trouver par elle-même.

C'est une liberté qui risque facilement d'être absorbée par une autre force: la tradition du classique. Les comptes rendus critiques font apparaître qu'il est à la fois possible d'assister à la représentation, de découvrir la l'histoire qu'elle présente, et cependant de revenir à la tradition à laquelle la représentation cherche à s'attaquer, dont elle veut se détacher. La fable, portée par la lecture de Besson, a été reçue, mais pas les éléments par quoi la tradition est contestée. Puet-être la fable a-t-elle été empruntée à la conférence de presse ou au programme, en les paraphasant--sans passer par la scène?

Nous regardons les descriptions de Rosencrantz et Guildenstern, les sympathiques patentés de la tradition hamletienne. Les comptes rendus s'obstinent à les présenter ainsi. Ils sont représentés comme des espions, des agents qui, de leur propre chef, se sont introduits dans Elseneur pour nuire à Hamlet. Ils sont livrés. Pourtant, il n'y a dans la représentation pas une

geste, pas un indice visuel laissant supposer une telle dénonciation--pas plus que du texte lui-même ne peut être tiré le moindre indice verbal.

Nombre de critiques prétendent avoir vu, en tant qu'intention déclarée: non pas la tragédie du prince, mais ce qu'annonce le titre de l'in-quarto, une tragicall historie, le condensé d'un proces historique séculaire, depuis l'époque légendaire de Saxo jusqu'au temps de Shakespeare, que Besson a voulu mettre en scène. Mais cela reste une constatation gratuite, sans conséquences pour l'édification du commentaire critique. Celui-ci se focalise sur les différents rôles; en utilisant volontiers des critères psychologiques pour assurer la cohésion d'ensemble.

Pourtant, c'est à travers des situations et des relations que la représentation véhicule le propos essentiel auquel est soumis tout le reste, la fable. Et aussi à travers la façon dont on passe d'une scène à l'autre, en une cuolée continue et sans transitions. Les scènes sont les phrases qui constituent la récit d'Hamlet. La disposition des scènes est due à Shakespeare: l'apport de Besson est dans la façon dont est présentée et mise en valeur la syntaxe, contrairement à l'usage consistant à choisir dans le lexique de la pièce les adjectifs et à se reposer sur eux.

L'effet de montage produit par les passages d'une scène à l'autre, la fonction qu'ils ont dans la pièce de commenter le déroulement de celle-ci, tout cela n'apparaît guère dans les comptes rendus. Apparaît surtout l'impression que cela est trop rapide; et ce qui est rapide est superficiel. La profondeur est quelque chose qu'on doit trouver dans le personnage dramatique, dans le drame en soi. Si c'est ici que réside la profondeur, c'est ... qu'il n'y a pas de profondeur.

Tous les rôles portent un masque, et c'est là quelque chose de très bizarre. Dans un pays comme la Finlande, le style de jeu naturaliste est devenu une seconde nature; l'emploi, d'un bout à l'autre, de masques ne peut être qu'une extravagance. Ezio Toffolutti a fourni dans la notice de programme quatre raisons justifiant l'emploi conventionnel de masques. La critique en prend bonne note.

On cherche des excuses ou manifeste un refus. Les commentaires ne prennent jamais une attitude de défense active; ils ne trouvent pas, par exemple, d'arguments favorables en dehors de la liste préétablie des raisons. L'une d'elle serait que les masques mettent en évidence la fable en compliquant et en empêchant l'effort d'analyse psychologique. Mais la critique ne va plus dans ce type de lecture. Ce qui est fait est bien, mais ç'aurait été mieux comme c'était.

Lorsque la critique adopte une attitude protectrice, c'est pour défendre une lecture traditionnelle. C'est avant tout aux deux Hamlet qu'elle réserve un traitement de faveur: au père outragé; au fils abreuvé d'outrages. L'interprétation donnée de fils si manifestement inséparable de ce qui va être raconté (la reculade comme manifestation d'énergie; l'hésitation comme action), qu'une critique fondamentale sur ce point impliquerait un rejet de tout le projet de Besson. C'est pourquoi on s'occupe du père, on le défend contre le mise en scène.

C'est là une des manœuvres récurrentes de la critique. Ce sont les rôles, et non pas les actions qui leur confèrent tour à tour leur existence sur la scène, qui sont considérés comme le matériau théâtral de la pièce. Appliquée aux deux Hamlet, cette façon de voir implique que l'interprétation donnée de l'un peut être exacte, cependant que celle de l'autre est tout à fait fautive. La lecture peut ainsi être mise en pièces, être partiellement acceptée, être accusée de comporter des incohérences.

