Communications from the International Brecht Society. 43-44 2014/2015

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communications 43-44

15th Symposium of the International Brecht Society

RECYCLING BRECHT OXFORD 2016

25 - 29 June 2016

St Hugh's College, Oxford

• Keynote speakers: director and designer Amal Allana (Chairperson, National School of Drama, India), Hans Thies Lehmann (theorist of postdramatic theatre and former President of the IBS), Pulitzer Prize-winning dramatist and translator Tony Kushner, and dramaturg Bernd Stegemann (Schaubühne Berlin and author of *Lob des Realismus*).

• Some 150 Brecht scholars from six continents, with over 100 papers on 'Recycling Brecht' organised in a range of strands, including: Brecht Abroad (from South America to the Indian subcontinent); Brecht as Recycler (with special sessions on the *Modelbooks* and the *Lehrstück*); Brecht in recent and contemporary German theatre (including Castorf's *Baal* scandal); filmic, visual and technological recycling; Teaching Brecht; and Brecht and Translation.

• Workshops and masterclasses on performing Brecht songs, translating poetry, activist theatre and more, with directors, composers, writers and translators including Di Trevis, Dominic Muldowney, Mark Ravenhill and David Constantine.

• Round table discussions with theatre practitioners, translators and writers.

• A broad cultural programme, including: a next-generation production of a new version of *Johann Fatzer*; song recitals by Robyn Archer and Lore Lixenberg (to include newly commissioned settings by young composers); experimental theatre work by Sarah Moon, John Hanse and Phoebe Zeitgeist Teatro; short films; and a cabaret evening by Sphinx Theatre.

Registration opens on 1 November 2015, with an early bird registration fee of US$130 (US$90 student/unwaged), to cover four days of academic programming and lunches.
Accommodation at St Hugh's College will be available at preferential rates. Numbers are limited, so please ensure that you book early.

For full information about the symposium, registration and accommodation, visit http://brecht.mml.ox.ac.uk/ibs-symposium.

brecht.mml.ox.ac.uk

Contents

2014/2015 Report from the IBS Secretary/Treasurer Paula Hanssen

IBS Checking -- pre expenses (includes royalties, back orders, new memberships from 2014 – 2015) $19,827.00

Summary of paid expenses in USD

Brecht Yearbook 38	2200
Shipping	980
Communications 42	2200
Shipping	2000
Database (3 yrs till 2018)	810
Total expenses:	-$8,190.00

Funds available for BY 39 (2014):

mid 2015	$11,637.00
US Money Market savings	$10,622.36

Euro account: Euro 7003,51

Expenses: 50,00 ALG membership

400,00 2016 Symposium grant

conversion: 6553,51Euro = $8,910.00

Projected expenses in 2015/2016

Communications 42 and 43:	$ 4100
+ shipping	900
Brecht Yearbook 39 and 40 + shipping	6000

Synopsis of IBS Membership

Year	Individual	Institutional	Total
2009	75	85	160 (175 projected)
		grown to	
2014	100	88	188

I'll be phasing out as secretary/treasurer, and I'd like to thank the membership, and the treasurer before me, David Robinson. His continued help with the membership database was an extremely important part of keeping the organizational records, though we now use an online database. Many thanks to Marc Silberman for his constant encouragement and suggestions.

Report from the President

In December of 2014 I flew to England in order to participate in a meeting of the planning committee for the fifteenth Symposium of the International Brecht Society, which will take place at St Hugh's College at the University of Oxford from 25-29 June, 2016. Key members of the planning committee are Tom Kuhn (fellow at St Hugh's and, since the death of John Willett, the series editor for the Methuen and Bloomsbury translations of Brecht's works), Erdmut Wizisla (director of the Brecht Archive in Berlin), Stephen Parker (professor of German at the University of Manchester and author of an extraordinary 2014 biography of Brecht, the most important such work in decades), David Barnett (Professor of Theatre at the University of York and author, most recently, of *A History of the Berliner Ensemble* [2015]), Steve Giles (professor emeritus at the University of Nottingham and co-editor, among others, of the Bloomsbury edition *Brecht on Theatre* [2014], as well as of *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political: International Perspectives on Contemporary Performance* [2013]), Charlotte Ryland (lecturer at St Hugh's and author of *Paul Celan's Encounters with Surrealism: Trauma, Translation and Shared Poetic Space* [2010]), and Marc Silberman (professor of German at the University of Wisconsin and, as many IBS members will recall, former editor of the *Brecht Yearbook*). In Oxford the planning committee agreed on a call for papers, on a promising program of theatrical and artistic events to accompany the Symposium (including song recitals by Rybyn Archer and Lore Lixenberg and a new production of Brecht's *Fatzer*), and on a number of exciting keynote speakers, including Hans Thies Lehmann, former president of the International Brecht Society and the major theorist of post-dramatic theater, Tony Kushner, author of the Pulitzer prize-winning play *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* (1993), and Bernd Stegemann (dramaturge at Berlin's Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz and author, most recently, of *Lob des Realismus* [2015]). The topic of the 15th Symposium of the International Brecht Society will be *Recycling Brecht*. This is a particularly appropriate theme in the current constellation, both in Germany and in the English-speaking world—and elsewhere as well—and it is, of course well suited to the sixtieth anniversary of Brecht's death in the summer of 1956. In some ways the 2016 Symposium will pick up where the 2006 Symposium, *Brecht and Death*, left off. That Symposium, which I had the honor of organizing together with my German colleagues Jürgen Hillesheim and Mathias Mayer, commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Brecht's death and took place in Augsburg, the city of Brecht's birth.

I flew to England from Leipzig, Germany, where I was fortunate enough to be able to spend the autumn semester of 2014 working and studying at the Institut für Germanistik and spending a considerable amount of time examining literary documents of the 1950s and 1960s located on the shelves of the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (the former Deutsche Bücherei). Among those documents were the minutes of the January 1956 conference of the Deutscher Schriftstellerverband, in which Brecht participated. As some IBS members know, the University of Leipzig is also home to the vice president of the IBS, Günther Heeg, who runs the extraordinary Institut für Theaterwissenschaft. Professor Heeg also leads a research group exploring "Das Theater

der Wiederholung," on which topic there was a conference at Leipzig's Theater der Jungen Welt in late October 2014 that I was fortunate enough to be able to attend (incidentally, not long after the twenty-fifth anniversary of the peaceful revolution in the former German Democratic Republic, whose commemoration, in Leipzig, also constituted a form of "Theater der Wiederholung").[1] Because of mediocre academic leadership in the state of Saxony and at the University of Leipzig itself, the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft, a unique institute that performs cutting-edge research on the theory and history of performance, has been under threat by budget-cutting administrators; however a storm of protest throughout Germany and the world, together with inspired leadership from Heeg himself, have helped to secure the future of the institute, at least for the time being. I am grateful to my colleague Günther Heeg for his hospitality to me in Leipzig in 2014, and for everything that I learned from him, and I very much look forward to his active participation in the 2016 Oxford conference, where he plans to speak about the theatrical work of Frank Castorf as a paradigmatic form of "recycling Brecht."

The Modern Language Association convention in Vancouver in January 2015 included two Brecht-related sessions: "Brecht, Protest, Youth" (chaired by Brecht Yearbook editor Ted Rippey, with commentary by Kristopher Imbrigotta) and "Brecht, Music, Opera" (chaired by Elena Pnevmonidou, with commentary by Matthew W. Smith). Also in 2014-2015, Berlin's Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus instituted a successful new series of Brecht-related lectures entitled "Brecht-Haus-Lectures." Speakers so far have included Klaus Theweleit and Eva Horn, and in December of 2015 Heinrich Detering is scheduled to give a lecture entitled "Zwischen Lenin und Lao-tse: Bemerkungen zu Brechts Daoismus." Another major occurrence of the last year is that the IBS has joined the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Literarischer Gesellschaften und Gedenkstätten (ALG, http://www.alg.de/). We look forward to a productive association with this important organization.

At the 2015 conference of the German Studies Association in Washington, DC in early October there was an informal meeting of IBS members who happened to be in attendance, and as a result of that meeting I was delighted that Kristopher Imbrigotta (University of Puget Sound) and Jack Davis (Truman State Univesity) volunteered to run for election as co-editors of *Communications from the International Brecht Society* (to succeed the admirable Andy Spencer). This is a vital function for the IBS, and I wish Kris and Jack well. I hope all IBS members will feel free to send them relevant notes, production reviews, interviews, etc., that might be of interest to IBS members. After all, *Communications* is ultimately what IBS members make of it, and I want to encourage active participation from all members and Brecht aficionados everywhere. There has been some discussion about taking *Communications* online (an inconclusive experiment in that direction had already been made by Norm Roessler as editor of *Communications* about a decade ago), and this will probably be a significant item on the agenda of the next official

1. See, for instance, Torben Ibs, "Rituale der Erinnerung: Lichtfest Leipzig," in Günther Heeg, Micha Braun, Lars Krüger, and Helmut Schäfter, eds., *Re-enacting History: Theater & Geschichte* (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2014), pp. 106-115.

IBS meeting in June 2016 during the Oxford Symposium. Also under discussion at the informal meeting in Washington, DC was the fact that after many years of selfless and extraordinary service as IBS Treasurer, Paula Hanssen (Webster University) has announced her decision to step down gradually. I will miss Paula greatly. Her support and assistance were already vital to me during my service as editor of the *Brecht Yearbook* a number of years ago, and they have been key these last two years during my service as IBS president. Paula has done such extraordinary work at this job, in fact, that I find it rather difficult to imagine serving as IBS president without her. However I am delighted that Sylvia Fischer (University of West Florida) has generously volunteered her services to begin to learn the ropes as future IBS Treasurer, initially as co-treasurer together with Paula Hanssen as she transitions off the leadership team. This kind of teamwork is, of course, entirely in the spirit of Brecht himself, and I have no doubt that he would have approved.

I was saddened to learn of the death of Brecht's daughter Barbara Brecht-Schall on 31 August 2015. She was a formidable champion of Brecht and his legacy, and she was always a generous supporter of the International Brecht Society and more than willing to let the IBS use interesting material located in the Brecht Archive—for instance in volumes 28 and 30 of the *Brecht Yearbook*, when we were able to publish crucial early treatments for the screenplay that later became the Fritz Lang film *Hangmen Also Die* (1943).[2] Barbara Brecht-Schall was buried in Berlin on October 2. Although I could not attend the funeral because I was in Washington at the German Studies Association conference, I am grateful to Erdmut Wizisla for agreeing to represent the IBS at the funeral, and to bring a wreath from us to the event. Although I did not have occasion to communicate with her very frequently, the death of Barbara Brecht-Schall leaves me with a melancholy feeling, as one of the last great living links to Brecht himself is now no longer among us.

At the GSA meeting in Washington, members also decided that the IBS should continue to propose Brecht sessions at future GSA meetings—to follow in the footsteps of the session on "Translating and Transforming Brecht" (featuring Kristopher Imbrigotta, Marc Silberman, Tom Kuhn, John Davis, Ela Gezen, and Sabine Gross) in October 2015. More and more Brecht scholars are going to the GSA conference, and therefore it makes sense for the IBS to have a presence there. Among the ideas suggested for a possible 2016 session are: Brecht and German Studies, commemorating Brecht's life and death in 1956, and Brecht and Socialism(s)—although nothing concrete has yet been planned, and in any case the GSA Program Committee ultimately decides on the shape of the GSA program. As usual, there will be a number of Brecht-related sessions at the 2016 Modern Language Association convention in Austin, Texas. These include "Brecht, Surveillance, Visibility" (on Friday, 8 January) and "Relations and

2. See Fritz Lang and Bert Brecht, "437!! Ein Geiselfilm," in *Friends, Colleagues, Collaborators* [*Brecht Yearbook* 28] (Pittsburgh: International Brecht Society, 2003), pp. 9-30; and also Lang and Brecht, Never Surrender, in *Who was Ruth Berlau?* [Brecht Yearbook 30] (Pittsburgh: International Brecht Society, 2005), pp. 7-60. None of these publications would have been possible without the cooperation of Barbara Brecht-Schall.

Legacies: Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno (on Sunday, 10 January). There will also be a session on "Heiner Müller in America" (also on Sunday, 10 January) featuring Janet Swaffar, Jost Hermand, and Helen Fehervary. I will be chairing that session, and Marc Silberman will be doing the commentary. Among other things, the session on Heiner Müller, Brecht's most important heir in the GDR, will be a reunion of sorts for former students and present colleagues of Jost Hermand, one of the founding editors of the *Brecht Yearbook* and my esteemed mentor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I very much look forward to this event, and I hope that any IBS members who are in Austin in January will come to it. I also hope to organize an informal meeting for any IBS members attending the MLA before or after one of these exciting Brecht-related sessions.

Please feel free to contact me or any of the other IBS officers with suggestions or ideas, and I wish you well as we move forward into yet another presidential election year here in the United States. There will no doubt be a great deal of theater, whether Brechtian or otherwise, to come.

Stephen Brockmann

Pittsburgh, October 2015

Bericht des Vizepräsidenten über Aktivitäten der IBS in 2014/15

Prof. Dr. Günther Heeg

1. „Theater und Film nach Brecht". Weltkongress der Internationalen Vereinigung für Germanistik in Shanghai, China, vom 23. – 30. August 2015

Das bedeutendste Brechtforum der letzten beiden Jahre fand im Rahmen des Weltkongresses der Internationalen Vereinigung für Germanistik vom 23. – 30. August 2015 an der Tongji Universität in Shanghai (China) statt. Der Vizepräsident der IBS, Günther Heeg (Leipzig), leitete dort die Sektion „Theater und Film nach Brecht" (Ko-Leitung: Eun-Soo Jang [Seoul] und Eiichiro Hirata [Tokio]). Internationale BrechtexpertInnen aus vier Kontinenten, darunter eine erfreuliche Zahl von NachwuchswissenschaftlerInnen, befassten sich mit den unterschiedlichen Erscheinungen des Nachlebens Brechts in der Gegenwart und erörterten die Möglichkeiten eines Überlebens Brechts, eines Überlebens mit Brecht.

Gravitationszentren der Vorträge, die in diesem Horizont standen, waren zunächst eine *Re-Vision des Begriffs der Verfremdung (und damit einhergehend der Historisierung)*, die – über die Reduktion des Begriffs auf eine bloße Theatertechnik hinausgehend – seine philosophisch-theoretischen Implikate auslotete und an Produktionen des Gegenwartstheaters zeitgenössischer Theatererfahrung aussetzte. Das geschah u.a. in den Beiträgen von Natalie Bloch (Luxemburg), Carolin Sibilak (Berlin) und Andrea Hensel (Leipzig). Perspektivisch, so Günther Heeg (Leipzig), zeichnet sich in Brechts Vorstellung des Fremden die Idee eines transkulturellen Theaters ab. Eiichiro Hirata (Tokio) übertrug diese Idee auf die Analyse von

Szenarien des Bunraku und Kabuki. Ein weiterer Schwerpunkt des Forums war die Untersuchung eines *neuen epischen Theaters resp. eines postepischen Theaters* in der Gegenwart, das u.a die Beiträge von Eun-Soo Jang (Seoul) und Hyun Soo Cheon (Seoul) untersuchten. Neue theoretische und praktische Schlussfolgerungen aus Brechts *Theorem der „Trennung der Elemente"* für eine Konzept der *Transmedialität* standen u.a. in den Vorträgen von Mai Miyake (Tokio, Leipzig), Sukkyung Lee (Seoul) und Chikako Kitagawa (Yokohama) im Zentrum. Schließlich wurde in den Beiträgen von Beatriz Calló (Sao Paulo) und Wonhyeon Lee (Anyang) erneut die Frage einer *Politik des Theaters in der Nachfolge Brechts* diskutiert. Die Vorträge der Sektion stießen in der Öffentlichkeit des Weltkongresses auf eine außergewöhnlich große Resonanz. Ein lebhaft mitdiskutierendes Publikum bestätigte die Aktualität der Herangehensweise an Brecht heute und die Bedeutung der Themenfelder für die zeitgenössische Rezeption Brechts. Deshalb sollen die Vorträge einer breiteren Öffentlichkeit in einer Buchpublikation zugänglich gemacht werden.

2. Brecht-Haus-Lectures

Neue Aufmerksamkeit für Brecht zu gewinnen durch einen Blick von außen ist die Idee der Brecht-Haus Lectures, die seit Frühjahr 2014 im halbjährlichen Abstand im Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus in Berlin stattfinden. Es handelt sich um ein Kooperationsprojekt des Literaturforums mit der Internationalen Brecht Society (IBS) und dem Bertolt Brecht Archiv (BBA) der Akademie der Künste, konzipiert von Günther Heeg (IBS), Christian Hippe (Literaturforum) und Erdmut Wizisla (BBA). Die Veranstaltungsreihe zielt darauf, neue, fremde Blicke auf den vermeintlich allzu bekannten Autor zu erproben und das Gespräch über Bertolt Brecht neu zu eröffnen. Dazu werden renommierte Vortragende eingeladen, deren Spezialgebiet *nicht* Brecht ist, die aber aus der Befassung mit ihren eigenen Themenfeldern und wissenschaftlich-publizistischen Schwerpunkten heraus neue Perspektiven auf Brecht werfen können. Die Moderation des anschließenden Gesprächs mit dem Publikum wird dabei von einem der Veranstaltungspartner übernommen. Die Reihe eröffnet hat der Kulturtheoretiker und Schriftsteller Klaus Theweleit (Freiburg) mit einem von Sonja Vogel (Literaturforum) moderierten Vortrag „Brecht revisited". Im Anschluss daran stellte die Literaturwissenschaftlerin Eva Horn (Wien) die zentrale Frage des Politischen an Brechts „Die Maßnahme" zur Debatte. Ihr von Günther Heeg (IBS) moderierter Vortrag „Die Auslöschung. Politik des Todes in Brechts Lehrstücken" löste eine lebhafte Diskussion aus und unterstrich so die Inspiration, die von dieser Veranstaltungsreihe ausgeht. Als nächste Brecht-Haus-Lecture ist ein Vortrag von Heinrich Detering (Göttingen) für den 11.12.2015 angekündigt. Er trägt den Titel „Zwischen Lenin und Lao-tse. Bemerkungen zu Brechts Daoismus" und wird von Erdmut Wizisla (BBA) moderiert. Die erfolgreiche Reihe, die die in sie gesetzten Erwartungen erfüllt, soll fortgesetzt und die Vorträge publiziert werden.

3. Forschungskooperation Leipzig - Rom. „Brecht transmedial" und „Bertolt Brecht und Heiner Müller".

Aus der engen Kooperation zwischen dem Institut für Theaterwissenschaft der Universität Leipzig unter der Leitung von Günther Heeg und Francesco Fiorentino vom Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture Straniere

der Università degli Studi Roma Tre waren 2012 bereits die Konferenz und der im Jahr darauf erschienene Konferenzband „Brecht e i media", hg. v. Francesco Fiorentino hervorgegangen. Im September 2013 fand die Befassung mit Brechts Verhältnis zu den Medien eine Fortsetzung in einer Konferenz, die den Fokus auf Brechts Umgang mit der Fotografie legte. Im Frühjahr 2015 ist dazu der Band „Brecht e la fotografia" bei Bulzoni editore erschienen, herausgegeben von Francesco Fiorentino und Valentina Valentini. Er vereint Aufsätze von Milo Adami, Simone Costagli, Giulia A. Disanto, Francesco Fiorentino, Helga Finter, Giacomo Daniele Fragapane, Günther Heeg, Gianluca Paolucci, Dora Rusciano, Luca Di Tommaso und Valentina Valentini. Die historisch und zeitgenössisch orientierten Abhandlungen untersuchen im Abstand zur bekannten Verwendung der Fotografie bei der Entwicklung des Grundgestus der Szene Brechts ungleich differenziertere, emblematische Praxis einer Kombination von fotografischem Bild und Text, wie sie exemplarisch in der „Kriegsfibel" anzutreffen ist. Beide Bände zusammen genommen stellen einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Bedeutung der Transmedialität bei Brecht und zur transmedialen Theaterpraxis dar. Für die Zukunft wurde ein in Leipzg und Rom angesiedeltes Forschungsprojekt über „Heiner Müller und Bertolt Brecht. Dichter des verdrängten Unbewussten, Dramatiker des Untoten" zwischen Francesco Fiorentino und Günther Heeg vereinbart, um die transnationale Forschungskooperation zu Brecht fortzusetzen.

4. Das transkulturelle Theater. Nach Brecht. Publikation und Konferenz

Die erneute Auseinandersetzung mit Brecht war und ist zentral in zwei internationalen Forschungsprojekten des Verfassers: Zum einen das deutsch-japanische Forschungsprojekt „Tradition und Transkulturalität im japanischen und deutschen Gegenwartstheater" in Kooperation mit Eiichiro Hirata (Keio Universität Tokio). Zum anderen das von der deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) geförderte Projekt „Das Theater der Wiederholung und transkulturellen Überschreitung". Der theoretische Nucleus beider Projekte ist die Idee eines transkulturellen Theaters. Die entscheidenden Anregungen dazu gehen von Brecht aus. Brechts Umgang mit dem Fremden und mit Fremdheit, seine Praxis der Historisierung, die Transmedialität seines Denkens und künstlerischen Handelns und sein Konzept der Geste sind entscheidende Elemente für die Theorie eines transkulturellen Theaters. Während einer Forschungs- und Vortragsreise im Sommer und Herbst 2015 hat der Verfasser die Idee eines transkulturellen Theaters nach Brecht in Shanghai, Seoul, Tokio und Rom mit großer Resonanz vorgestellt. 2016 erscheint dazu sein Buch „Das transkulturelle Theater. Nach Brecht. Szenen der Wiederholung und kulturellen Überschreitung" (Berlin: Theater der Zeit). Im Anschluss daran findet im Wintersemester 2016/17 ein gleichnamiges Symposium am Institut für Theaterwissenschaft der Universität Leipzig statt.

Dass dieses Symposium stattfinden kann, zeigt, dass man im Hinblick auf die Zukunft des Instituts vorsichtig optimistisch sein kann. Nach der realen Gefahr der Schliessung des Instituts im Jahr 2014 hat sich die Lage inzwischen deutlich zum Besseren gewandt. Das ist der überwältigenden internationalen Solidarität zu verdanken, die die Lehrenden und Studierenden des Instituts durch diese Krise getragen haben. Dafür sei allen aufs Herzlichste gedankt.

IBS at MLA & GSA: 2014-2016

IBS at the Modern Language Association (January 2014)

Marc Silberman

The Modern Language Association held its annual convention in Chicago (9-12 January 2014), and as an official, allied organization, the IBS sponsored a number of activities, including a business meeting. The two IBS sessions both had moderate turnouts. "Brecht and the Century of War" included two papers: Saskia Fischer (Universität Bielefeld) addressed Brecht's *Antigone* as a commentary/critique on rituals of violence, and Gerrit-Jan Berendse (Cardiff University, UK) elaborated on the *Kriegsfibel's* cyclical structure and "flânerie" as a pattern that one finds as well in W.G. Sebald's prose treatments of WWII; an extended response by Ted Rippey (Bowling Green State University) reflecting on the temporal and spatial dynamics of exile was enabled by the fact that Ingvild Folkvold (Norway) had to cancel owing to a lack of travel funding. The second session, "Teaching Brecht," aimed at practical approaches for teachers challenged by translating Brecht's theories into classroom practice. Sabine Gross (University of Wisconsin, Madison) presented detailed strategies for demonstrating Verfremdung and Gestus using a very short passage from *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*; Morgan Koerner (College of Charleston, South Carolina) walked us through a one-week unit on the popular film *The Lives of Others* (Donnersmarck, 2006) aimed at students recognizing patterns of emotional identification and their implications and then developing their own means for critiquing and responding to them using techniques adapted from Brecht; Carrie Preston (Boston University) demonstrated a lesson on "unfree thinking" based on a 3-step exercise using *Jasager/Neinsager* in which students experience their own assumptions about authority and obedience in response to her as the classroom teacher; finally respondent Elena Pnevmonidou (University of Victoria, Canada) reiterated the tendency of students to find Brecht "easy" in theory but a real challenge, both for students and teachers, in practice, concluding that "doing Brecht" is the best way to understand Brecht. This session yielded so much buzz that there are now plans underway for a Brecht Yearbook volume on "Teaching Brecht"; stay tuned! A third session on "Fifty Shades of Brecht: Vulnerability versus Autonomy among Brecht's Female Collaborators" was sponsored by the organization Women in German and included contributions by IBS members: Paula Hanssen (Webster University, St. Louis) traced Elisabeth Hauptmann's working relationship with Brecht that spanned over four decades, including after his death; Ute Bettray (University of Connecticutt, Storrs) used her personal interview with actress and Brecht-Schülerin Käthe Reichel to show how she negotiated the paradox of "falling prey" to Brecht's magnetism, on the one hand, and of becoming an independent, astute artist with her own ideas and career, on the other; Helen Fehervary (Ohio State University, Columbus) focused on Asja Lacis and Regine Lutz as two women in Brecht's life who never became intimately involved with him but with whom he engaged in important ways both intellectually and emotionally; Kris Imbrigotta (University of Puget Sound, Washington) gave a brief response that led into an animated discussion about the extent to which Brecht's relationships with female collaborators was unique for its partnership qualities, another example of male patronage, or

whether the entire conceptual apparatus of gender binaries is adequate for exploring these fruitful but psychologically complex relationships.

The IBS business meeting was both an occasion to discuss upcoming Brecht-related events as well as a social occasion at a tapas restaurant near the convention hotels. Most important, two suggestions for IBS sessions at next year's MLA convention – scheduled for Vancouver (Canada) from 8-11 January 2015 – were ratified: Kris Imbrigotta and Ted Rippey will organize a session on Brecht and 60s Protest Cultures, and Elena Pnevmonidou will work with Matthew Smith (Stanford University) from the MLA discussion group on Opera as Literature and Drama to organize a collaborative session on Brecht and music. Detailed calls for papers and deadlines will be available at the IBS's website (www.brechtsociety.org) and facebook page (www.facebook.com/brechtsociety). In addition, Ted Rippey will explore the possibility of an IBS session on Brecht and WWI at the annual German Studies Association conference, scheduled for Kansas City (18-21 Sept. 2014). Other business included details about upcoming volumes of the Brecht Yearbook and the need to explore digital publication in the future (maybe with a decision forthcoming at the next IBS symposium); the increase in IBS membership following the symposium in Porto Alegre Brazil; the topic of Brecht's novels at the February 2014 Brecht-Tage in the Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus as well as the planned series of "Brecht Lectures" at the Literaturforum to begin this spring with Klaus Theweleit as the guest speaker; the major publishing initiatives of Brecht in English by Bloomsbury / Methuen under the general editor Tom Kuhn (Oxford University, UK); and finally the tentative plans for the 15th IBS Symposium on Brecht in/and Translation at the University of Manchester (UK) in late June/early July 2016, hosted by Tom Kuhn of St. Hugh's College at the University of Oxford.

IBS Business Meeting at the Modern Language Association (January 9, 2015)

Report by Marc Silberman

The informal IBS business meeting took place on Friday, January 9, 2015, from 7:30 – 9:30 pm during the annual convention of the Modern Language Association, held in Vancouver, Canada. The meeting/dinner was attended by ca. 15 people at the Guu Izakaya Restaurant, with Marc Silberman presiding. The main order of business was to determine the IBS sessions to be organized for the next annual MLA convention, to be held in Austin, Texas (7 – 10 January 2016). As an MLA affiliate organization, the IBS is guaranteed one session and may apply for one additional, non-guaranteed collaborative special session with another MLA unit. The consensus was to sponsor two sessions:

1) Brecht – Surveillance – Visibility, explores whether the charged era of politicized surveillance technologies undermine Brecht's goal of making visible an act and the structure that causes it (*Verfremdung*)?

2) Complex Relations / Legacies: Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno, co-sponsored with the MLA Division on Philosophical Approaches to Literature, focuses on artistic, critical, and philosophical relations among Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno before and during the exile years as well as on the legacy of their tense relations.

Abstracts (ca. 250 words) are due by 15 March 2015, and the chosen submissions will be announced by 1 April 2015. To present a paper at the MLA Convention, you must become an MLA member by 7 April 2015 (www.mla.org). [See the details about the planned IBS sessions at the 2017 MLA Convention elsewhere in this issue.]

It was also announced that the IBS hopes to organize a session at the annual German Studies Association conference, to be held in Washington DC (1 – 4 October 2015):
Translating Brecht (contributions on the practice of translating Brecht from German into other languages but also from the page onto the stage and from one culture to another).
Send abstracts (ca. 200 words) by 9 February 2015 to Marc Silberman (mdsilber@wisc.edu). To present a paper at the GSA conference, you must become a GSA member by 16 February 2015 (www.thegsa.org).

Brecht Yearbook editor, Ted Rippey, reported that volume 39 (2014) is coming together for publication in 2015, with a substantive section including selections from the 14th IBS Symposium in Porto Alegre (including the keynote addresses). Rippey expects volume 40 (2015) – an open volume thematically – to appear soon thereafter. He also indicated that there are some changes coming in the editorial board of the Yearbook over the next year. Secretary-Treasurer, Paula Hanssen, reported that the IBS remains solvent and the membership stable, but because of increased mailing costs for members' publications, it will be necessary to raise dues by about US$5 per membership category. She will also be exploring possibilities of shifting the IBS website and credit card payment service to a less expensive platform. Marc Silberman reported on the organizational meeting in Oxford (UK) in mid-December to plan the 15th IBS Symposium on "Recycling Brecht" (25 – 29 June 2016). Professor Tom Kuhn will be hosting the symposium at St. Hugh's College of the University of Oxford. Reasonably priced housing and the conference venue itself will be at the College. The call for papers will be distributed in February with a deadline for submissions by 1 June 2015; decisions on all submissions will be announced in September 2015, giving participants plenty of time to arrange for travel subsidies and arrangements. As usual, a rich cultural program, beginning already on 24 June, is being planned with a literary tour of Oxford, a visit to the Bodleian Library, keynote speakers, etc.

Additional announcements concerned the Brecht-Tage Berlin, 9 – 13 February 2015 focusing on "Brecht und die Naturwissenschaften" and the Brecht Festival Augsburg, 30 January – 10 February 2015, focusing on "Brecht im Exil."

IBS-sponsored session at the MLA Vancouver, British Columbia, January 8-11, 2015

Session 68: Brecht, Protest, Youth
Thursday, January 8

Moderator: Theodore Franks Rippey (Bowling Green State University)

1. "Galy Gay in My Lai: George Tabori's *Pinkville*", Martin Kagel (University of Georgia)
2. "Brecht and the *Unmensch*: Armor for Protest in the Twenty-First Century", Sarah Moon (University of Connecticut, Storrs)
3. "Brechtian Challenges to Theater Artists during the Internal Armed Conflict in Peru", Carlos Vargas-Salgado (Whitman College)

4. "'*Good Woman* Should Have Been Done in One of Our Big Theatres Long before This': Students, the Playwright, and the Birth of Modern Theatre in Australia", Laura Ginters (University of Sydney)

Respondent: Kristopher Imbrigotta (University of Puget Sound)

1. Martin Kagel: "Galy Gay in My Lai: George Tabori's *Pinkville*"

For Hungarian-German-Jewish playwright George Tabori, the 1960s were a period of intensive engagement with Bertolt Brecht's writings. In 1961, Tabori put on "Brecht on Brecht," a collage of Brecht texts from different genres. Originally planned as a one-time performance, the show ran off-Broadway for three years and also toured the country. Beyond translating and performing Brecht's work—among the plays that Tabori translated were *The Guns of Carrar*, *Mother Courage*, and *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*—Tabori integrated Brechtian techniques into his playwriting and drew additional inspiration from Brecht for his own plays, notably in the context of the opposition to the Vietnam War. In February 1967, Tabori participated in the *Week of the Angry Arts*—an "artistic" protest of 200 notable New York artists against the American engagement in Vietnam—with a program entitled "Brecht on War." Later that year, in October 1967, his anti-racist play *The Niggerlovers* was performed in the Orpheum Theater in New York. The play bore strong traces of Brecht's learning plays, which was also true for *Pinkville*, a play Tabori wrote in 1970 and which was performed both in New York (1970) and in Berlin (1971). Featuring the transformation of the protagonist from a kind and sympathetic person into a cold-blooded killer (the title of the play was the official code name for the My Lai massacre), *Pinkville* used Brecht's *Mann ist Mann* as a template. Yet unlike *Mann ist Mann*, which, steeped in New Objectivity, focused on the secular, largely "mechanical" transformation of Galy Gay, *Pinkville* presented the psychological destruction of an individual's identity in the context of a military training camp and also possessed a metaphysical dimension in that the soldier portrayed (in the New York performance played by Michael Douglas) is aligned, albeit somewhat polemically, with the figure of Christ (Tabori called his play "a requiem"). *Pinkville*, in other words, does not employ *Mann ist Mann* to demonstrate men's fluid identity, as was Brecht's intention; rather, it shows an individual's deformation in the context of political and military aggression. In my paper, I will discuss both the New York and Berlin performances and show that, while Tabori draws on Brecht productively in the context of anti-war protest, he reshapes the predecessor's work in important ways and, in some way, even rewrites it. *Pinkville* not only restages but also reinterprets *Mann ist Mann*, looking more deeply into a subject that Brecht was unable to anticipate at the time, yet one that interests Tabori greatly, the formation of the fascist character. In Tabori, Brecht's refusal of bowing to theatrical convention then is turned into a different form of rejection: a post-Holocaust theatrical intervention breaking down the barrier between theater and politics. *Pinkville*, as New York Times critic Clive Barnes perceptively put it, is more theatrical politics than political theater. It is still a learning play, yet of a different era.

2. Sarah Moon: "Brecht and the *Unmensch*: Armor for Protest in the Twenty-First Century"

My paper will affirm that we can indeed learn from Brecht's theories of protest

and criticism to respond to contemporary events by first establishing the significance and power of Brecht's "epic theatre," then by examining his project in relation to today's concept of the post-human and finally by looking at a present-day application of his theories in a street theatre protest against coal power plant emissions. A major reason for the enduring relevance of Brecht's theory is that the central conflict around which many of his plays center -- the conflict between system-scale existence which benefits an elite few and human-scale existence which benefits the common person -- is as exigent a political concern as it was in his time. In addition, Brecht's advocacy for a new human responds even more powerfully to subjectivization in today's digital age than in his own electro-industrial age. In "A Radio Speech" in *Brecht on Theatre*, he states, "What matters most is that a new human type should now be evolving, at this very moment, and that the entire interest of the world should be concentrated on his development.... This new human type will not be as the old type imagines. It is my belief that he will not let himself be changed by machines but will himself change the machine; and whatever he looks like he will above all look human." By situating Brecht's theories on epic theatre in relation to Mikhail Bakhtin's essay "Epic and Novel," I aim to bring into relief the ways Brecht's theory of epic theatre draws power from the subversion of the traditional epic genre. Following this, I will bring Brecht into conversation with post-human theory, including the work of Hans Marovec and N. Katherine Hayles. Finally, I will consider my own application of Brechtian theory in the construction of a dramatic street theatre piece inspired by the trial of Jay O'Hara and Ken Ward on charges of disturbing the peace, conspiracy, failure to act to avoid a collision, and negligent operation of a motor vessel as a result of anchoring a lobster boat in the path of a coal tanker on its way to the Brayton Point coal plant in Somerset, Massachusetts in May 2013. *St. Joan of the Stockyards* calls our attention to the stifling net of the capitalist system that will co-opt even the labor activist and, in so doing, destroy hope and faith. Today, the human protester struggles both against a protest co-opting system and against the erosion of his or her own identity as human. I argue that Brecht's theatrical and social theory could not be more relevant to these conditions.

3. Carlos Vargas-Salgado: "Brechtian Challenges to Theater Artists during the Internal Armed Conflict in Peru"

Theater critic Alfonso La Torre wrote (1986) an invitation to Peruvian theatre producers to address the issue of violence and armed conflict, using these words: "This reality allows us to write in the manner of Bertolt Brecht. Brecht began making an apocalyptic theater, anarchistic, proclaiming the destruction of any system, because there was nothing worth to be saved. Brecht discovered Marxism and finished predicting in his mature works a new order, founded dialectically." For La Torre, it was mandatory that theatre artists avoided an "alienation" in front of a tragedy that was killing more than 70,000 people. The experience of the internal armed conflict in Peru (1980-2000), in which the Shining Path Communist guerrilla and State repression faced each other, meant a huge challenge to Peruvian theater artists. Located between two fires, the discussion of social, violent issues needed a unique ability to not be at risk. Then, several Peruvian theatrical figures of the era, particularly from the independent theater, focused on the works of Brecht as a resource for addressing social injustice

of armed conflict without being charged (or even, violently attacked) by the opposite side. The paper covers works produced during the violent time by artists like Yuyachkani (Poems and Songs by Brecht), Cuatrotablas (*Three Penny Opera*), The Catholic University Theatre (*Galileo*), playwrights like Sara Joffré and César De María, as well as writings by La Torre. In all the cases revised, we can perceive a persistent concern for discussing "the roots of the evil" in Peruvian social violence as well as a deep interest in rethinking theoretical and aesthetic paradigms by Bertolt Brecht.

4. Laura Ginters: "'*Good Woman* Should Have Been Done in One of Our Big Theatres Long before This': Students, the Playwright, and the Birth of Modern Theatre in Australia"

The quotation given above is a journalist's response to the Sydney University Players' production of *The Good Woman of Sezuan*, which premiered in April 1960, two decades after its first production in Europe. Brecht's work was almost entirely unknown in this country before his death in 1956 – and his long overdue reception in Australia is intimately linked to the young people who were the first to stage his work. From 1960 to 1963 students at the University of Sydney produced *Good Woman of Sezuan*, *The Exception and the Rule* and *Mother Courage* – all Australian premieres of Brecht's work. In Sydney in the late 1950s there was to all intents and purposes no professional theatre; the theatre-goer's choices were imported successful commercial shows, local revues, and the offerings of a few amateur "Little Theatres". A group of talented undergraduates burst onto this scene and rapidly started attracting attention of both audiences and the mainstream press from "downtown" for their ambitious and stylish shows. These included a number of Australian – and occasionally the world – premieres of contemporary writers such as Brecht who were not being produced by any of the established theatres. While these students did not set out to create a new social system, their efforts did represent a form of protest against the popular, easily digestible entertainment of the day, and their work ultimately changed the face of theatre in Australia: a decade after this, it was the core group of these same students who would go on to drive the New Wave of Australian theatre in an era characterised by intense political and social change which was reflected in its theatre. In this paper I would like to explore the role of these young people in introducing Brecht to Australia, why they were attracted to his work, how they interpreted it in a cultural and social world so distant from its origins, and the impact of these productions both on the audiences of the day, and the ramifications for theatre more broadly in Australia.

Panel Notes: After four well-written und stimulating presentations, the respondent Kristopher Imbrigotta posed two questions to the panel: 1) what the future directions for scholarship on this topic of "Brecht, Protest, and Youth Cultures" could be, and 2) whether Brecht is "radical enough" for today's protest movements. A lively discussion ensued, with various members in the audience (approx. 15 total) adding their thoughts.
Kristopher Imbrigotta

Brecht, Music, Opera: A Special Collaborative Session at the MLA in Vancouver

Elena Pnevmonidou

On January 10, 2015, the International Brecht Society and the MLA Discussion Group on Opera and Literature co-hosted a special collaborative session on *Brecht, Music, Opera* at this year's MLA convention in Vancouver. The session was co-organized by Elena Pnevmonidou (University of Victoria), session moderator, and Matthew Smith (Stanford University), respondent.

The premise of this collaborative session was to generate a dialogue between music and text that explores both the musical influences of Brecht as well as Brecht's impact on 20th century music. Some of Brecht's pivotal plays, such as *The Threepenny Opera*, *Mahagonny* or *The Measures Taken*, have been studies extensively as operatic pieces, and his musical collaborators, notably Kurt Weill, Hanns Eisler and Paul Hindemith have also been widely recognized for their radical innovations of modern music. Yet music and text are often still approached as separate languages from separate disciplinary perspectives. We still lack a fuller understanding of how Brecht is situated in the broader context of Weimar Germany music and what lasting impact he in turn has had on modern opera. To bridge this gap, the intention of this collaborative session on *Brecht, Music, Opera* was to examine the relationship between text and music in Brecht's operas, to explore the musical influences on Brecht, to capture the tensions in the creative partnerships of Brecht and his musical collaborators, whose impulses were often at odds with his own conception of theatre, and thereby to arrive at a better understanding of Brecht's legacy on 20th century opera as well as more broadly what constitutes a *Brechtian opera*.

There were four presenters on the panel.

Stephen Hinton (Stanford University) opened the panel with a paper on "Dramaturgical Counterpoint and the Narratives of Epic Opera." With a reference to one of the famous *Mahagonny* songs, "Gegen Verführung," Hinton explored the seductions of opera as an easily commodifiable cultural product as well as how Brecht, with his "epicization" of music, strove to channel opera into subversive directions all the while appropriating and explicitly working with its intrinsically "seductive" features. Hinton addressed the tension between Brecht's negative conceptualization of epic opera (in opposition to, e.g. Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*) and Weill's privileging of music. In spite of this fundamental tension, Hinton asserted that the common ground between Brecht and Weill consisted in their recognition and usage of musical counterpoint, a neoclassical nod to J.S. Bach, as the means by which music provides an ironic juxtaposition to the action or text. Hinton used the "Against Seduction" and the "Cranes" songs as examples that illustrate Brecht and Weill's strategic use of musical counterpoint. In the case of *Mahagonny*, J. S. Bach can thus be considered a crucial discreet common musical influence for both Brecht and Weill.

In his paper, "From *Jonny spielt auf* to *Die Massnahme*: Brecht's *Lehrstücke* and the Influence of *Zeitoper*," John Gabriel (Harvard University) proposed a reading of *Die Massnahme* that repositioned this arguably most anti-operatic of the *Lehrstücke* within the context of the popular *Zeitoper*. Unlike Brecht's other musical collaborators, that is Weill and

Hindemith, Hanns Eisler was not also a *Zeitoper* composer. Yet Gabriel argued convincingly that *Die Massnahme* can indeed be thought of as a refunctioned *Zeitoper*: It shares with the genre a topical plot, a heavily montaged narrative, the formal structure of the Baroque number opera as well as, crucially, jazz. While critics only recognize the "Song von der Ware" as an example of jazz in *Die Massnahme*, Gabriel's careful reading demonstrated how a refunctioning of the steady driving beat of jazz permeates the entire opera. *Die Massnahme* thus subtly unhinges jazz from its culinary commercial frame and refunctions it as a commentary on both the authoritarian gesture of the march as well as modern industry.

In her presentation, "Brecht's Sacred Music," Minou Arjomand (Boston University) connected back to a theme established earlier by Stephen Hinton, namely Brecht's indebtedness to J.S. Bach, concretely by linking Brecht's *Lehrstücke*, *Die Massnahme* and *Die Mutter* to Bach's *Passions*. While the themes of redemptive sacrifice, faith and the promise of a Messiah may on one level be at odds with the motivation of the *Lehrstück*, with their gestic quality and diegetic structure, the *Passions* served as models for the *Lehrstücke*. Other common features are that they are both intended as *Gebrauchsmusik* as well as the fact that the *Lehrstücke*, like the *Passions*, are often trial plays. The profound influence of Bach's sacred music on both Brecht and Eisler is further manifest in concrete examples in *Die Mutter* and *Die Massnahme* that explicitly cite and refunction passages from both Bach's *St. John* and *St. Matthew Passions*.

The last presenter, Paul Peters (McGill University), had planned to give a paper titled "Beyond Opera and Musical: The Unfulfilled Legacy of Eisler and Weill." On short notice, he had to call off his participation for medical reasons. His paper, however, would have dealt with the utopian potential of the new model for musical theatre developed by Eisler and Weill in their collaboration with Brecht during the 1920s and early 1930s. Peters would have also offered some speculation as to why this model, which in the German content so successfully refunctioned and fused both the *Schlager* (the German pop song) and *Innerlichkeit* (German inwardness), never gained sufficient traction in the USA. A Brechtian transformation of the American musical thus is a utopian dream that remains yet to be fulfilled. (See article p. 71)

The discussant, Matthew Smith (Stanford University), rounded off the presentations by commenting on two common threads that permeated all presentations: the discreet presence of Bach and the utopian substance of Brechtian opera – in spite of its philosophically and performatively netagive stance.

German Studies Association Conference, Washington D.C.

October 3, 2015

Roundtable: "Translating and Transforming Brecht"

Kristopher Imbrigotta - moderator
Jack Davis
Ela Gezen
Sabine Gross
Tom Kuhn
Marc Silberman

At this year's GSA conference in Washington, D.C., the IBS sponsored a panel on translating and transforming Brecht, bringing together a diverse group of scholars drawing on their experiences

as translators, researchers, and teachers to speak on the topic. The panel's format was conceived as a "roundtable" that took the form of ten-minute "statements" by each panelist, followed by short responses to each other and then a lively discussion with the audience. This panel brought together four members of the trans-Atlantic team of editors and translators (Marc Silberman, Tom Kuhn, Jack Davis, and Kristopher Imbrigotta) of the newly revised and expanded volume *Brecht on Theatre* (Bloomsbury, 2015). This long-anticipated edition of fresh Brecht translations, as we heard from the editors before the panel, is unfortunately unavailable for purchase in the United States (due to copyright issues!). This "anomaly" will, no doubt, only add to the hype and interest surrounding the new translations.