Dans le cas d'Hamlet père et fils, cela implique le rejet du paternalisme comme thématique de la représentation. Dans cette mise en scène, le paternalisme constitue, pour la fable, un élément central de violence exercée sur l'esprit, c'est le maintien de l'autorité féodale, du code d'honneur médiéval, de devoir de vengeance qui est négation de l'individu. C'est là ce qui est concrétisé dans les rapports de père au fils. La vengeance tient à Hamlet junior par des liens assez lâches dont il cherche à se libérer. Ce qui est mis en scène c'est une scène de famille. Pour cela il faut au moins être deux, manifestement de la même famille.

Toutefois, c'est dans les rôles qui gisent principalement les incohérences, et (dans la mesure même où s'affirme la figure charismatique du héros de la pièce) avant tout dans Hamlet lui-même. Comme Besson il est à la fois moteur et l'objet de la dialectique de la pièce. Comme il n'est pas une donnée, campée sur la scène avant le lever de rideau, sur qui la pièce n'aurait pas le moindre effet, il a le temps, au cours de la représentation, d'être mille fois infidèle à son prétendu caractère. Ce qui est encore accentué par le fait que l'Hamlet de Besson ne contient pas, à la manière classique; seulement une péripétie, mais un grand nombre: la pièce n'est pas une tragédie orientée obstinément vers son dénouement, avec son entassement de cadavres; c'est une histoire sur l'Histoire, avec toutes les sortes possibles de péripéties pleines d'enseignements, de tournants où un autre chemin aurait pu être choisi. C'est là que la fiction, selon Aristote, est supérieure.

C'est sur ce point que la critique éprouve le plus de difficultés. Elle avait d'ailleurs d'illustres prédécesseurs: Tolstoï estimait qu'Hamlet n'était pas vraisemblable; un personnage sans personnalité; le prince, et par conséquent Shakespeare, sont nus comme le roi du conte.

C'est dans l'article critique de Mme., paru dans le plus grand quotidien suédois de Helsinki, que s'affirme le plus directement le trouble causé par la représentation. Dans l'article on relève neuf occurrences des mots "conséquent," "inconséquent," "incohérence:" de la part d'un metteur en scène expérimenté comme Besson, on se serait attendu à une interprétation d'ensemble cohérente; c'est là un défaut presque incroyable; masques et costumes étaient cohérents, de même la version du texte; ce qui était tout particulièrement cohérent c'était le traitement d'Hamlet par le metteur en scène; incohérentes aussi la figure donnée à Horatio et les relations entre les deux.

A chaud, le jour même de la parution de cet article, Besson a composé une réplique. Elle a échoué dans ma poche et n'a jamais été publiée. Cela valait peut-être aussi bien, ou pas plus mal. La voici.

Il existe en allemand une plaisanterie grivoise: deux font l'amour; la femme dit: "Entre ou sors, mais j'en ai assez de cet éternel va-et-vient." Voilà le petit bourgeois.

Il n'y a rien qu'il craigne plus que le mouvement, la contradiction, l'unité des contraires, bref, le fait que tout ce qui est nature est changement.

Comique ou tragique! Surface ou profondeur! Sublime ou polissonnerie! Bien ou mal! Juste ou faux! Normal ou fou! Etre conséquent! C'est l'état, pas des processus, qu'il veut avoir autour de soi.

Rien ne doit venir menacer la fragile sécurité de son existence satisfaite d'elle-même. Si quelque chose le met dans un état d'insécurité, il est perdu! Il devient alors brutal.

Un printemps, Strindberg écrivit d'innombrables lettres à Siri von Es-sen; deux par jour, prétend-il. Dans l'une, il l'envoie au diable, dans l'autre, il la prie de venir le voir dans l'archipel de Stockholm où il se trouve. C'est ce qu'on appelle des dispositions d'esprit changeantes, et non pas un état de folie, affirme-t-il, bien que sachant que les apparences peuvent être contre lui. "Car le philistin n'est capable que d'un sentiment à la fois!" C'était au printemps de 1889, il y a cent ans. Comme le temps passe; parfois c'est à peine si on le remarque.



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HAMLET AT THE PFALZTHEATER KAISERSLAUTERN DIRECTED BY HEINZ-UWE HAUS

"Publikumsnähe" für "Hamlet"

1.

Die Fassung bekennt sich zu den Übertragungsprinzipien Eschenburgs, die die im Text verborgenen Elemente der vorshakespearischen Volkstheatertradition und ihre zeitgenössische (Nach-) Wirkung vermitteln wollen. Dementsprechend versucht sie, die widersprüchliche Einheit von (theatralischer) Konvention und (gesellschaftlicher) Kommunikation für gegenwärtige Spiel- und Sehgewohnheiten faßbar zu machen. Die Brüche, Ecken und Kanten in Sprache und Vorgängen werden als Hinweise auf eine "komplementäre Perspektive" (Weinmann) verstanden, die nur noch die schauspielerische Vermittlung zu leben vermag - vorausgesetzt, diese dringt mit ihren Erfindungen in die heutigen gesellschaftlichen (menschlichen, ethischen, ästhetischen etc.) Verhältnisse ein.