Below we have assembled the panelists' statements from the roundtable discussions, along with their university affiliations and a short title. (Note: these are not full articles.) The concepts of "translation" and/or "transformation" have indeed provided scholars and practitioners much to consider and debate within the context of Brecht's work as evidenced here. First, Jack Davis offers his thoughts and method of translating Brecht's fragments, in which we often must question our own textual allegiances in order to arrive at the end product. Ela Gezen's contribution is a condensed version of her statement in which she situates Brecht's influence in Turkey and how his dramatic theories have transformed contemporary Turkish theatre. Sabine Gross provides her thoughts on and practical experiences with the processes of transforming Brecht's *Puntila* form the page to stage, pointing to examples of Brecht's *Gestus* and importance of language for both actor and spectator. Tom Kuhn details his decisions, approach, and potential failures in translating Brecht's poetry. He highlights not only grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, but also demonstrates Brecht's playfulness and experimental nature with language and how one finds the *Haltung* of a poem. Marc Silberman rounds out our contributions with a brief introduction to the new Bloomsbury edition of *Brecht on Theatre* and his thoughts on the necessity of translating Brecht for "present times."

Jack Davis, Truman State University

Translating Brecht's Fragments

What initially interested me in this topic was the process of translating several texts by Bertolt Brecht for the volume *Brecht on Theatre*. The other translators on the project here in the US were Marc Silberman, Vicki Hill and Kris Imbrigotta; Tom Kuhn, Steve Giles and many others were working in the UK. Marc, Kris, Vicki and I met several times in Madison, Wisconsin, over the course of one summer to workshop our individual translations, which was great fun.

Some of the texts I worked on were shorter texts about the process of training actors and preparing roles. A couple of these had especially tangled syntax, to the extent that (for example) in a couple of extreme cases, the referents of pronouns were ambiguous. Translation, of course, does not tolerate ambiguity of this kind, or at least is usually unable to reflect it. And in the course of discussing these unpolished texts with the other translators, I finally succeeded in producing lucid English versions – versions whose easy readability had nothing in common with the provisional feel and experimental, if not at times downright awkward, phrasing of the German originals.

This process of turning messy texts by Brecht into clean English translations got me thinking about the process of translation in general, and where our allegiances as translators lie. Of course we have a duty to properly express our source text in the target language. But I came to see that our greater allegiance is actually to the target language itself. If I had produced an English translation with syntax in a similar state to the original Brecht, it would have been viewed as a bad translation. But it wouldn't have even really been a translation at all, since the prerequisite for a translation is a comprehensible text.

Sabine Gross wrote in an article several years ago that translation should be regarded as the superlative of reading. And of course, every time we translate, we are producing a reading of a text. This whole process made me start thinking about the kinds of reading that we do when we translate, and how it differs from other types of reading. For example, when I teach undergraduate students, I strongly encourage them to employ a kind of "close reading," at least in their initial approach to a text. I'm not talking about adopting the practices of the New Criticism or a *werkimmanente Interpretation*, but rather simply taking a text on its own terms before projecting authorial intentions onto it.

But I think that with translation in general, and especially when translating an author like Brecht, this kind of "text alone" approach shows its shortcomings very quickly. The force of terms like *Gestus*, *Haltung*, and *Verfremdung* makes itself felt across Brecht's work. In translating Brecht, we always took these terms not as mere words but as *concepts*, even if this focus may have the effect of making Brecht's thought seem more systematized than it really was at the time a given text was written. This is, I believe, an effect of Brecht's canonicity: his theoretical apparatus – or the one that scholars have constructed from his writings and practice – tends to project itself backwards in time onto our readings of his earlier texts.

So I had the feeling that at times, this came at the price of smoothing over the rough edges of Brecht's texts, of harmonizing certain terms with other theories that he had written about with more coherence elsewhere.

One of the texts I thought of specifically was titled "Über das schrittweise Vorgehen beim Studium und Aufbau der Figur." which presented us with the basic dilemma that I mean. The English title we ultimately chose for this piece was "On the Gradual Approach to the Study and Construction of the *Figure*." This short piece describes the inductive method an actor can use to construct the character he or she is playing and how he or she can display this process of construction to the audience.

And already in the title, we've made a judgment about the way this piece fits into Brecht's body of work, by choosing the English word "figure" instead of the more everyday "character." This word "figure" in English certainly conveys that rational, distancing approach Brecht strove for in his theater (and which he describes in this particular text), and so I think it is ultimately a good translation. But this meaning is not necessarily there in the German word alone, which I take as rather more neutral. After all, we could call a character in a psychological drama "eine Figur" as well. And in everyday English, while we might speak of a "literary figure" we'd never ask, for example, "who's your favorite television figure?" So while I agree with our choice

of word, I also think it amplifies Brecht's anti-Aristotelian tendencies. It seems to make Brecht "hyper-Brechtian."

So, this is my concluding statement, which is more a question to the rest of the panelists and the audience: at what point in Brecht's writings does a word crystallize into a "concept" or a *Begriff*? And how can translations balance this tension between the canonical Brecht and the experimental Brecht, between word and concept, and is this even necessary or possible?

Ela Gezen, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Translating Brecht into the Turkish Context: Genco Erkal and *Dostlar Tiyatrosu* Ensemble

My contribution to "Translating and Transforming Brecht" dealt with the interpretation and implementation of Bertolt Brecht's dramaturgy and theatre practice in the Turkish context, focusing specifically on the theatre ensemble *Dostlar Tiyatrosu* and its co-founder Genco Erkal (1938–). A dramatist, actor, and director, Erkal is one of many Turkish dramatists who first encountered and then subsequently studied Brecht's work at the Berliner Ensemble. In addition to Erkal, Mehmet Ulusoy (1942–2005) and Vasıf Öngören (1938–1984), two of the most significant names in Turkish political theatre history, went to East Berlin before him, both in order to study Brechtian theatre at the Berliner Ensemble. Erkal describes his time spent at the Berliner Ensemble in 1968 as having been pivotal for his subsequent dramatic work in Turkey, specifically in the context of *Dostlar Tiyatrosu*, which he co-founded in 1969 upon his return. By examining his theory and theatrical practice as it emerged and evolved throughout the past four decades, my paper specifically highlighted Erkal's translation of Brecht into the Turkish context, which has been based on the principle of Brecht's own call for continuous experimentation and transformation. Even while drawing on elements of Brecht's epic theatre and critical dramaturgy in the creation of a new political theatre aesthetic, Erkal (and his colleagues) foregrounded the necessity of adapting Brechtian concepts to urgent national issues, and of placing them in dialogue with Turkish aesthetic traditions and the Turkish literary left, including for example Aziz Nesin (1915–1995) and Nazım Hikmet (1902–1963). When we look at Erkal's past and present performance practice—and, by extension, at his ensemble's—Brecht's influence manifests itself in the general conceptualization of theatre as an on-going work-in-progress, reflecting on and engaging with socio-political realities and serving as a catalyst for societal change.

An extended and elaborated version of this paper, entitled "Brecht on the Turkish Stage: Adaptation, Experimentation, and Theatre Aesthetics in Genco Erkal's *Dostlar Tiyatrosu*," is forthcoming in a *German Life and Letters* special issue on Brecht, co-edited by Stephen Parker (Department of German Studies, University of Manchester) and Steve Giles (Department of German Studies, University of Nottingham).

Sabine Gross, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Translating *Puntila* from Page to Stage

I'd like to talk a bit about a very specific form of "translating" Brecht, one that is particularly necessary and productive in the foreign-language classroom and in literature classes. I will focus on the

translation – or transformation – of words into utterances and speech acts, of sentences into verbal positions and what Brecht calls *Gestus*. I'm talking about the shift in teaching from "what are the characters saying?" to "what are they doing/how are they interacting using language", that is: how are they performing language, performing in language, performing with language. Now, this translation from page to stage is what actors do, but even for actors and theater students not familiar with Brecht, it can be a real challenge to tease out the layering of *Gestus*, the rich but subtle performative dimension of a language that frequently sounds just low-key conversational, the sly humor and the numerous dialectical twists and inversions in which Brecht puts *Verfremdung* into practice not just via staging techniques, but in the very language his characters use.

One of the major difficulties of teaching drama as text is the challenge theatrical dialogue poses to students: to imagine the words not only as spoken on stage, but as representing actual meaningful exchanges between characters – meaningful not only in the sense of having meaning, but as presenting a plausible dynamic. This has become more of a barrier to understanding and appreciation as fewer students have actual experience with theater: it is not uncommon to have students in our classrooms who have never seen an actual theater performance. Teaching in a foreign language compounds the challenge. Time and again, if one teaches dramatic texts, students comment on the difficulty of "imagining" the words on the page transformed into an actual encounter, a scene in a setting, a back-and-forth between characters.

This is particularly true for Brecht, whose plays can include dialogue that refuses to capture the audience's attention by some of the obvious – and illusion-supporting ways: quick back and forth, dramatic statements, high-flying rhetoric. Brecht's language, especially in the later plays, is much more subtly shaped, deceptively close to ordinary language: in a word, epic rather than dramatic.

Consider Brecht's Finnish "Volksstück" from the 1940s [first performed in Zurich in 1948] *Mr Puntila and his servant Matti*, Brecht's take on the servant/master-dialectic. Admittedly some of it is clunky, but many of its scenes are underappreciated gems of comedy. There are some broad theatrical effects, but much of it depends on uttering outrageous, odd, non-sequitur or tongue-in-cheek statements with a straight face, *V-Effekt* in action. This starts in scene 1, with Puntila's initial reproach to the judge, his drinking companion, who has just fallen off his chair after two days of alcohol intake – Puntila urges him sternly to greater effort, including a beautifully ironic biblical "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak": this presentation of a situation with inverted values, "verkehrte Vorzeichen," alcoholic excess as strength of will and responsible behavior, is a form of comedic *Verfremdung*. It is taken further when, later, Puntila confides to Matti his terrible experience of suddenly finding himself "sternhagelnüchtern," or "stone cold sober."

How, precisely, does Brecht stage Puntila's drunkenness in verbal terms? (For our purposes, we'll ignore the strong potential for artistic physical comedy in both main roles, used with great success by Leonard Steckel as Puntila – with Mario Adorf as his straight man Matti – in the TV staging by Rolf Hädrich.) "Transforming" here needs to be an act of conscious attention, to observe

how fundamentally Brecht mocks and disrupts the customary rules that make verbal exchanges coherent. This is true on the micro-level, when Puntila, refusing to acknowledge that two days have passed and it is Saturday, orders "one aquavit and one Friday" from the waiter. This instance of *zeugma* is embedded in a whole series of violations of discourse pragmatics. The text in its consecutiveness pretends to offer cohesion while disrupting it: in reading or acting, one has to acknowledge that time and again, verbal forays don't go anywhere while keeping the scene going. Puntila repeatedly fails to recognize his own driver, hired several weeks ago. His benign-sounding curiosity about Matti deflects Matti's expostulations and attempts to give notice as the two pursue different tracks of thought.

Take the following three lines of dialogue from the play: The waiter brings a new bottle of aquavit and pretends to give confirmation that it is Friday.

Puntila, indicating Matti: "This is a friend of mine."

Waiter: "Yes, your driver, Mr. Puntila."

Puntila [to Matti]: "So you're a driver, are you? I always say what interesting people one meets on the road."

The short exchange includes several levels of absurdity: Puntila, who has failed to recognize his own driver, in drunken familiarity now elevates him to instant "friend," and then professes himself surprised at the news that he is "a" driver, which is what Matti has been trying to tell him for some minutes now; the clichéd remark about "meeting" people on the road is hilariously illogical, since it is Puntila's presence that occasions and indeed causes Matti's presence. The hinge between these two lines is presented by the waiter's comment, which stages a linguistic-pragmatic trap: offered in the form of assent and confirmation ("yes"), it is actually dissent – a chauffeur is precisely not a friend, as the play will proceed to confirm. So the short line has to carry a combination of impulses, while doing so lightly: The caution of the lowly tavern employee toward a high-status customer whose behavior has already proven erratic and dictatorial; the wish to act and speak responsibly and set the record straight; perhaps an attempt, solicitously, to keep Puntila from committing more imbecilities; but also a touch of challenge: is Puntila going to recognize the discrepancy in the two statements – friend vs. driver – if the second one is offered in the guise of assent?

We find a similar layering in the bathhouse scene, where Matti assists Eva in pretend-acting out a seduction scenario to provoke the Attaché into ending the engagement. This play-within-the-play is coolly staged by Matti and faked beginning to end; yet more subtly on a second level there is indeed a game of attraction, challenge and seduction going on between the two. This is theater of language, not of action. The same is true for the culminating play-within-the play of Matti subjecting Eva to an exam – ostensibly to text her suitability as a laborer's wife, but really to highlight, in one step after another, her shortcomings.

To sum up: My point is that even a minor-seeming exchange like that between Puntila and the waiter invites us to translate a brief line that may appear banal and one-dimensional into a complex attitude, a rich and perhaps contradictory ensemble of *Gestus* the waiter might display. Much more than any flamboyant physical expression or well-worn non-il-

lusionist staging technique, it is this translation/transformation, one from language to language, that brings Brecht's characters to life, in reading or in acting.

Tom Kuhn, St. Hugh's College, Oxford

"Man sollte sich vielleicht mit der Übertragung der Gedanken und der Haltung des Dichters begnügen." Translating Brecht's Poems[3]

One of the tasks I have been proud and privileged to be engaged to over recent years is the mediation of Brecht's work in, and indeed into, English, and I am going to talk about the pragmatics of translation, and the example of the poems. Translating always requires close reading and attention to detail, but the translation of poetry is an extreme case. There is no limit to the features of the original to which one may wish to be attentive. It is clearly not just a question of meanings, but also of associations, distant echoes, shades of other texts. It is likewise not just a question of forms in the most obvious sense: you may seek after equivalents for particular meters or rhyme schemes, but you will also want to convey something, for example, of the massing of "dark vowels" in such and such a line, or the preponderance of metaphors of violent motion. Anything and indeed everything that one might wish to draw out in a close line-by-line commentary also demands the attention of the translator. So to translate poetry is also always to fail. The translator will always be conscious of details missed, of crucial allusions and significant sounds that have, of necessity, fallen by the wayside.

The poems of Bertolt Brecht, on the other hand, are easy to translate. That is a hazardous statement, but it is at least one view. His poetry is exceptionally communicative and direct, the "messages" mostly pretty clear. He is not like Rilke or Celan, or a host of others, who demand a huge effort of interpretation before you can even begin. We do not need to look very far behind Brecht's images, or painstakingly tease out his allusions. Besides, his language apes the natural speech rhythms of German, it falls into casual iambics, *Knittelverse*, or has altogether no discernible regularity to imitate. There are precious few hexameters or classical meters to strain the capacities of German – he is not Hölderlin either. His sentence structures are mostly simple and plain, he does not exploit German syntax, stretch and distort it, as, again, Rilke sometimes does, or Trakl. What is more, his most characteristic verse form is the famed unrhymed irregular lines of much of, for example, the *Svendborger Gedichte*. Here there are no awkward forms to re-create, or for which to find equivalents. You can just ... translate. Brecht himself possibly made it even easier in his own remarks on translating poetry, namely that the most common mistake is to try to translate too much, and that "man sollte sich vielleicht mit der Übertragung der Gedanken und der Haltung des Dichters begnügen."[4]

But Brecht's poems are oh so hard to translate. Part of that difficulty derives from precisely the same features, which at first seemed easy. What is it about these rhythms, which – when we look at them more closely – turn out after all to be gentle variations on and distortions of a common German vernacular, not just

3. Parts of this paper, in a longer version, are available at http://brecht.mml.ox.ac.uk/papers-and-articles.

4. "Die Übersetzbarkeit von Gedichten," *BFA* 22.1, 132.

what people might actually say; what is it about these line divisions and about the whole poise and purpose of the verse, which marks it out as great poetry, which makes it so resonant and so far from chopped up prose? Brecht has become one of the most commonly quoted of all German writers – "Erst kommt das Fressen…," "wo ein Gespräch über Bäume," "Unglücklich das Land…," "die Mühen der Gebirge," "So viele Berichte/ So viele Fragen"; he certainly did not achieve this by having a voice so bland as to be easy to translate.

It's no use appealing to Brecht's own comments on translation, for what, after all, precisely are the "Gedanken" and the "Haltung" of the poet? If we knew that, all might be dandy. But we don't. The trouble perhaps is that the *gestisch* approach decrees, precisely, that rhythm and rhyme and indeed every other detail are also part of the "Haltung" of a poem. Besides, Brecht himself was notoriously picky about translators and translations of his own work. Especially when it came to the poems, where he described the efforts of Eric Russell Bentley and others as a "Katastrophe," and tried in vain to enlist W.H. Auden or Christopher Isherwood or Archibald MacLeish.

What is more, as well as the unrhymed, irregular verses, Brecht wrote in a great many other forms, rhymed and unrhymed, regular and irregular. There are sonnets, ballads, odes, and marching songs, all of them more difficult to translate – at least in this just technical aspect – than the freer verse, and there *are* hexameters: not just the famous attempt to recast the *Communist Manifesto*, but also hints of an elevated classicizing meter sprinkled at other points in innocent looking poems, to trip up the unwary translator.

The inflections of Brecht's German derive not just from everyday German, from dialect and folkish forms, but also from past literary models, from the Luther bible (famously) and from foreign languages, most notably English and Latin. Often, by these means, he achieves a lightly elevated register and rhetorical poise, which is exceedingly hard to capture. In 1957 Lion Feuchtwanger called Brecht the only "Sprachschöpfer" of the twentieth century; one might add that he was one of the great "Traditionsschöpfer" too.[5] And, as one delves into his oeuvre, even those claims of directness and clarity seem too simple. There is a bit of Rilke, Hölderlin, and even Celan, here after all alongside Dante, Villon, Li-Po, Heine, Shelley, and all the rest.

Here is an example:

Die Maske des Bösen
An meiner Wand hängt ein japanisches Holzwerk
Maske eines bösen Dämons, bemalt mit Goldlack.
Mitfühlend sehe ich
Die geschwollenen Stirnadern, andeutend
Wie anstrengend es ist, böse zu sein.[6]

This is a very well-known little Brecht poem from 1942, written during the first phases of the Battle of Stalingrad (that may or may not turn out to be relevant) when Brecht was in the United States – it was actually written on a journey from Santa Monica, where he was living at the time, to New York, where one of his close collaborators and

5. Feuchtwanger, in *Sinn und Form. Zweites Sonderheft: Bertolt Brecht*, Berlin 1957, p. 107.
6. *BFA* 12, 124 gives a less well-established variant of the last line; for this version, see *GW* 10, 850.

lovers, Ruth Berlau, lived. The poem is well known in English too, under the title "The mask of evil" in the translation by Hoffman Hays, first published in New York in 1947.[7] And when I came to do my own version – because, with the English poet David Constantine, I am undertaking a large-scale translation of the poems – it was hard to shake off the formulations and cadences of that established English rendition. The idea of "the mask of evil" is familiar even in German readings of the poem, and it is probably the first understanding that comes to the German mind too. Looking more closely at the title, however – and translation precisely makes you look more closely – we immediately encounter an interesting ambiguity: "des Bösen" is an adjectival noun, but we cannot tell from this genitive inflection whether Brecht means "*das* Böse," which would be the abstract moral category of "evil," or whether he means "*der* Böse," which would be simply "the evil man" or, in this case, "the evil demon." Moreover, "böse" can mean, as an adjective, such a huge range of things in German. It can be "evil," bad," but it can equally be "angry," "aggressive," "cross." Applied to a child, it can even just mean "naughty." There is no similarly ambiguous word in English – so somehow, as a translator, I am going to have to decide.

It is in an irregular, unrhymed form, with a lightly elevated register in German – so in some ways a perfect example of that not hard/hard aspect of translating Brecht – but the real killer in this case is that one word "böse," which occurs three times, and is of course the key. It is meaning and interpretation, which bedevil the task of translation here.

I found myself suspicious of Hays's translation. "Evil" has connotations in English of absolute moral abstraction, and Brecht is not that interested in moral absolutes like "Good" and "Evil." He is not a thoroughgoing moral relativist, but people in Brecht are *made* "bad" by circumstances, they are not of their nature "evil." As Peachum succinctly puts it in *The Threepenny Opera*:

Wir wären gut anstatt so roh
Doch die Verhältnisse, sie sind nicht so.[8]

And think of the whole argument of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* which, by the way, mostly dates form the same period as the poem, the beginning of the 1940s. There, part of Brecht's central thrust is to disarm the absolute moral injunctions of Christianity and modern bourgeois society, to make us see that our morality is contingent and alterable. There is an important interlude towards the end where Wang, the water-seller, confronts the Gods with his own suggestion for "eine kleine Herabminderung der Vorschriften," for instance, "dass nur Wohlwollen verlangt würde anstatt Liebe [...] oder Billigkeit

7. "The mask of evil // On my wall hangs a Japanese carving / The mask of an evil demon, decorated with gold lacquer. / Sympathetically I observe / The swollen veins of the forehead, indicating / What a strain it is to be evil." Bertolt Brecht, *Selected Poems*, translation and introduction by H. R. Hays (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947), in the meantime often reprinted and reproduced, above all in *Poems 1913-1956*, edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim (London: Eyre Methuen, 1976 and subsequent editions). Antony Tatlow authored a groundbreaking study of Brecht's reception of Chinese and Japanese culture under the title *The Mask of Evil* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1977).

8. "Erste Dreigroschenfinale" from the end of Act 1.

anstatt Gerechtigkeit [...] bloße Schicklichkeit anstatt Ehre." And just before this, the good person herself, Shen Teh, has confronted Mrs Shin, her rapacious predecessor as proprietor of the tobacconist's: "Warum bist du so böse?" Aha! It is the same word, but this time John Willett in his well-established translation of the play has plumped for quite a different and much weaker English word – rather an English gentleman's euphemism, one cannot help feeling:

Why are you so unpleasant?
To trample on one's fellows
Is surely exhausting? Veins in your temples
Stick out with the strenuousness of greed.[9]

The same image as in the poem.
So let us return to the poem and look for some other contextual detail to help us decide between the many possible alternative translations of "böse." There is precious little help to be had from within the short poem itself, but it refers to a Noh theatre mask which Brecht actually owned. Brecht picks out the "geschwollenen Stirnadern." Swollen veins at the temples are perhaps associated more with anger than with evil. It is not clear quite how much Brecht knew about the mask, but he was genuinely interested in the theatre traditions of the Far East, so it is reasonable to assume he had some idea. In Noh theatre such masks are worn by fearsome deities or spirits.[10] Generally they are not at all "evil" in that satanic sense, rather they may even be, if we take them back to their Buddhist origins, fierce precisely in order to protect the temple from evil. They may look mean, but their meanness is apotropaic, designed to avert evil.
Brecht wrote the poem in exile, and exile – this is a familiar thought – not only entails separation and displacement, it may also make relationships with all cultural and social space more complex and more urgent. Can we perhaps see the traces of that process in Brecht's work? It is easy to read "The mask" as another example of a pretty lazy "orientalism," of a piece with much of the reception of the arts and literature of East Asia in the early part of the twentieth century; maybe the mask was just a suitable decorative item. But let us imagine that it may also be a part of Brecht's more serious engagement with the art and theatre and even intellectual traditions of the East – of which there is also plenty of other evidence in his writings. That enables us to read, and perhaps translate, the poem differently, and perhaps more richly.
So I try out some other words for nastiness, to see if any of them seem to hit the mark. You can have fun with a thesaurus: wicked, vicious, choleric, villainous, flagitious ... there are so many words for the malign and ireful in English! English has a larger fundamental vocabulary than German, but no word does quite what "böse" does. Another problem arises immediately of course: the word occurs at three points in the poem and whatever we choose has to fit on each occasion – the title, then line two: "The mask of a ___ demon," and the last line: "How strenuous it is

9. Scene 7 and the subsequent Interlude: *BFA* 6, 247 and 253; *Collected Plays* 6, 77 and 84 for Willett's translation. Tony Kushner translates the same sentence, 'Why are you so furious?' (surely missing the point); and David Harrower has 'Why are you so mean?'

10. It remains unclear precisely what play or what character this mask is for. It shares characteristics with both the Shishi-guchi (lion spirit) and the Akujo-Beshimi (a more fearful aged god).

to be ___." I quite like "malevolence/ malevolent." It's all right in the first two places, but ponderous in the last line. I quite want to use two different words, but I think that won't do. Besides, "malevolent" is a quite high register word, whereas "böse" is neutral or even low register, depending on the meaning and context.

Another problem with some of these possible solutions is that this is indeed a mask – it is not "the face of evil" (how different that would be!). "Evil" and "wicked" have in English that sense of an inalienable "nature," rather than of an emotion that can be put on or cast aside. In German you can definitely be "böse" one moment, and friendly the next. Brecht's emphasis on its mask nature implies that there is another face underneath, just as in *Der gute Mensch* again. Brecht comments on an earlier draft of that play in his *Journal*, "wie leicht es ist für sie, gut zu sein, und wie schwer es ist, böse zu sein."[11] The idea that this *bös* mask is something put on can be associated with Brecht's critique of capitalism, or, by extension, of fascism, which was for Brecht an exaggerated form of capitalism. For him the fascist cult of hatred and cruelty was something that was ultimately harmful to themselves, the perpetrators, as a denial of their humanity.

But there is a stumbling block or a constraint to this reading. Interestingly, the poet observes the mask "mitfühlend." Surely that one word makes the familiar "evil" reading rather implausible: how would you feel with (or sympathize with) someone who was simply evil? And "Mitgefühl" is scarcely appropriate to a critique of Nazism either, although it perhaps fits the lesser manifestations and agents of capitalism. Brecht often expresses extraordinary compassion for the common soldiers who served Hitler's aims, but never for the real Nazis, and similarly for the hapless footsoldiers of capitalism, but never for the real stewards of finance and big business.

So, after this long diversion, I come back round to the idea of aggressive anger, instead of evil. That makes the poem suddenly reminiscent of another play from only a few years earlier: I am thinking of the scene about "short" and "long rage" in *Mutter Courage* (where the German words are unambiguous: *Wut* and *Zorn*). We may not sympathize unambiguously with Courage, but we feel for her certainly; and in this scene she is right about the need for a tenacious anger if protest is to lead anywhere. In this reading of the poem, to be "bös" might just potentially be a positive thing. Sometimes you have to be aggressive, but it is nonetheless an effort. The mask and the poem do not seem at first to express that idea. But perhaps the demon needs to be fierce in order to protect the temple, and perhaps we need to be filled with energetic rage in order to defend humanity against fascism. Think of Stalingrad, if you want to re-inject a note of real contextual seriousness. Or think of the great signature poem, "An die Nachgeborenen," which in my translation includes the lines: "Hatred, even of meanness / Makes you ugly. / Anger, even at injustice / Makes your voice hoarse. Oh we / Who wanted to prepare the land for friendliness / Could not ourselves be friendly."[12]

11. *Journal*, 9.8.40, i.e. *BFA* 26, 410-11.

12. This translation forthcoming in *Collected Poems* (New York: W.W. Norton – Liveright, 2018). There is another possible, far more personal, and possibly trivial, frame of reference. One typescript of the poem bears a note by

Anyway, eventually, I arrive at a translation, a provisional translation – all translations are provisional – this one subtly and yet also *very* different from the familiar version by Hoffman Hays:

The mask of the angry one
On my wall hangs a Japanese carving
Mask of an angry demon, lacquered in gold.
Feelingly I observe
The swollen veins at his temples, hinting
What a great strain it is to be angry.

I like the idea that this version might exist alongside Hays's "mask of evil," not supplanting it, but augmenting it, illustrating the play of that range of meanings in Brecht's original (which I presume Brecht enjoyed) and gesturing eloquently at the untranslatability of poetry. Or perhaps I should say: the only contingent translatability of poetry, the necessarily incomplete act of translation. There are another thousand poems to go – I can't spend this long on each one!

Such are the reflections, research paths, and pitfalls into which one may be led by essaying a translation of just one Brecht poem.

Ruth Berlau that it was written "28. September 1942 SM – NY' (*BFA* 12, 407), that is on the way from Santa Monica to New York to see Berlau. Brecht and Berlau had had an intense and unhappy correspondence leading up to this visit (see *BFA* 29) in which Brecht repeatedly chided Berlau for being so bitter and angry towards him, at least once using the word "böse" to describe her letters (*BFA* 29, 241).

Marc Silberman, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Translating Brecht for Present Times

[Note: this is a radically condensed and revised version of the editors' general introduction to the new, 3rd edition of *Brecht on Theatre*, published by Bloomsbury in 2015]

In 1963, when John Willett completed the manuscript of *Brecht on Theatre*, he considered it a provisional account. No one suspected it would become the standard introduction to Brecht's writings in the Anglophone world and in some instances even beyond for those who could read English but not German. In the 1960s Brecht was only beginning to be translated into other major languages, and his writings on theatre practices, if not totally unknown in Germany, were a mere rumor beyond. Willett's selection, translations and notes decisively influenced the discourse on Brecht's theatre.

The new, revised edition of *Brecht on Theatre* – which, by the way, is not (yet) for sale owing to copyright issues – reflects five decades of critical scholarship, biographical clarifications, and archival discoveries. We dropped some texts because they now appear in other volumes of Brecht's writings in the Methuen English edition. In their place we translated over 20 additional texts to enlarge the collection and restored passages Willett had left out in some 20 additional selections. All of Willett's original translations were refreshed, updated, and in some cases rendered completely anew into English. Willett sometimes made real errors; in other instances he worked without adequate insight into Brecht's own frame of reference; some essays were abridged with no indication for readers that material was missing, and

other selections were simply conflated from different manuscript sources. More important, Willett was unable to include translations of any material that had not already been published in German, so he was either forced to omit significant essays or had to make do with descriptions or summaries in the editorial notes.

What does it mean to translate Brecht for the present, for readers today? First, his writing initially seems easy to translate because of its clarity, and the Anglo-Saxon element of his style brings it close to us. Yet, his prose is also characterized by neologisms, wit, and a syntax that often resists easy transposition into English. Second, Willett's translations have been around for fifty years and decisively influenced the English-language discourse on Bertolt Brecht. Consequently, we as translators need to be mindful about "changing the rules of the game" by introducing new translations for concepts that have already entered the world of "Brechtian English." At the same time Brecht himself gave familiar words new meanings and introduced new words for innovative ideas as he wrestled with language to achieve the precision he sought in abstract thinking and in theatre practice. Indeed, this was our model as we worked to find a passable or the best solution among the possible ones. As a result, we introduced some major and many minor revisions to Willett's vocabulary. Three of Brecht's key concepts in German illustrate the challenges we faced: *Verfremdung*, *Gestus*, and *Haltung*. They have all provoked considerable academic commentary and disagreement, and their translation also raises controversial issues, not only in relation to rendering his writings into English more generally but also in more fundamental terms.

Verfremdung is probably the most notorious of Brecht's theoretical notions. Willett translated it as alienation and *Verfremdungseffekt* or *V-Effekt* as alienation effect or A-effect. This became the standard terminology, giving rise to two fundamental misunderstandings. The first was that Brechtian theatre was cold and impersonal because he wanted his productions to alienate the audience rather than to entertain them. The second misunderstanding is more plausible. By the 1930s Brecht was a committed Marxist, and *Entfremdung* is the term Marx uses for alienation. Marx's term refers to the socio-economic position of the worker in the labor process under capitalism, but Brecht's *Verfremdung* refers to an aesthetic process that renews our powers of cognition. In the course of the 1970s and 1980s two further translations were in circulation: distanciation and defamiliarization. The use of distanciation, or the distancing effect, led to misunderstandings: although Brecht may not have wanted his productions to actually put the audience off, he still wanted to distance the audience from the proceedings on stage. Yet generally speaking, he uses the term distance to characterize the actors' relationship to their roles, not the audience to the actions on stage. "Defamiliarization" has stronger credentials as a potential translation, not least as *Verfremdung* is the standard German rendering of the Russian Formalist term *ostranenie*, and defamilarization its English equivalent. For the Formalists, however, defamiliarization is an artistic technique designed to intensify our sensations and perceptions of objects in a world where authentic vision has been deadened by abstraction. For Brecht, the aim of *Verfremdung* is that we should understand the world better. It enables the spectators to perceive things in a new way so that the social rules governing our actions can be revealed and so that we (the spectators) can see how events

could have turned out differently. Rendering *Verfremdung* as defamiliarization suggests an equivalence with *ostranenie* that is theoretically misleading. Thus, we threw in the conceptual towel and chose not to translate *Verfremdung*, rendering it in italics and capitalized; V-effect adapts the German term into an English neologism, and the verb *verfremden* becomes "making strange" or "estrange."

We chose to adapt Brecht's Gestus without capitalization or italics: gestus. Willett introduced the obsolete English word "gest" to render the slippery, pseudo-technical term, even though it resonates more with jest (as in joke) or gist for many readers rather than with Brecht's global notion that connects theatre event, society, and audience by making actions observable, pointing to the structurally defining causes behind them, and enabling social critique. Etymologically Latin gestus refers to everything related to mime and mimicry, including facial expressions, body posture, and body language, which contribute to the telling of a story. Because Brecht drew on his own experiences in articulating both *Verfremdung* and gestus, his usage changed as did his own practices. Mentioned as early as 1926, gestus accrued related meanings over time. Ultimately he used the word in such an inflationary way that gestus could stand for Brecht's entire approach to staging theatre, that is, a central aspect of his theoretical and practical engagement with open forms of non-mimetic realism. By maintaining gestus as a "foreign word" in our translations – it is a neologism in German as well – we also conform to many scholarly publications on Brechtian theatre theory that employ it as an analytical and performance tool referencing embodied connections to social and/or historical contexts.

"Attitude" or "stance" is Willett's translation of Brecht's key concept *Haltung*; we consistently rendered it as "attitude" in this new edition of *Brecht on Theatre*. The German etymology relates it to the common verb *halten* (to hold) as well as to the familiar nouns *Verhalten* (behavior) and *Verhältnis* (relationship). In fact it is closely linked to gestus, as described above, and can mean both "attitude" in the intellectual sense of a cognitive category and stance in the pragmatic sense of physical comportment, combining what is usually a mental state in English with embodied expression or an actor's bearing. Brecht employed the word frequently in the second half of the 1920s to describe bodily dynamics in the context of acting, but he was himself inconsistent in the usage that changed over time. In other words Brecht places into an intersubjective relationship the traditional understanding of gestures, facial expression, and speech intonation. Together attitude and gestus represent analytical concepts that enable the actor to separate into single gestures social actions and appearances and contrast them with one another, indicating how meaning can be established, named, or produced in a consistent way by the actor on stage. Let me mention that our colleague David Barnett, author of the recently published volume *Brecht in Practice: Theatre, Theory and Performance* (Bloomsbury, 2014), thought we should have maintained *Haltung* in German, but we decided against this because we wanted to avoid as much as possible the impression that one needs to know German or – worse – be German to understand Brecht!

There are also less noticeable changes in both the new and revised translations of this new edition. The noun *Fabel*, which has been previously translated as story or fable, we consistently rendered as plot

in Brecht's sense of the dialectically interpreted plot that is made "playable" for a modern audience. Similarly, Brecht's touchstone phrase "das menschliche Zusammenleben" yielded the somewhat awkward but accurate "the way people live together." We de-gendered German's masculine nouns and pronouns, usually by pluralizing them, for example, the actor/he becomes the actors/they, or mankind becomes humankind. The indefinite pronoun one was rendered variously as you, we, or people. Translation is an act of appropriation, and the gestus of our translations emerges in the activity of appropriation, of making these texts our own, now in the present form.

The IBS at the 2016 Modern Language Association Convention

The IBS, an affiliate organization of the MLA, sponsored two sessions and a business meeting at the annual convention held in Austin, Texas, from 7-10 January, 2016.

The IBS business meeting

As usual, the MLA Convention was also an opportunity for IBS members and friends to get together for a business meeting and more informal socializing, this time at the Indian restaurant Clay Pit on Friday evening, 8 January. With IBS President Stephen Brockmann (Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh) presiding, the ca. 20 attendees introduced themselves and enjoyed a first round of drinks before discussing the main order of business: to come to a consensus about the topics and organizers for future IBS conference sessions. Below are the details for three IBS sessions planned for the annual German Studies Association conference, to be held in San Diego, California, from 29 September till 2 October 2016, as well as two calls for papers for the next annual convention of the MLA, to be held in Philadelphia from 5 till 8 January 2017 ("Brecht, Affect, Empathy"; "Brecht and Scandinavian Literature and Film"). Paula Hanssen then briefly reported on the IBS finances (still solvent) and on the recent election of the steering committee members for 2016 and 2017 terms. *Brecht Yearbook* editor Ted Rippey laid out the plans for the next three volumes: BY 40 to appear in late summer 2016; BY 41 to appear soon thereafter in early 2017, bringing us back into alignment with the publication dates; and BY 42 also in 2017, under the guest editorship of the Oxford Symposium organizers. Marc Silberman (University of Wisconsin, Madison) then detailed some of the upcoming Brecht-related events: the "Brecht-Tage 2016" at the Brecht-Haus in Berlin that will focus on copyright issues from 8-12 February under the title "'Laxheit in Fragen geistigen Eigentums': Brecht und das Urheberrecht"; the annual Brecht Festival in Augsburg planned for 2 February through 3 March under the title "Brecht und Deutschland – Die Vaterstadt, wie empfängt sie mich wohl?"; the 15th IBS Symposium in late June 2016 at St. Hughs College in Oxford, UK under the title "Recycling Brecht"; the 2016 Brecht Lectures planned at the Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus Berlin with Sigrid Weigel (spring 2016) and Josef Vogl (fall 2016); and finally, new English-language Brecht translations from Bloomsbury-Methuen, including *Caesar Novel* (January 2016), *Me-Ti* (September 2016), and a selection of unfinished plays under the title *The Writer's Workshop: Fatzer and Other Dramatic Projects* (fall 2017).

IBS Sessions at the German Studies Association Conference, San Diego, CA (Sept. 29 – Oct. 2, 2016)

1956: Brecht, Death, and Socialism [Session sponsored by the International Brecht Society]
1956, the year of Bertolt Brecht's death, marked a fundamental turning point in the socialist world, with the "secret speech" of Soviet leader Nikita Krushchev in February denouncing the crimes of Stalin, liberalization efforts in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and elsewhere, and ultimately the brutal crackdown on the Hungarian revolution and the arrest of Walter Janka, Wolfgang Harich, and others in East Germany in the final months of the year. Brecht's death in August of 1956 came in the middle of this momentous year, at a time of relative liberalization while the Berliner Ensemble was preparing for its first trip to London, before the crackdown of the year's final months. Would this year have been significantly altered if Brecht had not died in 1956? Is it possible that the crackdown in East Germany would not have occurred, or that it would have occurred in a different way? What was Brecht's role in the events of 1956, and to what extent did he! serve as a role model and inspiration for East German reformers? To what extent did reformers elsewhere in the socialist world influence him? On the sixtieth anniversary of Brecht's death in 1956, the International Brecht Society will explore the interconnection among Brecht, socialism, and the year 1956 in East Germany and the rest of the socialist world.

Moderator: Kristopher Imbrigotta (University of Puget Sound)

Respondent: Jost Hermand (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Crisis and the Escalation of Contradictions: Brecht's Intellectual Model in the Crucible of 1956 – Mark Clark (University of Virginia at Wise)

Bertolt Brecht emerged from 1953 in a significantly strengthened position within the GDR. Using a variety of tactics, he accomplished much during several crucial months: he blunted the SED's attack on fellow reformers such as Peter Huchel and Hanns Eisler; he helped to secure a measure of artistic/cultural autonomy through the creation of a new Ministry of Culture; and he gained a residence for his theater troupe. Even as he settled into a quasi-official role, Brecht's success in 1953 conditioned expectations for further reform in East Germany and among dissident intellectuals in East-Central Europe. When the next window of opportunity opened in 1956, Brecht thus seemed ideally situated to seize the initiative. In this paper, I will build on my earlier argument that Brecht was a particular kind of intellectual—committed to artistic freedom, partisan without being bound to a party, independent of official institutions yet experienced at surviving within! them, prepared to entertain risks and undertake unconventional experiments. More specifically, I will examine his role and ongoing influence in the rapidly changing circumstances of 1956. I will also examine the extent to which reformers such as Wolfgang Harich in the GDR and István Eörsi in Hungary followed Brecht's model, but also pushed beyond what he envisioned or thought possible, especially in the months following his death.

Marxism, Post-Stalinism, Philosophy: "Socialist Freedom" in East Berlin, 1956 – Sean Forner (Michigan State University)

In March 1956, just after the CPSU's 20th Congress and shortly before the death of their friend Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Bloch and his young colleague Wolfgang Harich hosted a philosophy conference in East Berlin. Guests from either side of the iron curtain gathered at the Academy of Sciences to discuss "The Problem of Freedom in the Light of Scientific Socialism" in what became a high-profile academic affair. An artifact of the post-Stalin "thaw," it probed the implications of de-Stalinization for socialist philosophy. Bloch and Harich invited a broad spectrum of East German colleagues and a mix of visitors from abroad, Marxists as well as a few non-Marxist interlocutors. The GDR delegation ranged from jurist Alfons Steiniger to unionist Hermann Duncker to leading SED ideologue Kurt Hager. The hosts' Hungarian contact György Lukács was unable to attend, but his assistant Ágnes Heller did; also present were Leszek Kołakowski from Poland, Henri Lefebvre and Roger Garaudy from France, and Hans Heinz Holz and Rudolf Schottlaender from West Germany. Others arrived from the Soviet Union and across the Eastern bloc. The proceedings document both ongoing dogmatism and tentative heterodox attempts by Communist theorists to renegotiate relations to "bourgeois" theoretical traditions and reassert subjective human freedom against objective historical necessity and its all-knowing agent, the Party. Moreover, the conference was a philosophical prelude to political upheaval. Clandestine discussions exploded into openly reformist forums across Eastern Europe that summer. Kołakowski was soon central to the intellectual opposition in Poland, as Lukács was in Hungary. In the GDR, despite the absence of a popular uprising, Bloch and Harich were targeted in an ensuing crackdown, the latter after he penned and publicized a platform for East Germany's thoroughgoing democratization. Meanwhile, Western Europe saw a revitalization of critical Marxism and leftist activism as well, in whose French incarnations Lefebvre and Garaudy played key roles. This remarkable gathering of mid-1950s Communist thinkers has been little explored and too readily dismissed by scholars, its nonconformist impulses and transnational implications unrecognized. My paper will situate the conference and its debates in the context of the ambivalent openings and suppressed alternatives of 1956 and the emergence of "socialist humanisms" with democratic intent in both East and West.

Intellectuals on the Eve and in the Wake of Revolution: Bertolt Brecht, Johannes R. Becher, Anna Seghers, Georg Lukács – Helen Fehervary (Ohio State University)

The most significant, and influential, voices of democratic reform in the GDR leading up to the pivotal year 1956 were those of Brecht, Becher, Seghers – and the Hungarian philosopher Lukács whose writings were seminal to debates of the early 1950s throughout Eastern Europe. By 1957 the tide had turned: Brecht had died in August 1956, just before the Hungarian Revolution; Becher, stripped of his powers as Minister of Culture, lived in isolation and ailing health until his death in 1958; Lukács, arrested and deported to Romania for his role as Minister of Education in the revolutionary Imre Nagy government,

returned to Budapest in April 1957 under house arrest and remained excluded from Hungarian politics; Seghers retained her position as President of the East German Writers Union but lived in virtual seclusion for several years and for the most part kept silent about political opinions she earlier would have voiced in public. Small wonder that intellectuals of the next generation such as Christa Wolf and Heiner Müller felt abandoned by, and to some extent ambivalent about, these their role models whose earlier struggles and occasional compromises with the authorities had offered promises of democratic socialism which they were unable to keep. But – taking a cue from this session's intriguing question as to what might have been if Brecht had survived his fate in August 1956 – would it have made any difference if this first generation of intellectuals had been able to live on and continue their efforts, not isolated but together? My paper will explore this question in the real context of these intellectuals' cooperative efforts before 1956, their writings, their political visions, and how these might have continued after 1956 till the liberalism of the Prague Spring.

Making Poems for Adults: Brecht's Last Literary Project – Stephen Brockmann (Carnegie Mellon University)

This paper explores Bertolt Brecht's last literary project: the translation of anti-Stalinist Polish poet Adam Wazyk's complex multi-part work "Poemat dla dorosłych" (A Poem for Adults), which Brecht was working on--together with his Polish-born collaborator Konrad Swinarski (born in 1929) – shortly before his death in August 1956. Brecht's goal was to publish a German translation of the poem, one of the most important anti-Stalinist works from Poland, in the weekly newspaper Sonntag, the primary publication of the East German Kulturbund zur Demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands (the country's most important cultural organization). Brecht believed that, especially in the post-Stalinist situation of 1956, after Nikita Krushchev's "secret speech" denouncing the crimes of Stalinism, it was crucial for anti-Stalinist reformers throughout the communist world to engage in intensive debate and discussion. He believed that in the past barriers had been erected between the countries of the socialist bloc, but he hoped that, in the context of 1956, it might be possible to overcome these barriers. Brecht believed that Wazyk's work, which had been instrumental in fomenting revolt and reform in Poland, could potentially help to play a similar role in the German Democratic Republic. Brecht's death unfortunately made it impossible for him to carry out his plans for a publication of Wazyk's poem; and in the subsequent crackdown on East German reformers (starting in late November, after the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution) a number of intellectuals associated with the newspaper *Sonntag* and with the Kulturbund were arrested and incarcerated. Nevertheless, Brecht's work on "A Poem for Adults" gives a clear indication of his approach to socialist reform in the final months of his life, and it illustrates his belief in the use of sophisticated literary texts as a way to open up a sphere for discussion and debate within a socialist public sphere that Brecht hoped to liberalize.