2.

Die teilweise Neuübersetzung bestätigt einen solchen "gestischen" Gehalt, also mögliche Interessen, Probleme, Ziele, Fragen, kurz: die Veränderbarkeit des Bestehenden und seine Widersprüchlichkeit.

Beibehalten wurde auch Eschenburgs "prosaischer" Zugang, was der Aufgabenstellung dieser Fassung als "work in progress" entspricht.

3.

Die Konzeption verwirklicht sich in Bezügen/Mitteln, die aus der plebejisch-(komischen) Tradition kommen, also der "platea" entstammen und die "locus"-Handlung kommentieren, kritisieren, karikieren und/oder parodieren. Hamlet steht zwar im Konflikt von feudaler Welt und bürgerlich-humanistischem Ideal, doch läßt ihn Shakespeare ständig über beide Seiten, ihr Ansprüche und Konsequenzen reflektieren und schließlich die Gewalt als ersten und nötigen Schritt zur humanistischen weiterweisenden Veränderung erkennen. Die Figur wird zerstört durch die äußeren (gesellschaftlichen) Bedingungen wie durch die inneren Zweifel als deren Reflex, die Zögern und Zeitverzug bedeuten. Flexibel zwischen Theaterwirklichkeit und Spielwelt lebt Hamlet seinen vielzitierten Konflikt aus: zergliedert, zerfasert, beschimpft, belacht ihn - durchdenkt ihn also und damit Möglichkeiten seiner Herr zu werden. Vom "vice", der in Richard III. noch lebendig fortlebt, ist in Hamlet nurmehr seine publikumsbezogene Dramaturgie, seine nun dem "Bösen" gefährlich werdende "impertinency" erhalten.

4.

Auch zwischen den "Monologen" steht Hamlet immer zugleich auf der Bühne und im Publikum. Als Vorderbühnenfigur repräsentiert er keine der beiden Seiten allein, sondern vielmehr etwas real-historisch Udenkbares, Utopisches: den närrischen Prinzen oder prinzlichen Narren. Weder in der Handlung noch im Spannungsfeld zwischen Handlung und Vorderbühne ist Hamlets Konflikt zu lösen: zu spät gekommen für den Prinzen, zu früh für den (bürgerlichen) Humanisten, ist er nur in der Vorderbühnen (= Volks-) figur in einem Utopia der Welt zwischen Bühne und Realität zu Hause. Die veränderungsbedürftige Welt, der Horatio ideale Hoffnung und Fortinbras handfeste "Fürstenerziehung"/Raison verheißt, kommt ohne utopisches (überlebens-)Spiel nicht aus.

Heinz-Uwe Haus

"EPISCHE VERSUCHE I" IN FRANKFURT AM MAIN, ODER:
 WIE MAN MIT ZWEI STÜHLEN UND EINEM TISCH DEN
GUTEN MENSCHEN VON SEZUAN AUFMÖBELT

Sabine Groß, University of California-Santa Barbara

Juli 1989. Besuch im Frankfurter "Mousonturm," in dem seit einigen Jahren eine Reihe freier Theatergruppen ein Heim gefunden hat. Vorstellungsbeginn: 21.30 Uhr, bei Sommerhelle und drückender Hitze. Auf der Bühne--nein, Bühne ist verkehrt, impliziert räumliche Abgrenzung von den Zuschauern, die hier einfach an zwei Seiten des Raumes sitzen--auf der Spielfläche also: ein Tisch, zwei Stühle. Seitlich ein Klavier. Hier also soll Brechts Guter Mensch von Sezuan stattfinden, ein Brecht-"Renner" seit langem, ein Stück auf der Kippe zwischen gesellschaftlichem Radikalismus und herzerreißendem Kitsch; und um so schwerer zu präsentieren, weil es zu den Brecht-Klassikern gehört, die Zuschauer womöglich schon durch Schullektüre abgestumpft oder auf sozialkritischen Applaus eingeschworen sind. Wie also wirkt man der klassizistischen Glättung, den eingeschliffenen Rezeptionsmustern entgegen, ohne in hektische Modernisierung auszubrechen?