The Brechtian Turn [Session sponsored by the International Brecht Society]

The International Brecht Society is sponsoring a session on "The Brechtian Turn" to focus attention on the influence Bertolt Brecht has had on the discourse about the intersections of art, culture, and politics in the postwar period. Especially with the generational shift in the 1960s the nexus of aesthetics, politics, and economics came to define artistic practices, and scholars began to hone their instruments for studying how art reveals with particular force the most acute problems of social development. Brecht's plays, poems, and prose stories contributed to this turn, achieving in Germany (East and West) canonical status and entering the school curricula. Brecht's models of epic theater and the Lehrstück as well as his theoretical writings on realism, the media, and the commodity nature of art suggested a critical apparatus that was embraced by various disciplines of scholarly investigation. This session will focus on the Brechtian turn in literary studies, film studies, and poetic practice.

Moderator: Paula Hanssen (Webster University, St. Louis)

Respondent: Hunter Bivens (University of California, Santa Cruz)

Brecht und die Literaturwissenschaft – Jost Hermand (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Im Gegensatz zu den Ostblockländern war bis zur Mitte der sechziger Jahre im Bereich der germanistischen Forschung in den NATO-Ländern von Brecht wegen seiner marxistischen Gesinnung kaum die Rede. Erst durch den Linksruck der westdeutschen Achtundsechziger-Bewegung und der Anti-Vietnamkrieg-Revolte in den USA erhielt die 1967 bei Suhrkamp erscheinende Ausgabe seiner Sämtlichen Werke plötzlich eine kaum zu überschätzende Brisanz, die sich in einer Fülle von Publikationen, der Gründung der Internationalen Brecht-Gesellschaft und der Herausgabe eines *Brecht-Jahrbuch* niederschlug, deren auf Solidarisierung gegen das herrschende Establishment pochende Wirkung bis in die frühen achtziger Jahre anhielt. Erst nach dem Durchbruch der sogenannten Postmoderne, dem "Neuen Subjektivismus" und der damit verbundenen Entsolidarisierung ließ die Faszination Brechts innerhalb der Germanistik erheblich nach, ja führte zu ersten hähmischen Gegenreaktionen. Wahrend sich solche Kampagnen im Hinblick auf das bisherige Ansehen älterer linker Autoren geradezu fatal auswirkte, hat jedoch Brecht – aufgrund seiner literarischen Bedeutsamkeit – solche Attacken relativ unbeschädigt überlebt. Allerdings hat sich das literaturwissenschaftliche Interesse an ihm aus dem Bereich des gesellschaftlich Aktivierenden inzwischen mehrheitlich in eher als harmlos geltende Themenstellungen biographischer Ermittlungen, genrespezifischer Fragen oder medialer Aspekte verlagert, um sich in "postheroischer" Tendenz von den jeweils engagierten Stellungnahmen im Sinne des Kalten Kriegs zu distanzieren.Von den jeweils vorhandenen rühmlichen Ausnahmen einmal abgesehen, begibt sich die Literaturwissenschaft mehrheitlich zu einem glattgebügelten Brecht, der keinerlei ideologische Sprengkraft mehr hat. Dafür sollte man allerdings nicht ihn, sondern die weithin systemkonforme Germanistik verantwortlich machen.

"The Brechtian Turn" in der Filmwissenschaft – Marc Silberman

Durch Jean-Luc Godards zitierfähigen Grundsatzanspruch, dass es nicht mehr darum geht, politische Filme zu machen, sondern Filme politisch zu machen ("pas de faire des films politiques mais de faire des films politiquement") wurde sowohl eine ganze Generation von Filmemachern inspiriert, die in den 60er Jahren hervortraten, als auch die Etablierung der Filmwissenschaft als akademische Fachrichtung angestoßen, die im Laufe der 70er Jahre die "German Studies" maßgeblich erweiterte. Die Überzeugung, dass der Weg vom Filmemachen zur Politisierung nicht unbedingt geradlinig läuft, überschneidet sich mit Brechts Kritk der Mimesis und dem konventionellen Realismus im Theater, d.h. dass "weniger denn je die 'einfache Wiedergabe der Realität' etwas über die Realität aussagt. Die eigentliche Realität ist in die Funktionale gerutscht" (*Der Dreigroschenprozeß*). Die Form also, wie ein Kunstwerk "aufgebaut" ist und wie die Realität "gestellt" wird, sagt etwas über den Kontext und die menschlichen Beziehungen aus. Diese Überlegungen fanden Zugang in die "German Studies" der 70er und 80er Jahre, als das Feld der Germanistik sich ausweitete und ein breiteres Textverständnis (auch Filme) sowie neue Methoden über die Textanalyse und die Literatursoziologie hinaus tolerierte, wenn auch nicht begrüßte. Dieser Vortrag befaßt sich damit, wie die Filmwissenschaft in die Forschungs- und Lehrtätigkeit der "German Studies" Eingang fand, dass also unsere Aufgabe nicht (nur) darin besteht, politische Kritik zu üben, sondern (auch) politisch zu kritisieren, d.h., den Lernprozeß selber als politisch zu zeigen.

Eine Poetin zwischen Zeitenwende und Brechtian Turn – Kerstin Hensel (Berlin)

Viele Wege führen zu Brecht, manche führen auch in die Irre. Die Werke Brechts in der DDR wurden geliebt oder gehaßt. Je nachdem, wer sich mit ihnen wie beschäftigte. Der schulische Lehrplan der 1970er Jahre machte uns Schüler lediglich mit ein paar Lehrgedichten bekannt, die als kommunistische Propaganda serviert wurden. "Didactics killed Dialectics." Brecht, der Parteidichter. Keiner in der Schule mochte ihn. Im Sturm und Drang meiner Jugend lernte ich – durch Begegnung mit dem Theater – den anderen Brecht kennen: seine subversiven Stücke, die unartigen Lieder, die atemberaubend poetischen Verse. Brecht, der Widerstandsdichter. Wir, die wir uns mit seinen kritischen Gedanken verbündeten, liebten ihn und prüften die Welt mit Hilfe seiner Texte. Nach dem Zusammenbruch des sozialistischen Systems, sahen wir die "neue Welt" des Kapitalismus – Dank Brecht! – klarer als mancher, der mit Schaum vor dem Mund konsumierbare Freiheit einforderte. Heute scheint Brecht selten als Verbündeter gegen "finstere Zeiten" zu taugen. Oder doch? Dieser Frage werde ich nachgehen.

Brecht/Reception Before and After 1956 [Session sponsored by the International Brecht Society]

This session explores what happened to Brecht's influence and his work after Brecht's death in 1956. In what ways did Brecht's death alter the conditions of his influence and reception? Did the impact of Brecht's work become more constrained, or did it expand? The session combines a number of specific case studies, starting with the impact of Chinese philosophy on Brecht's own late work, and moving toward a consideration of the way that Brecht's work has had an impact on subsequent writers, from Heiner Müller in the German Democratic Republic to Joko Tawada in the contemporary Federal Republic.

Moderator: Paula Hanssen (Webster University, St. Louis)

Respondent: Jack Davis (Truman State University, Missouri)

Dialectical Contradiction in a Postwar Milieu: The Chinese Influence of Lao Tzu and Mao Tzu Tung's Philosophy on Bertolt Brecht's Late Creation from 1950 to 1956 – Wei Zhang (University of Hawaii at Manoa)

During the last few years of Bertolt Brecht's life, Brecht compiled his entire theatrical theory under a new label of "dialectical theatre," which informed his late theatrical plays, such as *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Coriolanus*. Meanwhile, his idea of "dialectical theatre" has been presented in his dialectical writing, including the collection of short stories *Keuner Geschichten* and the poem "Gedanken bei einem Flug über die Große Mauer", which reflect his attitude toward the postwar German situation and his thoughts on constructing a new society. My paper will focus on the two theatrical plays and the other writings mentioned above through the lenses of Lao Tzu 's *Tao Te Ching* and Mao's "On Contradiction", as Chinese cultural influence, to analyze how Chinese philosophy and socialism influenced Brecht, and how these four works echoed each other. As is known to Brecht scholars, in the 1930s, Brecht was reading Lao Tzu and Mao, and these are reflected on Brecht's four works. However, no scholars have previously analyzed the nature of his appropriations. The implication of the interrelationship between these works will be addressed through textual analysis in this paper. This paper will also look into the affinities between the ideologies of Lao Tzu and Mao. Lao Tzu stated the key conception of universal immanent contradiction by speculating the vast amounts of phenomena between material and spiritual world on the experience of human beings, and Mao's "On Contradiction" put forward and demonstrated this universality of contradiction from Lao Tzu's method. The gist of these Chinese thoughts were absorbed, transformed and reinterpreted by Bertolt Brecht into his ideological texts. His four works illustrate the significance of dialectically resolving the contradiction between the human being and the postwar environment as the primary approach. I will use the following methods and approaches: comparative analysis of source materials and their adaptations, influence studies, script analysis, and semiotic performance analysis.

Brecht's Cultural Afterlife: 1956, Junge Kunst and the Early Didactic Plays of Heiner Müller – Anna Horakova (Cornell University)

Although Brecht was canonized by the GDR following his death, the author's calls for cultural and political reforms made in the last two years of his life (1955-56) did not have an immediate impact on East Germany's political landscape or the trials of his associates Wolfgang Harich and Walter Janka. Brecht's calls for cultural reforms, however, came to fruition as early as 1957, at a time when the recent uprisings in Poland and Hungary left the Soviet Bloc in need of cultural legitimation and greater popular involvement (David Bathrick). More precisely, Brecht's suggestion to return to the "kleinen, wendigen Kampfformen" of the agitprop theater at the fourth Writers' Congress of January 1956 (Brecht, Ausführungen vor der Sektion Dramatik) influenced a reversal of the official stance vis-à-vis representatives and movements of the socialist avant-garde tradition, securing their place in the state's cultural heritage and a renewal of this tradition in works by Brecht's East German avant-garde successors. This paper examines Brecht's influence on such successors, showing specifically how the periodical *Junge Kunst* and the early didactic plays by Heiner Müller and Müller/Hagen-Stahl reawaken the agitprop tradition as a theater that is critical of the dominant socialist realist strictures and of the volatile Aufbau period, the elements of which Brecht had endorsed.

Yoko Tawada's Art of Alienation – Vera Stegmann: (Lehigh University)

Yoko Tawada – or Tawada Yoko, as she is named in Japanese – is a contemporary author who was born in Tokyo in 1960 and who has been living in Germany since 1982, first in Hamburg and since 2006 in Berlin. She writes novels, dramas, and theoretical texts both in German and in Japanese. Her first German language publication, *Wo Europa anfängt* (1991), is a postmodern mix of travelogue, diary, fantasy tale, dream sequences, and poetic reflections, and has already been translated into English (*Where Europe Begins*). It is the first of many literary works in which Tawada crosses linguistic and cultural boundaries and questions the meanings of "Europe" and "Asia," as well as traditional concepts of East and West. I will concentrate primarily on two of her lecture cycles, *Verwandlungen* (Transformations) and *Fremde Wasser* (Strange Waters), because they contain her aesthetics of alienation that can be connected to Brecht. Tawada's thoughts on Brecht are complex and not uniformly positive, but she understands him well: Tawada wrote her Master's thesis on Heiner Müller and has performed at a Brecht and Chekhov festival in Japan, together with Jazz pianist Aki Takase. The condition of "Fremde" is a recurrent theme in Tawada's writings: "Being strange is an art," she stated in an interview. The critic Clara Ervedosa recognizes Tawada's "Besessenheit von der Sprache" and characterizes her as a "wahre Semiotikerin des Fremden." In the main body of my paper I will elaborate on how Yoko Tawada's concepts of strangeness, estrangement, and alienation can be related to and differ from those of Bertolt Brecht.

Calls for Papers: Convention of the Modern Language Association, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (January 5 - 8, 2017)

NOTE: if your abstract is accepted, you must become an MLA member by April 1, 2016.

Brecht, Affect, Empathy

Cold Brecht? Does critical distance imply the absence of emotions? Where do feelings come into play? Why is empathy necessary for a Brechtian audience? Send 200-word abstracts by March 15 to Ted Rippey: theodor [at] bgsu.edu

Brecht and Scandinavian Theater and Film

From his years in Scandinavian exile to his translations of Strindberg's plays, Brecht was profoundly influenced by Scandinavian theater. He, in turn, inspired later Scandinavian dramatists and filmmakers, from Ingmar Bergman to Lars von Trier. We invite papers for this panel that consider the ties—historical and current—between Brecht and Scandinavian theater and film. Send 200-word abstracts by March 15 to Kjerstin Moody: kmoody@gustavus.edu

Below we provide the paper abstracts and the response from the two IBS-sponsored sessions at the January 2016 MLA conference:

Brecht, Surveillance, Visibility

Program arranged by the International Brecht Society

Presiding: Vera S. Stegmann (Lehigh University, Pennsylvania)

1. "Breaking the Fourth Wall of Biometric Surveillance: Brechtian Aesthetics in Surveillance Arts Activism," Elise Morrison (Yale University)

Fueled by counter-terrorism programs after 9/11 and by technological advances in facial recognition, iris scans, and other DNA-based identification processes, biometric surveillance techniques have gained popularity and controversy over the last decade and a half. These cutting edge analytical systems mine the body for stable markers of identity and behavior, and then interpret these data points in order to measure, track, and predict the social, economic, and political actions of individuals and groups. Because they are structured by digital algorithms and computerized vision, biometric software systems are often assumed to represent the body from a neutral, non-discriminatory, and objective viewpoint. This paper examines the truth-claims of biometric techniques of surveillance and the normalized representation of bodies upon which they depend (what Simone Browne [2010] called "digital epidermalization") in relation to theatrical traditions of naturalism and realism. More specifically, I argue that Brechtian strategies of *Verfremdungseffekt*, gestus, and "not/but" remain central to the important work of artists and activists that strive to make visible – and thereby open for critique and revision – normalized processes of biometric surveillance. Recent works by Zach Blas and Manu Luksch employ Brechtian aesthetic strategies to highlight structural connections between the representational norms of facial recognition software and the discriminatory, dehumanizing effects of these biometric surveillance systems. Blas's "facial weaponization" masks (2014), designed according to composite biometric data of the facial profiles of homosexual men, and Luksch's dystopic

film *Faceless* (2008), filmed entirely through publicly installed CCTV cameras in London, effectively utilize Brechtian strategies of representation to, as feminist theorist Elin Diamond (1997) put it, "expose illusionism, to pry actor/signifier from character/signified," or, in the case of biometrics, to pry the individual social subject from biological data points. At the same time, these artists create startling new representations of contemporary subjecthood that suggest, among other things, ways in which human bodies can protect themselves by appearing strange, unfamiliar, and illegible to systems of biometric surveillance.

2. "Alienated and Relaxed: Immersed Spectators at Work and Onstage," Jim Ball (Texas A&M University, College Station)

Walter Benjamin's "What is Epic Theater?" opens with a counterintuitive assertion that the interested spectator of Epic Theater is "an audience that is relaxed." Though Benjamin offers the image to contrast the emotionally roiled audience produced by conventional drama, it also contradicts the bumper sticker dictum that "if you aren't outraged, you aren't paying attention." Alienated and relaxed, this audience finds an echo in twenty-first-century white-collar workers: individuals who are subject to techniques of workplace surveillance, whose social relations are mediated by web services that double as tools for data mining, who can be monitored by the state through devices carried from home to office, but who demonstrate relatively mild concern for the privacy they give up. The "pellucid manner" of presentation Benjamin ascribes to Epic Theater finds reiteration in the transparent interfaces through which these spectators, immersed in a series of screens, meet the world and are made racialized subjects of history (Nakamura 2008). These resemblances recommend the embrace of Brechtian aesthetics to estrange social and political conditions by a form that often eschews the *Verfremdungseffekt*: immersive theater. Though immersive art ostensibly traffics in "high grade feeling[s]… of presence" (Grau 2003) that erase broader social conditions, it also produces intense experiences of self-alienation illuminating the immersive strategies of surveillance governing daily life. This presentation excavates the possibilities and limits of Brechtian aesthetics in contemporary immersive theater by reading Brecht against theorists of immersion and through close analysis of Wolf 359's immersive theatrical exploration of corporate alienation, *Temping*.

3. "Performance at a Smart Intersection: Surveillance, Information Technologies, and the Space of Brecht's 'Street Scene,'" James Harding (University of Maryland, College Park)

Among the many essays that Brecht wrote on the politics and aesthetics of theater, perhaps the most spatially oriented, theoretically innovative, and politically provocative was his 1938 essay "The Street Scene." This "Basic Model for an Epic Theater" derived its titled from the primary example used to illustrate his model: a street scene from everyday life where a witness to a car accident uses a variety of gestures and provisional reenactments to demonstrate to bystanders the significance of what transpired in the accident. Brecht notes that the gestures made by the animated "demonstrator" are consistent with the acting methods demanded by Epic Theater because neither attempts to draw the bystanders or audience into the illusion of a realistic reenactment. On the contrary, both merely seek to provide a rough illustration that then, in turn, can serve as the

practical foundation for a socially significant intervention. Illustrative though this example from the "street scene" might have been in 1938, one cannot help but wonder about its status some 75 years later when our city streets and intersections are routinely monitored by CCTV cameras. What is the status of the "street scene" – those cameras behoove us to ask – in what is now called the "surveillance society"? How, to be more specific, have the flood of surveillance and information technologies into the public sphere fundamentally altered the space of the "street scene," which was so crucial to the articulation of Brecht's notion of theater? And what, most important of all, does the alteration of the space of the "street scene" mean for the political foundations not only of the theater that Brecht envisioned but also that he subsequently inspired? Such questions, I will argue, position the conceptual spaces of twentieth-century political theater in a relation with the material and technological realities of the twenty-first century that demand our attention if we are to continue to speak seriously rather than nostalgically about the contemporary viability of political theater. I propose that we as critics and practitioners return to this epic "street scene" and consider the implications of how it has changed. Drawing upon the work of critics like David Lyons, Malcolm McCullough, Tim O'Reilly, and Evgeny Morozov, I will argue that the advent of surveillance and information technologies and of so-called "smart" public spheres marks the emergence of a different conceptual organization of space, itself confronts us with radically new forms of performance, and, in reconfiguring the "street scene," ultimately calls for a fundamentally different conception of theatrical practice than Brecht could foresee.

Respondent: Ted Rippey (Bowling Green State University, Ohio)

"Comments on Concepts in Brecht's Thinking"

Presence [/ distance / attention]

In Jim's paper, we are offered two contending notions of presence: one from Oliver Grau, who writes of immersive art's "high grade feeling of presence" that "diminish[es] critical distance"; and another from Michael Fried, who associates "presence" with art that "makes spectators aware of their position as spectators." It seems that in one theory, presence means that the presence of the artwork and the presence audience coalesce, while in the other, presence involves audience attention to the distinction between the two. Jim describes *Temping's* use of the printed page as a mode of absorption that also compels attention to the participant's state of immersion in the cubicle. I'd be curious to hear any of the panelists elaborate on the relationship between immersion, absorption, and attention.

Affect

The verb to compel raises the question of how audiences are moved in ways that do not involve rational argumentation (implicit or explicit). Jim treats affect specifically, but there is an affective dimension to the artworks and problems that James and Elise treat as well. Affect has also become a trending theoretical interest in the humanities in recent years, and it would be worthwhile, I think, to consider what constructive tensions emerge when one compares contemporary thinking about affect with Brecht's thinking about *Haltung* (orientation, disposition, stance), and how these relate to conceptualizations of the body.

Empathy

It is heretical in Brechtian circles to speak of emotional identification, but Brecht's interest in transforming the stage, the play, or the street in a progressive way must hinge on a basic human capacity for empathy. It is difficult to imagine an audience that would feel nothing and be sufficiently motivated to critical thought and action. This is an open question to all present: What does one make of feelings in the context of Brechtian aesthetics? (The affect concept would seem pertinent here as well.) In James's and Elise's papers, for example, there is a strong sense of the individual under threat from the surveillance state or surveillance industrial complex. In Jim's discussion of *Temping*, immersion in the surveillance environment seems more ambivalent but occasionally elicits moments of individual agitation and/or poignancy.

The individual

A particularly strong thread in Elise's and James's papers is the idea of the individual, an entity that deteriorates due to exposure in an age of surveillance. My initial sense, especially given Brecht's thinking about the relationship between individuals and masses in the interwar era, is that to draw on Brechtian concepts in an effort to theorize how an individual might shield him or herself from the contemporary apparatus of surveillance is to defend as a real thing something that Brecht considered a social fiction. The individual, as understood in terms of uniqueness and autonomy, was in Brecht's view an obsolete notion and an obstacle to social progress. At the same time it is clear that we cling to the idea, not only in legal terms but also in cultural concepts of the self (the lived self vs. the data self in Elise's discussion, for example). And it could of course be that Brecht's interwar conceptualization of an obsolete concept has itself in the meantime become obsolete. I wonder, then, whether Elise and her fellow presenters might elaborate their working definitions of individual and comment on the implications of an individual making him or herself (or hmerself?) strange not only to the apparatus of surveillance but to him or herself as well. Privacy, I imagine, would also look different in light of such auto-strange-making.

fremd

Speaking of strange, I'll close with terminological queries to all present. Does alienation mean estrangement, and vice versa? Do both of those mean the same thing as defamiliarize or making strange? Are all of these encompassed by *Verfremdung*? Would the answers to any of these questions in 1939 be different from the answers in 2015? This would be a question about Brecht's times and our times, German studies and Theater studies, and English and German.

(While the discussion was cut short at the end of the session owing to lack of time, the consensus among the 25+ attendees was that this session opened up new horizons for future work on Brechtian theater in the twenty-first century.)

Relations and Legacies: Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno

Program arranged by the International Brecht Society and the Forum Teaching Philosophy and Literature

Presiding: Paula Hanssen (Webster University, St. Louis)

1. "Adorno's *Bilderverbot* and Brecht's Gestural Theater," Astrid Oesmann (Rice University, Houston)

This presentation examines Adorno's notion of *Bilderverbot* (prohibition of images) in his *Negative Dialectics* as a continuous challenge to art and literature after World War II and Brecht's response after his return to Europe in 1947 to the passive but conscious experience of destruction and defeat and the unconscious incorporation of fascism into the realms of individual and collective habit and conduct. Brecht criticized the supposed "overcoming of fascism" as it was attempted in Germany after the war, namely the attempt to overcome Nazism only rationally and psychologically. He sought to create a place for critical reflection by developing his theater models (or model books) which consist in meticulous photographs of the staging of plays that make the disposition of characters in various situations observable. Brecht and actress Helene Weigel developed facial expressions for *Mother Courage* that bear similarities to the living masks of the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski. Weigel's presentation of the silent scream, a classic gesture in theater anthropology, is drawn from involuntary memory. In this context Brecht's perception of Paul Cézanne's "Gustave Geffroy" as "Das Gesicht als Stilleben" (the face as still life) might foreshadow new ways in which a theatrical practice of distance and differentiation could examine single aspects – through images – of what Adorno considered to be "incommensurable with experience."

2. "Collaboration, Exile, and the Quotidian: Brecht and Benjamin in Community, 1933–39," Katherine Hollander (Simmons College, Boston)

This presentation focuses on gendered aspects of Benjamin and Brecht's collaborative work in their shared exile after during the 1930s. That some of Benjamin's colleagues were uncomfortable with his friendship toward Brecht is legendary. In particular, Theodor Adorno's distrust expressed itself in sharply gendered terms, as when he referred to the playwright as "Berta" and objected to "her collective," as if Benjamin were in danger of being seduced by a femme fatale. Yet their comradeship-in-exile played out within a network that was animated and anchored by women intellectuals. Hollander will detail the friendships that Benjamin enjoyed with Brecht's wife, Helene Weigel, and lover, Margarete Steffin, and that Brecht cultivated with Weigel's mentor, the Danish novelist Karin Michaëlis, to illuminate a diverse range of intellectual labor and collaboration, as well as affective ties. Rejecting a model based on sex and competition among "Brecht's women" or on an asymmetrical friendship between the two men (as Adorno feared was the case), the presentation investigates a community underwritten by a repertoire of behaviors and relationships which can give us clues about its members' views on socialism, anti-fascism, and art. Equally important is to show how this group reached across gender, ethnic, and other differences to create a collaborative life which gave rise to some of the most important literary works and theoretical concepts of the period.

3. "Brecht and Adorno on Music: A Comparative Approach to Their Musical Aesthetics," Carolin Sibilak (Universität der Künste, Berlin)

While Brecht only started to mention personal encounters with Adorno in the journal of his American exile years, they had already met in the 1920s. Adorno had been acquainted with Kurt Weill and, working as a music critic, had written reviews on the *The Threepenny Opera* and *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. Fascinated by the latter, he not only

reviewed the premiere in Leipzig but also the productions in Frankfurt and Berlin, stating: "This music, made up of the debris of past music, is completely contemporary. [...] Its intention is not to restore a ruined bourgeois music" – which indeed, wasn't its creators' intention. What Adorno writes in his essays on music often reveals a remarkable proximity to Brecht's works, for example, to his notes on *Mahagonny*. They both think and write about the commodity character of music, about utility music, and the hypnotic effect music can have on the listener; they even resemble each other in their choice of words based on their mutual interest in the works of Marx, Lukács, Freud, and Hegel. However, their different approaches to art – theoretical (Adorno) versus practical (Brecht) – along with their respective main fields of interest in music (as a non-rational, non-conceptual form of art) versus theater – corresponds with a dissenting opinion about the function of art in society and hence evokes several differences in their judgment of music. Focusing on two prominent examples, the socialist workers' songs by Brecht and Hanns Eisler and *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* by Brecht and Kurt Weill, the paper discusses the similarities and the differences of Brecht's and Adorno's aesthetics of music as well as their respective development.

Respondent: Robert Kaufman (University of California, Berkeley)

"Surviving the Concept–& *More*"

Merely to enumerate—let alone really elaborate and engage—the insights these three rich talks provide would take me than my allotted response-time. I hope that my necessarily limited highlighting of some invaluable points the papers raise can nonetheless help us begin to discuss the range of issues the presenters have asked us to consider.

Constructing the sort of provocative critical constellations of Brecht, Adorno, Benjamin, and others that she offered us in her wonderful *Staging History: Brecht's Social Concepts of Ideology* (2005), Astrid Oesmann begins with Adorno's observation about the initial blockage or repression preventing Germans from undertaking genuine reflection about the National Socialist genocide. That blockage necessarily caused reflection on the genocide to "give way," as Oesmann puts it, to the *question*—perhaps especially to be posed in art—of *how to* reflect: how to reflect, in the first place, *on* this sensed impediment to reflection (in order at least to start swimming back upstream towards the possibility of reconstructing the capacity for critical-reflective experience concerning the historical event and its aftermath). Linking the Adornian imperative that survival—that all kinds of *survivors*—take up the work of critical reflection on what it means to live "nach Auschwitz," Oesmann reminds us that, however many more generations-after of "giving way" to a more distanced relation to the Holocaust we and the art and criticism we are currently involved with may now be, critical reflection, including reflection on art's ongoing relation to what Celan called "das, was geschah" ("that which happened"), must continue to renew its sense and understanding of this critical—this at once historically removed and urgently contemporary—inquiry.

Cannily leading us, via Max Frisch's recollections, into Brecht's brilliant, caustic, barely postwar comments about the grotesquely inappropriate though almost immediately, conventionally accepted vocabulary of those survivors working in theater—comments Brecht likewise

directs toward the surviving theater itself, from its rebuilt physical presence to its cultural, political, and institutional status, to the meanings it proffers in the scarcely acknowledged aftermath of the Holocaust—Oesmann implicitly evokes and lets us overhear, as dark historical undersong/counterpoint, the still awful humming, the still lacerating torque, of the 1942 lyric poem that was in some sense a collaboration between Brecht and Salka Viertel (Brecht's friend and comrade in the wartime Los Angeles exile community's world of art and politics):

Ich, der Überlebende
Ich weiss, natürlich: einzig durch Glück
Habe ich so viele Freunde überlebt.
Aber heute nacht im Traum
Hörte ich diese Freunde von mir sagen:
"Die Stärkeren überleben"
Und ich hasste mich
(BFA 12, 125)

[I, the Survivor
I know, of course: it's simply luck
That I've survived so many friends. But last night in a dream
I heard those friends say of me: "Survival of the fittest"
And I hated myself
(trans. John Willett in Brecht, *Poems: 1913–1953*, 392.]

Meanwhile, the historical situations, scenes, materials, and issues that Kate Hollander and Carolin Sibilak's papers explore are mined in ways that compel us to see or rethink related dynamics. Hollander returns our attention to the crucial importance of a community of women artists, activists, and friends in establishing the very possibility and foundations for six years of exilic work and life in Denmark, years and locations that, in far too many historiographical and critical accounts, have been treated almost exclusively as a time and province peopled by Brecht and Benjamin alone. Hollander's welcome historical revisiting of the larger community involved asks us to reconsider what artistic and political autonomy may or may not mean: on the ground ethically and politically; in the sociohistorical context, and with a decided foregrounding here of gender; and in musical, theatrical, poetic, and philosophical activity. Likewise, Sibilak's treatment of Brecht and Adorno's musical engagements brings us—perhaps especially in the wonderful discussion of Adorno's laudatory analysis of Kurt Weill's *Mahagonny*—to the brink of recognizing that the actually very slippery, contested term *autonomy* may present real challenges to settled notions of what Brecht, Weill, Adorno, Benjamin—and we—really understand it to mean.

Indeed, all three papers prompt us to question long-received views about Brechtian, Benjaminian, and/or Adornian understandings of some other fundamental yet vexed terms that *autonomy* summons forth: commodity, abstract/abstraction, image, gesture, representation, mimesis, art and aesthetics, music, experience, society, mass media, contemplation, passivity, constellation, use, culinary, pragmatism, optimism, change, and—dare I say it—Thesis Eleven. Finally, I want to add that these three papers' intensity and intellectual commitment permit us to rediscover the value of a formulation that has at times illuminated the complex lives and work of the three figures named in this session's title, which were intertwined in their own time and have become ever more so in their afterlives, their *sur-vival*. Attending to Brecht's most compelling art (as well as to the art of those in dialogue with it, from Beckett to Celan, Grotowski, and artists today), and to Benjamin's and Adorno's thinking *about*

art's work, that formulation offers not so much a solution as a key with which to unlock the problem of our above-listed central yet troubled terms. The formulation reminds us to consider on the one hand the status and work of the *concept*, and, on the other, something not necessarily *anti*-conceptual or *anti-rational*, but which Benjamin and Adorno both call, following Mallarmé, the "not-yet conceptual," or, at times, the "more."

I suggest that in an impressive number of cases, there existed a convergence that was usually difficult for these three figures—and especially Brecht and Adorno—to see, much less admit, for to do so might deprive them of the energy they found in their perceived opposition to one another. Of no small import here is Adorno's and the Frankfurt School's (often, including Benjamin's) Kantian-derived use of the term *concept*, as thought's representation of an objectively known truth or reality; and of *art* and *aesthetic*, as the thought-experience which critically, imaginatively, generatively *exceeds* the existing concept's boundaries, reaching *more* of reality than can be gleaned through thinking that occurs in a manner determined by any already-established concepts. Hence aesthetic and, more broadly, intellectual autonomy for Adorno—as also for Kant, and likewise for Brecht and Marx—is in effect *not* autonomy from other people, from sociopolitical or material society, from life: it is autonomy from the established *concepts* that claim "objectively" to represent what they have purported to cognize (for that is technically what it means for something to become, on the model of mathematics, a *concept*: that it basically presents its object of reality "objectively," scientifically). Adorno's withering critiques of music, poetry, commercial media "in society" are—whether or not we think he is right about the particular instance he is judging—animated by the theoretical view that art becomes critical when it finds its way to *more* than the knowledge available through use of the determinative concepts that presently existing society *uses*, defines itself by.

This is why "use" in art and aesthetics for Adorno—as for Marx—can involve a delusory sense of activism, when what looks like the renewal of use-value unwittingly reconfirms what it is the effort has actually been "making use" of (despite any Left intentions to the contrary): exchange-value, the ruling concept-practice of capitalism. From *image* or *gesture* all the way up to the category of *society* itself, Adorno—consciously building on Benjamin's theorization of the "dialectical image" that shares so much with Brecht's developing notions of Gestus—treats our contested terms doubly, dialectically: they are approached through a description of present society's inadequate, conventionally accepted conceptualization of them; and—if only by implication—they are critiqued by offering an aesthetically derived sense of the realities that lay beyond, that are *more* than what extant, "objective" conceptualizations allow for. This also explains why Adorno, as Sibiliak reminds us, very clearly adopts Brecht's condemnation of merely "culinary" art. In Adornian usage, Brecht's term simultaneously describes and critiques what inevitably results from art that has ceased to seek those aspects of reality that exceed, that are more than, what can be determined through our existing storehouse of status-quo concepts. And the *more* concerns not only utopian or alternative, transformative possibilities: often as not, it devastatingly reveals to us how much more, how much unaccounted for, experience and suffering exist than can be conveyed through already-known concepts. That

is, of course, also a pretty good précis of what Brecht's art seeks.

Many thanks, then, to the presenters for leading us to, or—if not quite yet to, than almost to—that *more*, which perhaps we can now approach by way of the audience's questions and comments.

(The ca. 20 attendees had sufficient time to raise a number of questions for each of the speakers.)

'Recycling Brecht': 15th IBS Symposium 2016

Plans are well underway for the next symposium of the International Brecht Society, to be held in the United Kingdom for the first time. The symposium will be hosted by the 'Writing Brecht' project at the University of Oxford (brecht.mml.ox.ac.uk) and by The Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities. It will be held at St Hugh's College and will run from 25-29 June 2016.

On the sixtieth anniversary of Brecht's death, the symposium will turn its attention to 'Recycling Brecht', an opportunity to explore the myriad ways in which Brecht can be viewed as both recycler and recycled. On the one hand, participants are invited to reflect on how Brecht engaged in a process of 'recycling', through his tendency to revamp and recalibrate diverse kinds of source material. On the other, the theme encourages a consideration of how Brecht's ideas and practices have been re-thought, re-imagined and adapted.

Proposals will be invited on a number of areas related to the 'Recycling' theme, including questions of translation, adaptation, teaching Brecht and – in view of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death in 2016 – Brecht as recycler of Shakespeare. Invited speakers include the director Amal Allana (National School of Drama, India) and dramaturge Bernd Stegemann (Berlin), with more to be confirmed soon.

As ever, a broad programme of cultural events will accompany the academic programme, including song recitals, cabaret and theatre.

For the Call for Participation and updates on the symposium programme, please go to www.brecht.mml.ox.ac.uk/ibs-symposium

Enquiries to: writing.brecht@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk

Barbara Brecht-Schall, born October 28 1930, died August 31 2015

"I've got a lousy reputation. But that's also because gentlemen still don't like women to have opinions. And I do."

The daughter of Brecht and Helene Weigel, Barbara Brecht was born between the premieres of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* in March, 1930, and *The Measures Taken*, in December of that year. Her childhood was spent in exile from Germany and she would later describe her father as "a Sunday papa" who lived for his work: "He was very charming, very funny and great fun to talk to but he didn't wash enough and he smelt of cigars."

Following the Brecht clan's return to Germany Barbara joined the company of the Berliner Ensemble in 1951 as an actress under the stage name Barbara Berg, playing principal roles in Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* and her father's *Mother Courage and her Children*. In 1961 she married Ekkehard Schall, the theatre's leading actor.

Her mother died in 1971, and though management of the ensemble ostensibly passed from the family, Brecht's three children became his literary heirs and thus maintained a measure of artistic control. Son Stefan, who had remained in the US when the rest of the family returned to Germany, and a daughter from Brecht's earlier marriage to Marianne Zoff, Hanne Hiob (who was living in West Germany), asked Barbara to assume the lead role as administrator of their father's oeuvre.

"It seemed to all of us that I, like my mother, would be good at taking care of such things," Brecht-Schall said in an introduction to a volume of her father's poetry, *Love Poems*, published in David Constantine and Tom Kuhn's translations in 2014, "although some people were furious that a woman could decide what could and could not be done with plays."

She immediately sprang into action, blocking attempts by the GDR government to disinherit Brecht's heirs and forcing through the publication (beginning in 1975) of her father's diaries, which didn't always toe the political line. The Berliner Ensemble's artistic director Ruth Berghaus, who had held the post since Weigel's death but whose first great success there dated back to 1964, was forced to resign in April, 1977, because, it was said, her style was too radical. Berghaus herself cited the "unbearable atmosphere" of her relationship with the Brecht-heirs as the reason for her resignation.

The heirs sold to the state that parcel of land in Buckow in the Mark Brandenburg, on the shores of the Schermützelsee, on which Brecht and Weigel's summer house stood. The Brecht-Weigel-Haus was opened as an historical site in 1977, a combination of museum, monument and a venue for literary and musical events, while the rest of the land stayed in the possession of the family – Brecht-Schall would spend much of her life there. Chausseestraße 125 in Berlin-Mitte, the house to which Brecht and Weigel moved in 1953, and in which Weigel lived until her death, was opened as the Brecht-Haus Berlin on February 10, 1978, the 80th anniversary of Brecht's birth.

In addition to her curatorial duties, Brecht-Schall also found time to appear in the made-for-tv movie of *Arturo Ui* of

1974 (as Dockdaisy) and Egon Günther's *Lotte in Weimar* of 1975 (as Mrs. Elmenreich).

Brecht-Schall was indefatigable in defending her understanding of her father's legacy: In a typically florid piece marking her passing, *Die Welt*'s Tilman Krause referred to Brecht-Schall as "die heilige Barbara der Nachlassverwalter" (Saint Barbara of literary executors), the *Lordsiegelbewahrerin*, or Lord Privy Seal, of her father's work, and as a *Gralshüterin*, or keeper of the grail. "Anyone can produce dad's plays," Krause quotes her as saying, "under one condition: Nobody's allowed to add anything."

Increasingly the Berliner Ensemble took on the aura of a museum as Brecht-Schall, like Cosima Wagner at Bayreuth, refused to allow innovation for fear that it would violate her father's supposed wishes. Even Brecht-Schall later conceded that the 1980s had seen some "terrible productions".

She was in New York when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. After German reunification, the Berliner Ensemble was privatised and its director, Manfred Wekwerth, was dismissed in 1991 by the Berlin minister of culture Ulrich Roloff-Momin, but Barbara Brecht-Schall retained control of the performing rights to Brecht's plays. At the Berliner Ensemble, she was insistent on her right to approve the director, principal actors and designer of productions of Brecht's work, and she was thus often in conflict with those whose creative input she felt marred or muted Brecht's intentions.

After Einar Schleef had included a brief scene of male nudity in his 1996 production of *Puntila* at the Berliner Ensemble, Brecht-Schall refused the director permission to stage *Galileo*, saying: "Seven naked cardinals on the stage – I don't need that."

Richard Garmise, a friend and a lawyer for Brecht's interests in North America, said in an interview that Brecht-Schall was not averse to creative stagings of her father's work. "What she didn't want was people changing the text," he said. "She was not a fierce person, but she had a job to do." In November, 1996, her influence caused the resignation of the Berliner Ensemble's artistic director, Martin Wuttke: "You have to apply to Barbara Brecht-Schall personally, with your wish list of the pieces you want, the cast you propose, and the director. Her wishes and mine were too divergent; I got almost nothing. The only piece I got was *Ozeanflug* directed by Robert Wilson, and I think that was only because Wilson sent her a bouquet of flowers beforehand." Brecht's heirs "want to see the plays made as Brecht made the plays [but] this is contemporary theatre".

Barbara Brecht-Schall was said to have mellowed with time, although in February this year she requested a preliminary injunction, through Brecht's publishers, to halt a production of *Baal* at the Residenztheater in Munich . The play, which the director Frank Castorf had reset in post-war Vietnam, had been listed as one of the 10 most noteworthy productions in current German theatre, but Brecht-Schall was said to have been enraged by changes to the script. An agreement was reached and the theatre cancelled all dates after the end of February.

"As the protector and guardian of her father's legacy, Barbara Brecht-Schall was a forceful and courageous, often difficult negotiating partner," Claus Peymann, current director of the Berliner Ensemble said in a statement after her death. "Her toughness and steadfastness were

well-known, but so too was her heart. Barbara Brecht-Schall protected and defended – a true Joan of Arc of the theater – the work of her father, one of the most important dramatists of the modern age." Peyman added, "We will also miss her baking skills. Every year the office staff looked forward to Barbara Brecht-Schall's home-baked Christmas cake."

In Marcel Ophuls's documentary about the reunification of Germany, *November Days* (1992), Barbara Brecht-Schall claimed that she had remained non-political throughout the communist era, a statement which Ophuls punctuated with a clip showing her in animated conversation with Erich Honecker, head of the East German Communist Party from 1971 until his forced resignation in 1989. She also makes appearances in two further documentaries – Joachim Lang's *Brecht - Die Kunst zu leben* of 2006, and the more widely-seen (and praised) *Theater of War* of 2008, which takes as its subject matter the Public Theater's production of Brecht's *Mother Courage* with Meryl Streep in the starring role.

Brecht-Schall's husband Ekkehard died in 2005, and both her brother Stefan and half-sister Hanne Hiob in 2009.

Barbara Brecht-Schall is survived by her two daughters, Johanna Schall, an actress-director, and Jenny Schall-Dizdari, a costume designer, and two grandchildren. Currently in repertoire at the Volkstheater in Rostock is a production of *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, directed by Johanna, with costumes by Jenny. Johanna Schall said she and her sister are to share oversight of their grandfather's works together with Stefan Brecht's two children.

Compiled by Andy Spencer

How the Legacy of Bertolt Brecht Will Continue: An Interview with Johanna Schall, Manager of the Brecht Literary Estate by Ulrich Seidler

***Berliner Zeitung*, 2 October 2015 (copyrighted by Die Berliner Zeitung and published by permission)**

Bertolt Brecht's legacy is considered one of the most significant in German history. Following her mother's death, it is now Johanna Schall who is responsible for it. A conversation about famous forefathers, superficial obituaries, and the freedom of the arts.

Barbara Brecht-Schall, the daughter of Bertolt Brecht and Helene Weigel, died on 31 August 2015. This news occasioned a good deal of public interest because Brecht-Schall protected the rights to her father's works according to the proverbial letter of the law. Her role as heir was highly contentious in the theater scene and the culture sections of the press. She prohibited performances and was attacked aggressively. In the 1980s Benjamin Henrichs wrote in the weekly *Die Zeit*: "Disinherit the heirs!" And when her mother, Helene Weigel, died in 1971, the GDR's head ideologue and Politburo member Kurt Hager confronted the daughter and wanted the keys to the Brecht safe. She didn't give them up. Most recently she stopped Frank Castorf's production of *Baal* at the Residenztheater in Munich. It enjoyed only three performances, the last one at the Berlin Theater Festival [Berliner Theatertreffen] in May 2015.

At the news of the death already it was announced that Brecht-Schall's daughters, the theater director Johanna Schall and the costume designer Jenny Schall, would manage the literary estate, and like their mother, they would be represented by the Brecht publisher, Suhrkamp Verlag. "My mama is dead. I loved her and now she is gone," wrote Johanna Schall on 3 September at 1:39a.m. in her blog "Theaterliebe" [Love of theater], and in response to the obituaries she asks: "What do these people know?" This interviewer wrote the obituary of Barbara Brecht-Schall for the *Berliner Zeitung* [September 1, 2015], a good reason to ask: what don't we know? We met Johanna Schall in Bremen, where she was rehearsing Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* with the Shakespeare Company, "guaranteed without a poodle." We are sitting in the theater courtyard under a late summer sun.

Mrs. Schall, how did you learn of your mother's death?

I was with her. That weekend we sat outside at my sister's. She cooked, everything was fine. But then she said that she had a pain, we had to go to the doctor. It was probably the old kidney problem, she had a kidney infection while in exile, and one of her kidneys had to be removed, after the war, in Zurich. In any case it happened very fast and unexpectedly. She had been through two hard years, but had come out of it, could move again without a walker. It is always too soon.

Where did she die?

In St. Hedwig Hospital [in Berlin Mitte]. A great hospital, I can strongly recommend it. After my mother passed, they brought us a cross and a candle, in case we needed them. We didn't.

How did you feel reading the obituaries? She was generally recalled as a strict Brecht heir.

Well, it's probably always the case that obituaries are incomplete and unjust. But in the case of one's own mother, you notice it more.

What was unjust?

For example, when you read that my mother was an obstruction; that is simply nonsense. Brecht was for years the most performed writer on German-language stages. There must have been a lot allowed. And although I don't know the numbers, I believe the so-called scandals, when my mother said "no," can be counted on one hand. I think this has been exaggerated.

Why?

Perhaps because on the one hand Brecht is a leftist and on the other he earned money from the *Threepenny Opera*. That irritates people perhaps.

That's a contradiction with which your mother also was able to live quite well.