In die nach Besetzung verlangende, vielsprechend karge und--wie sich zeigen wird--sehr wandlungsfähige Ausstattung treten ein: ein Klavierspieler (Lutz Köhler), zwei Spieler (Angelika Sieburg und Andreas Wellano). Nicht zu sehen: der Regisseur (Rolf Johannsmeier), das vierte Mitgleid dieses Ensembles. Alle Beteiligten waren Mitglieder des "Schlicksupp Theatertrupp," der ab 1980, als er mit Brechts "Brotladen" debütierte, die Szene der freien Gruppen in Frankfurt mitprägte. Ihr Ziel an diesem Abend: Nicht wie "Bildschirm, Leinwand und Fotografie (...) quadratische Dokumente für die angebliche Wirklichkeit" liefern, sondern "mit der ureigenen Grammatik des Theaters dem voyeuristischen Bilderkonsum Ereignisse entgegensetzen." Das Duo, das da auftritt, sich auf Tisch und Stuhl niederläßt: das sind nicht Gestalten aus dem Stück, sondern Schauspieler, die sich--und uns, den Zuschauern--einen Weg in das Stück bahnen: indem beide zunächst Regieanweisungen vorlesen, in der dritten Person sprechen, einen Dialog beginnen (s. Foto). Das von Brecht geforderte Nichtverschmelzen des Schauspielers mit der Rolle wird hier ganz nach Brechts Anweisungen vorgeführt und auch weiterhin konsequent durchgehalten. Während der gesamten Aufführung stellen die beiden Spieler Figuren vor, ohne hinter ihnen zu verschwinden. Die Zweierbesetzung betont durch die zahlreichen Rollenwechsel das Demonstrative, den Zeigecharakter des Spiels. Es sind zwar nur zwei Spieler auf der Bühne, doch ist dadurch die Zahl der Figuren keineswegs auf zwei begrenzt. Oft befindet sich ein ganzes Arsenal von Figuren auf der Bühne, die man zu sehen glaubt, wenn die beiden Spieler sie durch die flinkes Hin- und Herspringen von einer Rolle in die andere aktualisieren: als beleuchte ein Scheinwerfer mal die eine, dann die andere Figur. So werden Shen Te, die achtköpfige Familie und der Polizist simultan auf der Spielfläche präsent gemacht, und mit welcher schauspielerischen Virtuosität, mit welchem--auch körperlichen--Witz das erreicht wird, macht Akteuren und Zuschauern gleichermaßen Spaß. Präzise werden die verschiedenen Figuren durch Körper, Stimme und Gestus definiert, bei blitzartigen Rollenwechseln gewinnen kleine Details leitmotivische Aussagekraft. Das Spielen über Geschlechtergrenzen hinweg erfüllt nicht nur eine weitere Forderung Brechts, sondern führt anschaulich vor, daß biologisches

und soziales Geschlecht zwei verschiedene Dinge sind: eine kokett entblößte Schulter--und wir sehen die Hausbesitzerin Mi Tzü (s. Foto); das in Arm gewiegte--imaginäre, aber akustisch eindringlich präsent gemachte--Baby: die Mutter der achtköpfigen Familie tritt auf. Je nach Szene werden zudem die drei Götter--jeder der drei individuell profiliert--abwechselnd von Angelika Sieburg oder Andreas Wellano auch von beiden übernommen. Tisch und Stühle erfüllen eine Vielzahl von Funktionen: Türen, Brücke, Wolke, Trennwand, Abgrund, Streitobjekt (s. Foto)--oder eben Tisch und Stühle. Die mit einem Minimum an Requisiten machbare Illusion wird in ihrer Gemachtheit gezeigt, indem die verwendeten Verfahren gleichzeitig vorgeführt werden. Episch ist eben diese Unvollständigkeit der Illusion. Alle Übergänge bleiben sichtbar und werden betont, wenn die Schauspieler kurz aus der jeweiligen Rolle springen, um das Spiel zu kommentieren und einander--oder dem Klavierspieler--Anweisungen zu geben. Auch das Publikum wird mit einbezogen: z.B. kritisch gemustert, ob sich nicht möglicherweise doch ein Gastgeber für die Götter findet. Selbst die sommerliche Schwüle wird nicht als stückfremd ignoriert, wie es üblich wäre (so geschehen und gesehen zum Beispiel am Abend zuvor im Frankfurter Schauspiel, wo Kleists Zerbrochener Krug stückimmanent korrekt, aber dem Sommerwetter grotesk unangemessen von Schauspielern in Wintermänteln gespielt wurde), sondern ausgesprochen und mitgespielt: im Öffnen und Schließen der Fenster wurde der Konflikt zwischen der Zuschauern und Spielern gleichermaßen zusetzenden Hitze einerseits und andererseits der Notwendigkeit, Polizeimaßnahmen aufgrund nachbarlicher Geräuschbelästigung zu vermeiden, ausgetragen. Das dynamisierte die Aufführung und machte deutlich, daß hier nichts Fertiges abgespult wurde. Überhaupt wurde die Vorlage streckenweise gekürzt, verändert, improvisiert: daraus ergab sich z.B. ein neues und aktuelles Gleichgewicht von Umgangssprache und Stilisierung. Auch dahinter stehen theoretische Überlegungen: man kann Brecht nur gerecht werden, wenn man seine Stücke nicht als museale Reliquien behandelt, sondern als Material, das kritisch auf Brauchbarkeit überprüft werden muß. "Bei Brecht wird vieles falsch verstanden--denn Brecht ist humorvoll, sinnlich, erotisch," sagt Angelika Sieburg--und so spielen die beiden auch. Undogmatisch wird hier Brecht er-probt und dabei ernstgenommen in einer Weise, die erfolgreich Automatismen des Spielens und Zuschauens aufbricht. Ein Beispiel solcher Verfremdung: In einer Reihe von Dialogen (Wang und Shen Te mit den Göttern, Shen Te mit Sun) sprechen die Teilnehmer voneinander abgewandt, ohne Blickkontakt, in verschiedene Richtungen. Man verkürzt die Wirkung dieses Verfahrens, wenn man es platt-symbolisch als Ausdruck herrschender Entfremdung interpretiert. Die Wirkung zunächst: die Kommunikation wird--für Spieler und Zuschauer--der eigentlich unabdingbaren und erwarteten Gesprächssituation beraubt. Damit wird sie erschwert, frag-würdig gemacht, spricht den Zuschauer anders an, als es eine Gesprächsdyade könnte.