Yes, definitely. That's the way it is in our society, an inheritance is protected. No one who inherits a house or a factory has to provide a justification. I was also annoyed at the superficiality of the obituaries. It seemed as if I was reading the same seven sentences in each of them, with minor grammatical adaptations. And no one seems to realize that my mother lived in another time. The question that apparently none of the writers asked would have been: why does someone with her experience, someone born in 1930, who spent twelve years of her childhood and youth in exile, who was witness to the rise and fall of the

GDR, why does someone like that make such decisions that perhaps aren't so evident to us spoiled fighters for artistic freedom? One doesn't have to share this perspective, and I'm the last one to claim that my mother was always right. But these prejudices and clichés are always at their fingertips.

Someone has to write the obituary when the news is announced.

Okay. I didn't expect that everyone would write what a lovely, enchanting woman my mother was. But it wasn't hard to see that my mother was not responsible for the *Baal* issue.

Did the trouble with Castorf's "Baal" production affect your mother's health?

No. That's the theater, and that is quite important. Of course she was upset, but I don't believe this kind of annoyance led to her death. She certainly was angry, but she was used to that. There was this myth for a long time that she was a monster. Actually, as long as I've been alive. It wasn't nice. People would call up in the middle of the night and threaten her. Anonymously.

Did you see Frank Castorf's "Baal" production before it was banned?

Yes, I thought it was extraordinary. I've known and admired Frank since I was very young, when he first began to direct. I saw all of his things, in Anklam, I made pilgrimages there. If I was a fan of anyone, it was of Frank.

Was.

Not any more, now I'm really too old to be the fan of someone. There were also interruptions in my attention to Castorf. And I have seen things of his that I found long and demanding. At *Baal* I was alert. I thought it was great. Whenever I've seen this play before, it always seemed to be by a middle-aged director giving free reign to his sexual frustrations. I really liked what Frank did: showing how talent goes bad in violent times, how it gets twisted. He went beyond the private dimension.

What did you think when you came out of "Baal"?

I was sorry. Such a great evening! Wasted! Too bad! But I cannot throw the guilt at my mother's feet. That would be unfair. A contract was signed, the legal situation was known to all. As far as I know, all these contracts always stipulate that you can transpose and delete, that you can cross-cast genders or whatever, but you cannot add other texts without getting explicit permission. But the agreements were broken, so you shouldn't be surprised. I am willing to bet that the Munich people didn't take my mother seriously, that they thought she's old, she won't give us any trouble. So despite the pain at losing this production, I have to admit that I think they had it coming. They tried to snooker her. If they had only called up. I still think: a phone call, and that would have saved the day...

No one called?

No! At least as far as I know, no one. She would certainly have told me.

Okay, so that is the legal-moral side of the issue, but what about the art?

When I look around, I see that there are good reasons to protect an artist's work for which you are responsible. There are people who have the gift of deconstructing plays, people like Frank Castorf or

Armin Petras, and making it into art. Others less so. For example, I am not able to do this. My talents lie elsewhere. For that reason I question the general demand that one must be allowed to do anything because art is free.

Now you are in the position of power as heir to weigh freedom of art against protection of intellectual property.

That is why my mother kept the rules very simple. Deletions, transpositions, casting are free. But the rest has to be negotiated.

Now you could make new rules.

We'll have to see, first we have to learn the ropes. There are also other family members! And in eleven years Brecht's works are out of copyright. Hopefully that won't extinguish the interest in them. That's what happened with *Massnahme* [*The Decision*]. Soon after she released it for productions [1998], no one was really interested in it anymore. In any case it will take getting used to for me. As a theater director, I have been on the other side up until now.

Before you became a director, you were a very busy actress. Was that automatic with your family name?

Possibly because of this very question I never wanted to become an actress, but rather an archaeologist. After finishing high school – with no clear class perspective – I worked in health care, in the Friedrichshain Hospital. At that time there was a real lack of nurses, and if you made no major mistakes, you were soon allowed to work shifts alone. That was good for me. But after a while I realized that my resistance to a theater career was an affectation.

Then you trained as an actress at the Deutsches Theater.

Yes, and I wouldn't recommend this to anyone. Today it is no longer even possible. Now you work in the theater and seek out the training at the acting schools. Voice, speech, movement training, etc. Alexander Lang was my mentor. I was overwhelmed. I needed a long time before I began having fun in this profession. I even wanted to give it up, but I had luck with my theater manager, Gerhard Wolfram. He saved me, he sent me into the provinces so that I could discover my talent.

After Frankfurt an der Oder (the Kleist Theater) weren't there other ones...?

Precisely. For three seasons in the early 1980s; then I returned to the Deutsches Theater in 1997. Frankfurt an der Oder was hardcore. The party leadership forbade us at the time from singing the "Solidarity Song" [by Brecht, music by Hanns Eisler]. Because of Solidarność.

But that is a prophetic directorial idea, so close to Poland. There must have been political conflicts in your family as well. Your mother was Brecht's daughter, your father – Ekkehard Schall [1930-2005] – a Brechtian actor and member of the Socialist Unity Party [SED], both of them courted by the party and state leaders. And then the rebellious daughter Johanna Schall. Did you quarrel with each other?

We had settled all that much earlier. My father and I were both pretty dogmatic. But in retrospect I must say that I got along quite well with my father. We knew where the other stood. In any case he didn't change his opinion in the blink of an eye, when it was no longer politically correct. He needed a long time to see things differently. His was

simply a different generation. My father had been a member of the Nazi youth. He lived through the aerial bombings in Magdeburg. But he transformed himself with great effort in to someone who then joined the SED out of conviction. I was never in it. At one point I wanted to be, in order to change things, but that passed quickly. When I passed my high school exams, the controversy with Wolf Biermann had already happened. It was a completely different time. It is probably harder to say: okay, that too was a mistake. Two mistakes in one lifetime, that is a lot of work, at least for someone with integrity.

Fighting is also rather strenuous.

If you don't have to strain yourself when arguing with parents, then something is wrong.

You didn't quarrel so much with your mother?

I did, but about other things. I left home at 17. I think it was more normal then, compared to today.

Is the generational conflict more difficult for children of famous and privileged parents?

I don't know. Many people don't see you; they see some kind of Bertolt-Brecht screen over my face. Privilege makes for bad conscience but also has advantages. Perhaps more doors open with a famous name. For example, I was able to travel outside the GDR after I turned 16.

How so?

My grandmother, Helene Weigel, was clever enough not to give up her Austrian citizenship. But what do I know. It was probably because of the family name.

You once stated that you ceased being a Stalinist at 15. How did this change of mind happen?

It was my high school friends. I was pretty ignorant, quick-tempered, and undialectical in my thinking. And my friends, who are still my friends today, were very patient with me.

Did you ever consider turning your back on your family in order to separate yourself from its entire pre-history.

How do you do that? Despite all the major spats, including a year of silence and such things, I really did love my mother and at the least highly respected my father. Certainly in his work, but also his mind. He was sometimes ignorant, brash, and loud, but I'm like that too, in my own way. And my mother was really a true Jewish mother, including chicken soup and all. Besides, you can't simply remove yourself, also in terms of one's career. That would have been foolish. The GDR was small, in the theater world we all knew each other. Everyone knew who I was. At one point I assumed a stage name, but it was in fact a needless affectation. And to cap it all, I chose Anderson because I liked the name. And then later the Stasi story of Sascha A. was revealed.

Your mother also acted under the stage name of Barbara Berg, although everyone knew who she was. And you have something else in common. Your mother once said: I am not a great actress but a good one. And you: I am a good actress but not a great one.

A coincidence, but I stand by it. And for that reason I am no longer an actress. I worked with great people and had a lot of roles. But when I watched someone like Dagmar Manzel [Deutsches The-

ater], I knew what I lacked. And I was no longer content with the acting profession. I began to direct in the early 1990s. It was the right choice.

Why did your mother stop acting?

In the early 1970s she went on sick leave. She had several surgeries. On the one hand she was strong as a horse, but on the other she had numerous illnesses. At some point the doctor forbade her to be on stage. It was hard. She could also no longer drive. She liked to do both.

Your mother almost belonged to the founding group of the Berliner Ensemble.

We were different in that respect. I would never have wanted to act at the Berliner Ensemble. I had enough trouble dealing with all my family members in the professional theater. My mother trained first as a costume designer and then later as an actress. She often said that her father insisted she first had to be successful elsewhere before she could join the Berliner Ensemble. And that she was at the Deutsches Theater.

Why wasn't your mother concerned about mixing work and family life?

I can imagine that twelve years of the four family members together in exile led to a different kind of bonding. I didn't know my grandfather. He had already been dead for two years when I was born. As far as my grandmother is concerned, I can only say that from the perspective of a child she was a great grandma. She died when I was twelve. She was the perfect grandmother, extremely relaxed. Of course she never talked to me about the theater and politics, but nonetheless about important things and then as an equal. I often visited her at the summer house in Buckow. She brought me there almost every weekend. I could go swimming, run through the forest with other children. But I can't say a thing about Weigel as a historical person.

Your mother loved Helene Weigel very much.

Yes. You must remember that my grandmother's career was interrupted in 1933 by her exile, just as it was taking off. For twelve long years she hardly acted. They fled one day after the Reichstag fire: to Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and then to California via Moscow and Vladivostok. Constantly with fear at their backs, two children and – I assume – a not so undemanding husband. Suddenly she was just a wife and a mommy.

At a similar age you too experienced a biographical rupture: the fall of the Wall.

Yes, but that was a happy experience. I am very glad that the country no longer exists.

You yourself applied for permission for the demonstration on November 4, 1989 and spoke at it as well. Many say that was the decisive event.

We were much too late. You shouldn't overstate it. Actually, everything had already happened by then. Nonetheless, it was a terrific time. On the other hand, I also learned that my political foresight was not so well developed. As I said, we were too late. Things were pretty good for us at the Deutsches Theater. We kept our mouths shut for quite a while. And because I experienced my own cowardice at that time, I am probably too combative today. I never again want to be well-behaved.

On the face of it one could say that the death of your mother has resolved many of the contradictions with which you lived.

Then I mourn those contradictions too. I won't make it easy for myself by saying: look, I am much nicer than my mama.

Has the Residenztheater in Munich, for example, called you to ask about the "Baal" production under these new conditions?

That would not be a good idea. As I said, I don't think it is reasonable to assume that this *Baal* will be performed again. The litigation was undertaken by Suhrkamp Verlag, not by my mother.

What is the situation now? Perhaps you could explain briefly the family relationships.

After Helene Weigel's death the first-born son, Stefan, was responsible for the rights in America, and my mother and Hanne Hiob, her half-sister, were responsible for Europe. Steff died in April 2009 in New York, Hanne the following June. Recently my mother died. In the following generation there are besides Jenny and me Stefan's children, Sebastian and Sarah. We'll have to see what happens. Most requests were always answered with a "yes."

Hm.

Why do you look so skeptical? Have you ever counted the number of times my mother made trouble? Before *Baal* the last time was, I think, Einar Schleef [for a production of *Galilei* in 1996]. And how long has he been dead? And before that it was Hansgünther Heyme's *Threepenny Opera* [1975]. For that production Peachum was supposed to be a schtetl Jew. My mother thought that was wrong. And, as I said, Schleef with the naked cardinals. And *Baal*, which was the only completed production. I'm not so well-informed, but I believe those were all her interventions.

How much is actually earned in royalties?

I can't say, I have to see. I imagine it is not a pittance, but also not as much as it used to be.

It's been reported that in 1997 it came to about one million D-Mark.

Divided up among everyone... Today it is certainly not that much. I know only that I haven't suddenly become wealthy. Perhaps a bit better off than before, because the theater doesn't pay that well, but I don't think that my lifestyle will change radically.

Didn't you receive any money before this?

I was raised as a child with the money, but then I earned my own money, like most people. Recently I lived with my mother. That was convenient, because I am seldom in Berlin. And I could care for her, when she was ill, together with my sister. But I paid rent.

Money always plays a role.

Money plays a role, absolutely. "If you have money, you don't need to bow," Brecht wrote.

Translated by Marc Silberman

Bertolt Brecht's literary estate is one of the most voluminous in German literary history. It comprises 85 running meters of shelving with about a half million documents, among them 200,000 manuscripts. In addition there is a photographic archive with 670,000 image documents. The estate is housed on permanent loan to the Brecht Archive in the Academy of Arts, located in the Brecht-Haus (Chausseestrasse 115), next to the Dorotheenstädtische cemetery where Brecht, Helene Weigel and now also Barbara Brecht-Schall are buried.

As principle heir, Helene Weigel established the Brecht Archive on 1 December 1956, the year that Brecht died. When she died in 1971, her daughter, Barbara Brecht-Schall, became the principle heir. Together with her half-sister Hanne Hiob (Brecht's daughter with Marianne Zoff) she managed the European rights, represented by the publishing house Suhrkamp Verlag. Her brother, Stefan Brecht, was responsible for the American market. Hanne Hiob and Stefan Brecht both died in 2009.

With the death of Barbara Brecht-Schall the next generation takes on the role of heirs. These are Brecht-Schall's daughters Johanna and Jenny Schall as well as Stefan Brecht's children in America, Sebastian and Sarah. Seventy years after Brecht's death, his work in German will no longer be protected by copyright, that is, beginning in 2026 his works can be used for any purposes by anyone without seeking permission or paying a fee.

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Manfred Karge talks Brecht at the Edinburgh Festival

Andy Spencer

Premiered in 1982, Manfred Karge's *Man to Man* enjoyed a revival at the 2015 Edinburgh Festival under the direction of Bruce Guthrie and Scott Graham and starring Margaret Ann Bain as Ella Gericke. *The Guardian* lauded the production in a 5-star review (August 8) and also sent Philip Oltermann to interview the 77-year-old playwright (August 3). Following comparisons to Orson Welles and Samuel Beckett (the "Brandenburg Beckett"), Oltermann got down to asking Karge about writing "plays about working-class struggles when your paying audience is made up of a much wealthier segment of society", which necessarily led to Karge talking about his time at the Berliner Ensemble. Karge: "The middle classes are interested in these struggles because they always worry about losing their status and slipping down the pecking order. But, of course, it is a problem for playwrights interested in working-class life that we don't always have the audience we wish for. It was different back when the Berliner Ensemble first opened. You had whole factory brigades or school classes going to the theatre. A ticket used to cost 1.50 East German marks. Now people pay €40."

Karge and Matthias Langhoff left the BE in 1969 and headed for the Volksbühne because, as Oltermann writes, "they felt the theatre was interpreting its founding father's work too literally." [...] Brecht's theatre, Karge says, has always been less about theorising than about boiling things down to basics. "What I learnt from Brecht is that every performance starts from zero. Brecht never tried to confuse people – he wanted to tell stories and be understood."

"I still notice a difference between actors who started out in West Germany and those who were trained in the East. The western actors are often trying to express their inner state: their acting is less about telling a story than discovering yourself. In the east, our training was much more focused on technique." Even now, he says, members of the audience come up to him after shows to praise him for his elocution.

Is Brecht's idea of epic theatre still relevant? "It is – because the subjects Brecht was interested in are still alive. That's not necessarily good news for Brecht: he might have been happy to find out that the problems he was interested in are no longer around. If there was no more capitalism, *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* wouldn't need to be performed. But it's all still here, that's the mad thing. We are going in circles. The excesses of capitalism aren't dying down – they are getting worse and worse. And until that stops, Brecht remains relevant."

"Verfremdung" or "Verwandlung": A Brechtian Look at Yoko Tawada's Works

Vera Stegmann (Lehigh University)

Yoko Tawada – or Tawada Yoko, as she is named in Japanese – is a contemporary author who was born in Tokyo in 1960 and who has been living in Germany since 1982, first in Hamburg and since 2006 in Berlin. She writes both in German and in Japanese. While a student in Japan, Tawada studied Russian language and literature at the university, and in 1979 she traveled on the Transsiberian Railroad from Japan via Siberia and Moscow to Germany. This journey resulted in 1991 in her first German language publication, *Wo Europa anfängt*. This text, a postmodern mix of travelogue, diary, fantasy tale, dream sequences, and poetic reflections, has already been translated into English (*Where Europe Begins*). It is the first of many literary works in which Tawada crosses linguistic and cultural borders and questions the meanings of "Europe" and "Asia", as well as traditional concepts of East and West

Tawada had originally hoped to study Russian in the Soviet Union, but this plan never materialized, possibly because of the Cold War conditions at the time and because of failing financial support; so she traveled further west and found a home and university support in Hamburg, Germany. She describes her arrival and her first years in Hamburg in detail in her interview with Ortrud Gutjahr in the collection *Fremde Wasser* (18-24). After many other literary publications, she published her dissertation, *Spielzeug und Sprachmagie in der europäischen Literatur*, in 2000, under the auspices of Sigrid Weigel. There is a productive cross-fertilization between her dissertation and her multilingual language games in her own literature. Other German language titles include *Ein Gast* (1993, short novel), *Talisman* (1996, literary essays), *Opium für Ovid: Ein Kopfkissenbuch von 22 Frauen* (2000, prose piece), and *Überseezungen* (2002, literary essays) – note the subtle word play between "Überseezungen" (overseas tongues) and "Übersetzungen" (translations). This book is a collection of essays and stories on the subject of 'translating' between different cultures. In 2004 the novel *Das nackte Auge* appeared, also originally in German. This novel is situated in post-communist territory and deals with East Berlin and the GDR, as seen through the alienating lens of an Asian author. In the winter semester of 1997-98 she was the fifth creative writer (after Marlene Streeruwitz, Joao Ubaldo Ribeiro, Tankred Dorst and Aleksandar Tisma) to be invited to the University of Tübingen as a "Poetikdozent" to deliver three key poetic lectures that were published under the title *Verwandlungen: Tübinger Poetik-Vorlesungen*. In the summer semester of 2011 Yoko Tawada became the first author to receive the distinguished *Hamburger Gastprofessur für Interkulturelle Poetik* that is sponsored by the "ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius". Here she also delivered three main lectures that were published under the title *Fremde Wasser*.

These two lecture cycles – *Verwandlungen* (*Transformations*) and *Fremde Wasser* (*Strange Waters*) – contain her aesthetics of alienation that can be related to Brecht. Tawada claims not to like Brecht, although she wrote her Master's thesis on Heiner Müller and has performed at a Brecht and Chekhov festival in Japan, together with Jazz pianist Aki Takase. In an interview with Bettina Brandt entitled

"The Postcommunist Eye" Tawada mentions her Japanese texts based on works by Brecht and Chekhov, stating: "I hate Brecht, so I wrote against Brecht, and I love Chekhov, so I wrote for him. In some ways it is more interesting when you write against an author. In trying to determine what I find so irritating in Brecht I have become increasingly fascinated with him" (44). More recently, in her collection *Fremde Wasser*, she evaluated Brecht in greater nuance:

"Um Brecht zu lesen, muss man ihn nicht lieben. Ich habe mich schon mehrmals gefragt, warum er immer wieder in mein Blickfeld rückt. Wahrscheinlich, weil sein Schreiben einen Raum bietet, in dem eine finnougrische Zunge mitreden und eine Geisha eine Neinsagerin sein kann. Und selbst wenn dieser Raum eher kahl aussieht als frei, kann man ihn sich als den Proberaum für das Theater der Übersetzung vorstellen. In diesem Theater spielt keine historische Figur, sondern die Übersetzung selbst die Hauptrolle." (Gutjahr 107)

"In order to read Brecht, you don't have to love him. I have asked myself several times why he appears in my field of vision again and again. Probably, because his writing offers a space in which a finno-ugric tongue can also converse and a geisha can be a no-sayer. And even if this space looks more barren than free, one can imagine it as the rehearsal room for the theater of translation. In this theater not a historical figure, but translation itself plays the protagonist." (My translation)

These words introduce her thoughts on Brecht's play *Die Judith von Shimoda* that she analyzes in her collection *Fremde Wasser. Die Judith von Shimoda*, a play about the relationship between Okichi, a Japanese geisha, and Townsend Harris, an American consul to Japan, is based on 19th century historical events and characters and on legends that developed during the period of Japan's forced opening to free trade. Brecht's play interests Tawada primarily for its many translations, from a Japanese play by Yamamoto Yūzō, to an English translation by Glenn W. Shaw that was translated into German by Margarete Steffin, upon which Brecht and Hella Wuolijoki, the Finnish author with whom he stayed during his exile in Finland, turned it into an epic play. Only fragments of Brecht's German version survived, but when Hans Peter Neureuter discovered a Finnish translation of the full text among Wuolijoki's papers, he reconstructed the missing parts of Brecht's original text from Wuolijoki's translation. It is these multiple reconstructions of the play that interest Tawada, although she also relates the text to the recent tragedy of the earthquake/tsunami/nuclear meltdown in Fukushima that happened in March 2011, only a few months before her lectures on *Fremde Wasser* in Hamburg.

The title *Fremde Wasser* already combines the concepts of alienation and transformation. Water, the fluid element that has served as a metaphor for life as transformation from mythological times – the figure of the mermaid, for example – to Tawada's own modern novel *Das Bad* (Ervedosa 575), is here alienated in association with the word "Fremde".

The condition of "Fremde" is a recurrent theme in Tawada's writings. In an interview with Claire Horst (February 2009), entitled "Fremd sein ist eine Kunst," she connects an aesthetics of strangeness or alienation to the condition of the migrant writer:

"Fremdsein ist dann sozusagen positiv gemeint oder die Haltung, die man dann

behält, bewusst einnimmt. Sonst heißt fremd bleiben ja oft, jemand hat es nicht geschafft, sich zu integrieren. Das meine ich nicht. Fremd sein ist eine Kunst. (...) Das Fremdsein braucht der Autor immer, auch im eigenen Land, dass man nicht ein blinder Teil von einem Ganzen ist, dass man Distanz hat, dass man nicht einverstanden sein kann oder selbstverständlich empfindet, dass man immer denken kann, es könnte anders sein, das ist fremd sein.

Ich denke, dass Integration zwar wichtig ist für die Gesellschaft. Aber Integration heißt ja nicht Assimilation. Integration heißt ja auch, wie kann man die Fremdheit behalten. (...) Ich konnte nur deshalb eine neue Sprache und eine neue Kultur als Erwachsene lernen, weil ich versucht habe, fremd zu sein. (...) Jeder muss seine Fremdheit finden, entdecken, wir müssen fremd sein, sonst gibt es keine Integration in einer Gesellschaft, wo viele verschiedene Menschen leben."

"Being strange/alien/foreign is meant positively or as the gesture that one maintains, assumes consciously. Otherwise, remaining foreign means that one hasn't been able to integrate. I don't mean that. Being strange/foreign is an art. (...) An author always needs this feeling of foreignness, even in his/her own country, so that one isn't a blind part of a whole, one has distance, one can disagree or sense naturally that one can always think that things could also be different – that is the meaning of being strange.