Insgesamt: eine spannende und gute Inszenierung--eine Auseinandersetzung mit Brecht, in der das Inszeniertwerden in die Wirkung mit eingeht. Gerade für Kenner des Stücks bietet die Aufführung eine neue Perspektive. Insgesamt hatte sie jene "Deutlichkeit und Leichtigkeit," zu der Brecht selber der ersten Aufführung des Stücks in Frankfurt unter Harry Buckwitz 1952 verhelfen wollte. Also: eine nachahmenswerte Beispiel, dem hoffentlich weitere "Epische Versuche" folgen: abwechslungsreiche und undogmatisch-Brechtgetreue Inszenierungen. Nicht zuletzt: eine Ermutigung, auch einmal mit kleiner Besetzung und ohne schwerfälliges technisches Arsenal an Brecht heranzugehen, die gerade in den USA an Colleges, in (insbesondere kleineren) Deutsch- und Theaterabteilungen fruchtbar gemacht werden sollte.

Die Truppe spielt nicht nur Brecht: sie veranstaltet auf Einladung auch Workshops. Kontaktadresse: Angelika Sieburg und Andreas Wellano, Wolfgangstraße 59, 6000 Frankfurt/Main, BRD (Tel. 069 594913).





I N B R I E F

FROM THE GERMAN INFORMATION CENTER, NEW YORK:

"Wie Bertolt Brecht enterbt wurde"

Die Stadt Augsburg, in der der Dichter Bertolt Brecht am 10. Februar 1898 als Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht geboren wurde und in der er die ersten 22 Jahre seines Lebens verbrachte, hatte ihren berühmten Sohn lange nicht zur Kenntnis genommen: er lebte seit seiner Rückkehr aus der Emigration bis zu seinem Tode 1956 als Kommunist in der DDR, was ihn während der Jahre des kalten Krieges und der deutsch-deutschen Feindschaft im Westen weitgehend unakzeptabel machte.

Seit 1985 gibt es in dem Hause, in dem Brecht geboren wurde, eine Gedenkstätte: Augsburg bekennt sich zu Brecht. Dieses Bekenntnis soll in Zukunft noch etwas deutlicher werden. Die Stadt beschloß, einen Literaturwissenschaftler für die Brecht-Forschung einzustellen. Augsburg hofft angesichts der Veränderungen in der DDR auf eine bessere Zusammenarbeit mit dem Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv in Ostberlin.

In letzter Zeit sind der Augsburger Brecht-Sammlung eine Reihe von Neuerwerbungen geglückt, die am 10. Januar der Presse vorgestellt wurden: unter anderem 39 Briefe Brechts an seine im vergangenen Jahr verstorbene Augsburger Jugendliebe Paula "Bi" Banholzer, Brechts Militärpaß aus dem Jahre 1918 ("Führung: sehr gut; Strafen: keine"), Photoalben, Briefe an seinen Bruder Walter, eine Erstausgabe der Dreigroschenoper, eine Ausgabe des Kapitals von Karl Marx, die Brecht im Jahre 1932 mit Widmung von seinem Berliner Marxismuslehrer Karl Korsch erhalten hatte, Brechts Tauf- und Konfirmationsbesteck sowie das komplette Schlafzimmer von Brechts Mutter Sophie. Die meisten dieser Stücke stammen aus dem Nachlaß von Brechts Bruder Walter.

Die Augsburger Papierfabrik Haindl, in der Brechts Vater beschäftigt war, stellte 100.000 DM für den Erwerb dieses Nachlasses zur Verfügung.

Zu den Neuerwerbungen zählt auch das Testament von Brechts Vater, mit dem er seinen vor den Nazis ins Exil geflüchteten Sohn enterbte und Walter Brecht zum Alleinerben bestimmte.

* * *

(The following introduction to the revised/expanded edition of Eric Bentley's Brecht Memoir [Manchester: Carcanet 1989] is reprinted with permission of Martin Esslin.)

INTRODUCTION: ERIC BENTLEY--BOLTON WANDERER

It is somewhat ironic that Eric Bentley should need an introduction to an English audience. The pioneer translator of Brecht who is often characterized in Britain as being too American in his use of idiom, is, in fact, an Englishman from Bolton, Lancashire. And much, much more than a mere translator and champion of Bertolt Brecht in the English-speaking world: critic, playwright, director, performer, teacher--and moulder of the taste and sensibility of several generations of readers and theater-goers.

In this wide and variegated field of unceasingly energetic activity, the encounter with Bertolt Brecht occupies an important place; and Bentley's Brecht Memoir can be seen as a focal point from which perspectives open up on a multitude of aspects of Bentley's achievement and radiate in a number of directions.

For if Brecht had an important impact on Bentley, Bentley played an equally important part in Brecht's life in America and beyond. Bentley was far more than a mere amanuensis and helper to Brecht. He was big enough to hold his own with him and to assert and maintain his individuality and independent political point of view against the weight and assertiveness of that most self-righteous of geniuses.

That he could hold his own in the debate with Brecht--who either bulldozed his antagonists into the ground of total submission or reduced them to outraged and angry retreat--is an earnest of Bentley's stature. Much as he admired Brecht, he was equally incisive and illuminating as a critic and expounder of Pirandello, Strindberg, Ibsen, Shaw, Wilde, Sternheim and many other important dramatists. It was Bentley who, through his series of anthologies from the classical and modern repertoire, introduced the canon of masterworks of the European stage to America and made them available to the "regional theatre" movement then struggling to be born in the United States.

And, above all, it was Bentley who through his books and his weekly criticism diligently laboured to destroy the prevailing American presumption that the theatre is no more than a branch of the entertainment industry devoted to purveying cheap thrills to audiences bent on forgetting their daily cares; and to assert the function of the "playwright as thinker," of dramas as an instrument of serious inquiry into society and the basic problems of human existence.

In all this he maintained a constant link between theory and practice, directing a number of the world premieres of Brecht's own works; writing an impressive number of his own plays and adaptations; scoring a world-wide success with his documentary drama on the anti-communist witch-hunt in the film industry--Are you now or have you ever been ...--involving, of course, the interrogation of Bertolt Brecht; and performing his own translations of Brecht songs, accompanying himself on his own rickety harmonium--perfect renderings precisely because an untrained voice and a skillfully calculated "non-professional" style provides exactly the effect Brecht himself aimed at: the spontaneity of a real person bursting into song because he wants to make a point rather than "beau-ooo-tiful myuuuusic." Such wide-ranging achievement emphasises the fact that Eric Bentley is a prime representative of an--alas--vanishing breed of artist-critics who combine the erudition and analytical acumen of first-rate academic scholarship with the creativity that allows them to talk of art with the special insight of the practitioner, and to write their criticism in a style that bears witness to their artistry.

Too much literary criticism nowadays is written so badly, in such obscurantist jargon, that it proclaims--all too clearly to a reader with a sense of taste and ear for style--that these critics cannot possibly be

judges of good writing when they themselves so obviously have tin ears and lack the skills of a good writer.

Eric Bentley is one of the dwindling band of critic-scholar-artists whose work, being itself a product of artistic skill (in the tradition of the truly great creative critics from Lessing, Coleridge, Hazlitt, to Shaw and Edmund Wilson) is readable for its own sake, and thus capable of penetrating to the general reader, helping him towards a greater understanding and increased illumination and enjoyment of the arts. It is a saddening aspect of our times that this type of criticism now seems threatened with extinction, as the ever-growing scholasticism, self-reflexiveness, and indulgence in obscurantist jargon (which merely serves to give the appearance of depth to platitudinous and shallow insights) in the academic discourse in this field tends to exclude all but the members of a small coterie of "knowing" insiders.

An essential aspect of a great critic, of course, is his ability to project the image of a "personality" so that the reader can perceive his discourse as the opinion of someone worth listening to, a voice that issues from real authority.

Bentley's personality comes through, clear and strong, in everything he writes. He is a man of immense enthusiasm and immense commitment, forever active on behalf of causes he has embraced, or of individuals he has found worthy of support. His generosity to such individuals, his readiness to campaign on their behalf, is proverbial. The list of those who have lastingly benefited from his support and encouragement is very long. I, for one, figure on that list. I have owed him a great deal.

Bentley's Brecht Memoir is an expression of this aspect of his personality. It is far more than merely a contribution to the biography of a great writer. It is an immensely valuable account of the inter-action of two great personalities at a climactic period of history, at a point where two distinct cultures clashed and interacted.

--Martin Esslin

NEWS FROM THE BRECHT SOCIETY OF AMERICA:

Dwight Steward, President of the Brecht Society of America, reports that Heinz-Uwe Haus (Berlin/GDR) has joined the staff of the BSA electronic journal GESTUS as a contributing editor. Notes Steward: "Recent events in East Germany have increased the opportunity for close relations with BB-land. Also, Uwe is very active in the new political process [see Letters, this issue], working with the Demokratischer Aufbruch party, 'die neue Volkspartei für die vollständige Demokratisierung'! We soon hope to link up via computer with Haus and the DA party and have a regular feature in GESTUS political-cultural climate. Elections have been pushed forward to mid-March, and the outcome could be critical ... to future Brecht studies. We would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in working on this project." (Contact address: Brecht Society of America, 59 S. New Street, Dover, Delaware 19901 USA).

NEW JOURNAL: WESTERN EUROPEAN STAGES

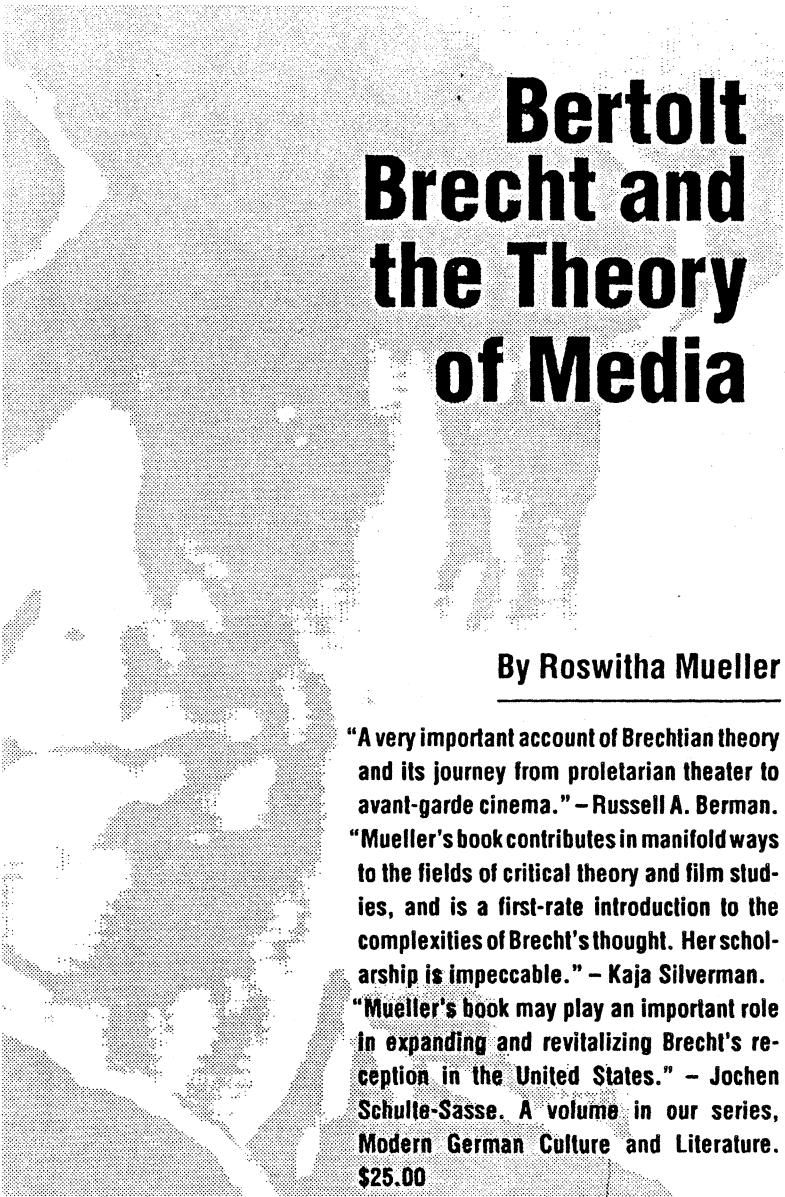
The increasing internationalization of theatre has been an important part of the development of this art in our times. In many countries there now exists some formal structure for the encouragement of international performance, from the great international theatre festivals to individual offerings by foreign companies at particular theatres. Few major theatre cities today do not witness during a season offerings from a variety of other nations. The careers of major modern directors like Patrice Chéreau, Peter Hall, Peter Brook, Nuria Espert, or Giorgio Strehler must be traced from country to country, and undertakings that consciously merge elements from many nations such as Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* or which cannot even be witnessed in their totality without international travel, like Robert Wilson's *the CIVIL wars*, provide striking evidence of the internationalist spirit of modern theatre. The ever-greater cooperation of Europe, certain to increase after 1992, is clearly one of the major sources of this activity.

Despite the close historical relationship of American and European theatre and the tremendous impact that European dramatists, dramatic artists, and companies have had and continue to have on our theatre, it remains very difficult for those interested in European theatre to obtain up-to-the-minute information on the trends, the major new talents and productions, and general news of what is happening on the European stages. Except when major productions tour to America, which happens all too rarely, we hear

very little about what is happening even to the best known figures--the Strehlers, the Brooks, the Steins, the Bergmans, the Chéreaux--unless we are able to locate and read sources in all the major European languages, and of course information on new figures, the major names of tomorrow, is even less accessible.

The Center for the Advanced Study of Theatre Arts (CASTA) at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York presently publishes the *Journal of Soviet and East European Performance*, which seeks to address this problem, at least in a modest way, by providing news and information on the theatres of Eastern Europe. Similarly *Western European Stages* will seek to bring its readers current information on important events, artists, and concerns in the West. Among the regular features will be interviews with important contemporary figures, reviews of productions, general review articles summarizing recent events in a particular city, and articles on current trends, practices, or concerns. The emphasis of the articles will not be upon literary or historical analysis, but on the clear and lively reporting of significant current events and trends in the Western European theatre, both traditional and experimental.

Articles will be contributed by the editors of this journal, but contributions from others are welcome. They should be addressed to the Editor, *Western European Stages*, Theatre Program, Graduate Center, CUNY, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, NY 10036.



Bertolt Brecht and the Theory of Media

By Roswitha Mueller

"A very important account of Brechtian theory and its journey from proletarian theater to avant-garde cinema." – Russell A. Berman.

"Mueller's book contributes in manifold ways to the fields of critical theory and film studies, and is a first-rate introduction to the complexities of Brecht's thought. Her scholarship is impeccable." – Kaja Silverman.

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Zur Wiedereröffnung des Berliner Ensembles am 11. Oktober 1989

Volker Braun

1

Wie unklar ist der Stoff
Der Welt. Zu den Stürmen und Fluten
Den unausbleiblichen Erdbeben
Treten die Beben der Völker und
Der Erdrutsch der Gedanken.

Lange schien es, als stünden die Zeiten
Still. In den Uhren
Der Sand, das Blut, der abgestandene
Tag. Jetzt bricht er an
Der jüngste wieder und unerwartet.

Wo geht es lang oder, bescheidner gefragt
Weiß wer was vorn und hinten ist?
Die Strategien verschimmeln
Wie naß abgebrochene Zelte
Hinter den Flüchtlingen.

Staaten, gebaute Zukunft und gesunken
Ins Gras, das sie fressen. Felsenfeste
Bündnisse im Blutsumpf wankend, und
Die unverbrüchliche Freundschaft
Mustert mißtrauisch
Ihre Abwässer.

Dort hat man den Hunger auf Kommunismus
übergangen und verlangt
Bürgerliche Kost; und da
Macht man reinen Tisch mit der Geschichte
und steht vor dem leeren.

Aber bedenkt
Daß da auch Hunger herrscht
Mit dem Mandat der Massen, Hunger
Nach Gerechtigkeit.

2

Unser Staat meldet seine Erfolge, als hätten
wir die DDR dem Meer abgerungen. Wirklich,
es war ein Meer von Trümmern. Aber die
Trümmerfrauen stehn zum Denkmal geduckt
und um ihre Sockel scheint die planierte
Landschaft zu versanden. Von ferne sieht sie
vielleicht wie eine große Düne aus: ruhiger
Urlaub in der Revolution. Die Einwohner, im-
mergleiche Handgriffe mit so angespannten
Mienen, als würden sie ein Wunder erwarten,
ausharrend, während das Ziel verblaßt, im
Dunkel des eigenen Schattens vor dem Flut-
licht der westlichen Verführung. Sie sehn
sich auf eine Insel versetzt umspült von einer
reißen Strömung, oder ist es das Hoch-
wasser eines heftigen Frühlings, und sie ram-
men Wellenbrecher in die Wiesen oder neh-
men blindlings Platz im letzten Ikarus.

3

SELBSTSCHÜSSE, SCHRECKENSKLAR DIE
WORTE
FEUER IM BRIEFKASTEN
UNTER DER TAPETE DIE RISSE
IN DER SUBSTANZ
BERÜHRE MICH!
DIE ADERN ATMEN IM FELS.

4

Unsere Bühne, Raum bietend
Den großen Widersprüchen
Wird wieder eröffnet.
Der Planwagen der Händlerin
Und der Eisenwagen der Genossen
Stoßen aufeinander. Was für alte
Fahrzeuge, die nicht wenden können!
Ihre sichtbare Schwierigkeit macht uns Mut
Zu einer andern Bewegung. Eröffnen wir
Auch das Gespräch
Über die Wende im Land.

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