I think that integration is important for society. But integration doesn't mean assimilation. Integration also means: how can one preserve one's strangeness. (...) I could only learn a new language and a new culture as an adult, because I tried to remain foreign/strange. (...) Everyone needs to find, discover his/her foreignness/strangeness, we have to be strange, otherwise there is no integration in a society in which many different people live." (My translation)

"Being strange is an art" – this statement is reminiscent of Brecht's aesthetics of alienation, although Brecht might have rather said: "makings things strange is an art". In the above paragraph in which she favors integration over assimilation in a new society, she uses key Brechtian concepts or terms, such as "Haltung" and "Distanz". The only difference to Brecht might be that the "Fremdheit", her strangeness and distance, are elements that she does not seek to create like Brecht, when he calls for defamiliarizing seemingly familiar sights. Rather, she takes her "Fremde" as a given and seeks to preserve it. Difference and distance are fundamental existing conditions for Tawada as a bilingual and migrant writer, and her main preoccupation is rather the question of how to remain different while integrating in a new society.

Tawada's poetic lectures entitled *Verwandlungen* (Transformations) contain her aesthetics of alienation that she relates to the idea of transformation. Recurring ideas on "Fremde," "Fremdheit," and "Verwandlung" weave themselves through her text, and her lectures abound with such terms as "fremden Land" (*Verwandlungen* 7), "fremden Ohren" (*Verwandlungen* 7), "fremden Stimmen" (*Verwandlungen* 8), "Fremdsprache" (*Verwandlungen* 9), "fremden Zunge" (*Verwandlungen* 9), "fremde(n) Sprache" (*Verwandlungen* 10, 22), "fremdes Gesicht" (sichtbar) (*Verwandlungen* 41, 53), "Fremdheit" (*Verwandlungen* 52), "fremde Begriffe" (*Verwandlungen* 53), "fremdartige Geweih" (*Verwandlungen* 56), "Distanz" (*Verwandlungen* 58, 59). Curiously, though, with all this em-

phasis on strangeness and the alien, one specific term is conspicuously missing in all of Tawada's works: it is "Verfremdung", alienation.

Tawada's collection *Verwandlungen* consists of three lectures, aesthetically arranged by the senses, the first focusing on music or sound, the second lecture concentrating on visual aspects (script), and the third essay emphasizing, again visually, the idea of transformation. The first lecture is entitled "Stimme eines Vogels oder das Problem der Fremdheit" (the voice of a bird or the problem of strangeness). This essay deals with the problem of alienation acoustically, through the medium of the voice. Tawada likens the process of learning a foreign language, in her case German, to that of trying to hear, understand, imitate, and speak to a bird in a forest, maybe even a songbird. Speaking a foreign language, acquiring another "tongue", is an artistic experiment for her in which one becomes acutely aware of the "nakedness" of one's own voice (*Verwandlungen* 7-8). The tension between the desire for integration and preserving one's difference or foreignness defines the process of socialization (*Verwandlungen* 8). Her juxtaposition of human and animal language is also an act of alienation. Tawada chooses the bird as a symbol of art, spirituality and beauty, and discusses several literary and poetic examples in which the language of birds figures prominently: Paul Celan's poetry cycle "Sprachgitter", E.T.A. Hoffmann's fairy tale "Das fremde Kind", Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Nightingale", Ludwig Tieck's fairy tale "Der blonde Eckbert", Richard Wagner's opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Siegfried), Mozart's *Zauberflöte* (the bird catcher Papageno), and Olivier Messiaen's musical composition *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (catalog of birds). Many, though not all, of these examples hail from the Romantic period. The essay culminates in the final climactic statement: "Wer mit einer fremden Zunge spricht, ist ein Ornithologe und ein Vogel in einer Person." (Whoever speaks in a foreign tongue, combines the figure of the ornithologist and the bird in one person.) This thesis comes very close to Brecht's theory of alienation, when Brecht posits, for example in his essay "Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst": "Der Artist sieht sich selber zu" (GBA 22.1: 201). An ornithologist who simultaneously can be a songbird is like the artist who can view and analyze his or her own art – an artist who understands the process of alienation.

The second lecture of *Verwandlungen* is entitled "Schrift einer Schildkröte oder das Problem der Übersetzung" (the script of a turtle or the problem of translation). It looks at a similar question from a perspective that is not auditory or musical but visual. Since Japanese and German are not only different languages but use different alphabets and scripts, Tawada rests her glance on each letter, as if it were a painting. The Japanese language uses ideograms, and Tawada's bilingual German-Japanese computer contains 8500 Japanese ideograms that she considers each, like the German letters, a work of art. This process alone, in which she slows down her reading to the speed of a "Schildkröte" (turtle), is a form of alienation. Tawada's alienating and artistic view of the alphabet leads her to regard each letter as a mystery or a potential work of art. "Was will zum Beispiel ein A mir sagen?", she muses (*Verwandlungen* 30). Or later: "Man schreibt ein B, es kann eine Blume daraus werden, aber auch eine Bombe. So unzuverlässig, unberechenbar und überraschend ist jeder Buchstabe des Alphabets" (*Verwandlungen* 31). These

letters function like independent characters in a play in Tawada's imagination. She regards letters as alphabetic *bodies* that are infinitely transformable. Writing for her is the art of creating, placing, and combining such alphabetic bodies (*Verwandlungen* 32).

The third lecture is entitled "Gesicht eines Fisches oder das Problem der Verwandlung" (the face of a fish or the problem of transformation). This lecture deals with the one of the central questions for Tawada, the idea of metamorphosis, as seen again through a visual metaphor or image, that of the face. She notes the fluid contours of the body of a fish: Unlike in humans or in most animals, we cannot strictly say that a fish has a face, or where the face of a fish begins, where it ends, and where it merges into the body. "Ein Gesicht ist etwas, das sichtbar geworden ist" (*Verwandlungen* 46). (A face is something that has become visible.) As a prime location for seeing and for making visible, a face is a central mediator for art. For Brecht too, this process of "Sichtbarmachung", of making visible, is an indispensable element of his epic theater. She also notes a cultural difference between Germany and many Asian societies: "Es wird in Deutschland meistens negativ bewertet, wenn man mehrere Gesichter hat. In den christlichen Gemälden haben nur die Gestalten, die das Böse verkörpern, mehrere Gesichter" (*Verwandlungen* 51). A prime example for this is Stefan Lochner's painting "Weltgericht", in which the devil appears as a multi-faced character, while all the angels only have one face. Tawada contrasts this image with buddhist art, which frequently contains statues with several faces. Senjukan'non – a sacred creature that appears in many shapes to save people – is often depicted as a figure with 42 hands and 11 or 27 faces. Each hand, except the two front ones, contains an eye. The coexistence of several faces in one being is not seen as a sign of evil or betrayal, but rather shows the magnificent art of transformation (*Verwandlungen* 52).
For Tawada, the theme of the face is intimately connected to the topic of "Fremdheit" (strangeness, alienation). Having several faces, being able to transform into other faces or characters, as the figures in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* constantly do, is for her a primary condition of art and the dream of most artists (*Verwandlungen* 57). Ironically, she is not as far removed from Bertolt Brecht, who has his dramaturg state in *Der Messingkauf*: "Der V-Effekt bleibt aus, wenn der Schauspieler, ein fremdes Gesicht schneidend, sein eigenes völlig verwischt. Was er tun soll, ist: das Sichüberschneiden der beiden Gesichter zeigen" (GBA 22.2: 740)

Brecht also insists, in his theory of epic acting, that any actor should have at least two faces: his/her own and that of the character the actor is portraying. However, in his modern and politicized view it remains clear which is the own and which the foreign face. These contours become more fluid in Tawada's postmodern and less political perception of art.

The critic Clara Ervedosa has described Tawada as an artistic semiotician with a "semiotischen Sicht auf die Wirklichkeit" (573). Ervedosa recognizes Tawada's "Besessenheit von der Sprache" and characterizes her as a "wahren Semiotikerin des Fremden" (572). The theme of the "foreign" or the "Fremde" recurs constantly in Tawada's literary and critical writings, yet one key Brechtian term, "Verfremdung" or "alienation", is curiously absent in her literature, although it lurks everywhere between the lines. One could say that Tawada has replaced Brecht's theory of alien-

ation with her semiotics of transformation. These two concepts are not as far removed as they appear: Brecht argued against "Einfühlung" (empathy), against an actor becoming the character, i.e. Oedipus, that s/he performed, so that the entire audience could also identify with and become this Oedipus. But Brecht never opposed the basic idea of transformation; he only argued against a "restlose Verwandlung" (total transformation), as he called it in his essay "Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst" (GBA 22.1: 203). For Tawada, the question of "Verwandlung" or metamorphosis is not connected to the idea of "Einfühlung" or empathy, as it is for Brecht. On the contrary, she feels that the current obsession with identity or the fear of "Identitätsverlust" (loss of identity, *Verwandlungen* 60) has pushed aside the concept of "Verwandlung" or metamorphosis, which is a key aesthetic principle for her. For Tawada, transformation or "Verwandlung" implies the simultaneous existence of several faces or several identities, and as such it is a form of alienation.

As an artist, Tawada is much less directly political than Brecht. Unlike other migrant and international writers of Turkish, Eastern European, Middle Eastern or African origin in Germany, Tawada did not come to Germany for political or economic reasons. While Brecht's central life experience may have been that of political exile, hers is that of migration as travel and exploration of different cultures. This may partially explain why in her work the ideas of "Verfremdung" and "Verwandlung", of "alienation" and "transformation", are not mutually exclusive or contradictory, but can frequently coexist.

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Translating Brecht

Romy Fursland

Romy Fursland specializes in literary translation. Her translation of *The New Sorrows of Young W.*, by Ulrich Plenzdorf, was published by Pushkin Press in June, 2015.

I am sure Brecht would be pleased to know that in the months from May 2013 to January 2014 he made me think harder about words than I ever had before. During those months, I translated and retranslated some of his theoretical writing and dramatic practice pieces for two new volumes of his work, *Brecht on Theatre* and *Brecht on Performance*. It was an exhilarating and at times a terrifying experience. As Steve Giles notes in the introduction to his new translation of the 'Messingkauf Dialogues' ('Buying Brass', *Brecht on Performance*, Bloomsbury November 2014), Brecht wrote in his journal in 1940 that whenever he opened *Buying Brass* he felt as though a cloud of dust was being blown into his face, and asked himself, 'How can one imagine something like this ever making sense?' I must admit that there were moments during the translation process when the same thought occurred to me.

A text is never so difficult to understand as when you have to translate it. A translator cannot skim over an ambiguous word or phrase, settling on a rough interpretation of what it probably means; a translator must come to definite conclusions about the precise meaning of every word in a source text, and choose one English equivalent from what is often a long list of synonyms. Context is all-important here, of course; and it is also useful to compare your own interpretations with those of other translators. I

was fortunate in that some of the essays I worked on for *Brecht on Theatre* and *Brecht on Performance* had been translated before, by John Willett. Although my retranslations differ substantially from Willett's translations, it was useful to be able to look at his solutions to some of the problems I encountered. I was lucky too in being able to discuss particularly thorny translation issues with the editors of the two volumes, Steve Giles, Tom Kuhn and Marc Silberman.

Brecht's theoretical writing abounds with such issues. I had to contend with metaphor, neologisms, a great many abstract terms, and a breath-taking range of allusions to literary, theatrical, political, philosophical, historical and sociological concepts. I also had to decide how to translate words with specific connotations in a Brechtian context. This is a common issue for translators: what do you do with a source-language word attached to a specific set of meanings and associations which may be unfamiliar to your target audience? One solution is to leave the word in the original language and gloss it in a Translator's Note, rather than translating it with an English word which might have misleading connotations. This was what the editors ultimately decided to do with *Verfremdung*, given that it has such a specific meaning in a Brechtian context and that English equivalents such as 'alienation', 'estrangement' and 'distancing' do not capture this specific meaning exactly.

A translator cannot leave too many words in the original language, however, without the translation becoming inaccessible. Brecht's writing is vibrant and it is fun – it must not be made heavy or impenetrable in translation. In the vast majority of cases, therefore, I needed to find English equivalents for German words.

One aspect of Brecht's writing which made this particularly difficult was his use of wordplay. Wordplay is language-bound: what functions as a play on words in one language is unlikely to work the same way in another. This is illustrated by the example below, in which Brecht plays with the verb *greifen* (meaning 'to grip' or 'to grasp'). I tried to retain instances of wordplay wherever possible, but was defeated by this one:

> Unter dem Begreifen eines Menschen verstehen wir nämlich nicht weniger als: ihm gegenüber Griffe haben. Jener «totale» Überblick über ihn, der ihn uns umreißt und der momentan sein muß, genügt nicht, sondern ist nur eine Voraussetzung unserer eigentlichen entscheidenden Operation des Begreifens, die ihn *handhabt*, und dazu eben jenen Überblick als eine Art Situationsplan braucht. Auch ist solch ein Überblick überhaupt nicht zu gewinnen ohne einen solchen Plan einer Operation: nur im Hinblick auf diese ist er zu gewinnen und gilt er. Wir können den anderen nur begreifen, wenn wir in ihn eingreifen können. Auch uns selbst können wir nur begreifen, indem wir in uns eingreifen.
>
> From 'Notes on *The Mother*' in *Brecht on Theatre*

Greifen appears in both *begreifen* ('to understand') and *eingreifen* ('to intervene'). This gives both verbs a sense of physicality which ties in with the phrases *Griffe haben* ('to have a handle/grip on') and *die ihn handhabt* ('which handles him').

Like German, English will allow us to grasp something mentally as well as physically, so I was able to translate *begreifen* as 'grasp' and retain the idea of physicality. Unfortunately, however, I

could not find a way to retain the *begreifen/eingreifen* wordplay without sacrificing meaning. I translated *eingreifen* as 'to act upon':

> What we understand by the idea of '**grasping**' human beings is nothing less than being able to **get a handle on them**. That 'total' overview we have of them, which outlines them in our minds and which is necessarily instantaneous, is not enough – rather, it is merely a precondition for the actual, decisive operation by which we are able to **grasp** them, an operation which ***handles*** them, and which in order to do so requires this very overview as a kind of plan. And this kind of overview cannot be obtained at all without such an operational plan: it can only be obtained, and is only valid, with reference to this operation. We can only **grasp** another person when we are able to **act upon** that person. And we can **understand** ourselves, likewise, only by **acting upon** ourselves. (*Brecht on Theatre*, 2014, p. 92)

(As you can see, I used 'understand' instead of 'grasp' for the last instance of *begreifen*: I felt that 'grasp ourselves' would simply sound too odd...)

Individual words, then, can present the translator of Brecht with some interesting dilemmas. And when Brecht starts to put words together, things get even more fun. Particularly in his earlier essays, collected in the 1918 – 1933 section of *Brecht on Theatre*, Brecht's syntax can be very complex indeed. The proliferation of relative clauses in the sentence below, from 'Three Cheers for Shaw', is pretty impressive:

> Wenn man dazunimmt, dass gerade er mit der gedankenlosen Gewohnheit aufgeräumt hat, in allem, was einem Tempel ähnlich sieht, nur mit gedämpfter Stimme statt laut und fröhlich zu sprechen, und dass gerade er bewiesen hat, dass wirklich wichtigen Erscheinungen gegenüber nur eine lässige (schnoddrige) Haltung die richtige ist, da sie allein eine wirkliche Aufmerksamkeit und völlige Konzentration ermöglicht, so wird man begreifen, zu was für eine persönliche Freiheit er es gebracht hat.
>
> From 'Three Cheers for Shaw' in *Brecht on Theatre*

There is sometimes a temptation to smooth out syntax in translation for the sake of readability. In simplifying an original writer's sentence structures, however, a translator risks losing nuances and finer shades of meaning, as well as failing to give an accurate representation of the writer's style. I always tried to mirror Brecht's syntax in translation as closely as English would allow – though in this case I did decide that English prose could not support quite such a long conditional clause, and I split Brecht's sentence in two:

> And we mustn't forget that it was Shaw who did away with the mindless custom of speaking in hushed tones, instead of loudly and cheerfully, in anything resembling a place of worship, and he who proved that the right attitude to take towards any really important phenomenon is a *casual* (flippant) one, because that is the only attitude which permits complete concentration and true attentiveness. If we consider all this, we can understand how great a degree of personal freedom he has achieved.

(*Brecht on Theatre*, 2014, p. 28)

It felt strange, having spent so much time so deeply involved in Brecht's writing, to let go of my translations. I had felt completely absorbed in Brecht's texts; I had read them, and my translations of them, so many times I could have quoted parts of them verbatim. I read through my completed translations with a mixture of excitement and a powerful sense of responsibility: these were both Brecht's words and mine; these were Brecht's ideas which I had worked out how to express in English. I felt strangely connected to Brecht, having wrestled with his ideas and listened to his voice and picked apart his sentences for so long. I can only hope Brecht would have approved of my translations. I feel privileged to have translated him – because it was fun, and challenging, and inspiring, and because I am happy to think I have played a part in making more of his work accessible to an English-speaking readership. Of that, I know he would have approved.

Romy Fursland discussed her translations of Brecht's theoretical writings at a symposium held at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London in June 2014. For more information about the symposium and video footage from the day – which included the first ever performance of Steve Giles' new translation of the 'Messingkauf Dialogues', *Buying Brass* – see the *Writing Brecht* website: brecht.mml.ox.ac.uk

Zombie Hordes, the Market and Reification: A Brechtian Perspective

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An important philosophical concern of Brecht's was with the phenomenon of social reification. Berger and Luckmann (1967) define reification as, "the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things...reification is the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something else than human products—such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws or manifestations of divine will" (p. 89). Similarly, Brecht discusses reification as occurring when "relationships between human beings [assume] the character of things" (Brecht et al. 2003, 94) and in a rare instance of accord, Lukács (1971) describes the phenomenon of reification as happening when "a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity', an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people" (p. 83).

The reason Brecht was concerned with the phenomenon of social reification was because he believed it inhibited the workers' ability to act on their own behalf and facilitate emancipatory revolutionary action (Squiers, 2011; 2014). In short, the argument goes that if something seemed to be a product of nature, people would view attempts to change it as Sisyphean. In Brecht words, "factors, such as social background...must be shown as alterable" (Brecht & Willett, 1992, p. 60).

Although I have elsewhere argued that Brecht's rejection of Aristotelian narrative form was (borrowing Lukács' term) an attempt to penetrate 'the veil of reification' (Squiers, 2013; 2014), I can think of no attempts of Brecht's to explicitly depict a particular reified form in his theatre. Nevertheless, an artist/philosopher like Brecht's interest in the phenomenon raises the question of how one might represent a reified form. This is of interest because the artistic representation of reified forms could be a way of addressing the problems they present. That is, a representation could show the audience that the form is a product of human interaction and thus alterable. This would be a major step, of course, toward altering it. The short discussion that follows about reified forms in general and the use of the specific example of zombie hordes as metaphors for the market can be of use toward this aim.

To begin, it is helpful to explore how we treat reified objects in common language. Specifically, it is interesting to see that we don't speak of reified things as direct objects. The way the market is spoken of in daily language provides a good example. One says, "Did you see what the market did today?" and someone else replies, "Yeah, it went up six points." Notice how nothing is happening to the market. Even though the movement being discussed (up six points) is actually a number on an index which changes according to the various ways human beings interact by buying and selling, the market appears to be doing something all by itself. An anthropomorphizing has occurred. The market has been given the human quality of spirit, ego, autonomy, agency, self-animation. The market is said to be doing the action, all by itself. The market appears as an undifferentiated totality. It does not appear as the sum of purposeful, intentional, human actions, which it is. Human action is forgotten about, overlooked, ignored and the human roots of the market become invisible, hidden, overlooked, etc. The puppeteer's hands are hidden; the marionette appears string-less behind the black background of reification. Furthermore, a second, crucial point also emerges here. Notice how humans are said to relate to this 'object.' We no longer connect with the market in our true relation to it. We no longer see it as the product of our interactions together. We connect with this object in a different way. We see it as an external object with agency which we observe, classify, describe, study, catalog, analyze, discover the properties of, etc. In short, we experience it only in its alienation from us.

Given these points, I believe that in order to represent a reified form we would need to show something which could depict a human construction as autonomous from human control but, still in some way maintain the quality of being produced by individuals acting together. Additionally, if we want to suggest the reified form is pernicious, its representation needs to be perceived as a problem by the audience. This could be accomplished, for example, by having it pose a threat to or obstacle i.e. serve some antagonistic function in Aristotelian narrative form. In epic theatre, the reified form could be one of the social forces acting on the characters and propelling them through time. But what would that look like in practice? Maintaining our example of the market, I believe the very trendy motif of the zombie horde could be used as a trope for representing it. Though many examples abound, one will suffice to illustrate the point. The one I would like to take

is from the zombie apocalypse movie *World War Z*. In this movie, a group of zombies are segregated from humans by a large wall, dozens of meters high, which has been constructed especially for this purpose. Behind the wall the humans begin singing which agitates the zombies working them into an aggressive state. The noise of their prey compels them toward the wall. Unlike many zombie films, these zombies move quickly and are rather agile. As they move toward the wall they being climbing and piling on top of each other. This pile eventually raises high enough to allow some of them to breach the wall and subsequently attack the humans behind it.

Thus depicted we can identify several similarities between the market and the zombie horde. First, they are socially constructed in that they are produced of individuals interacting with each other. Second, they are both seen as something greater than the sum of its parts. They are beyond the individuals whose actions comprise them. There is also a parallel to be found in this imagery of the zombie horde and the familiar classical liberal economic assumption, famously put forth by Adam Smith (1937) which argues that the society benefits most by allowing self-interested actors to act in a self-interested way. In the depiction of the zombies breaching the wall there is no sort of coordination between the zombies and no leadership. They are all out for themselves but by following their own self-interests their society at large reaps the benefits. That is to say, at least those that are able to use their fellow zombies as footholds to get over the wall benefit. But, even in this we find another parallel between the horde and

the market. Those being stepped on are those within the zombie society which have fallen victim to exploitation.
In sum, the parallels are apparent. The un-regulated, individually self-interested actions of the zombies pose a direct threat to the protagonist (here played by Brad Pitt). Collectively these actions present themselves as a nearly uncontrollable phenomenon which threatens the human race.

However, as it's currently presented the representation of the zombie horde may be too abstract to be practical. That is, the parallels are there for those who have the heuristic tools to understanding it in that manner. But, they are likely too subtle for many audience members to see them. In order to turn the zombie horde into a more socially functional metaphor for the market (i.e. a metaphor available for use in progressive social action) several things must be accomplished. First, one must be able to adequately draw the parallel for the audience between the zombie horde and the market. Mechanisms of connection need to be embedded within the text and/ or presentation. Second, the representation needs to be presented as somehow alterable. This can be accomplished by means of plot development and resolution if the horde is presented as the antagonist (as is often the case) in dramatic narrative form. It could also be accomplished in epic form by showing changes in the horde or its behavior through time. Finally one must get the audience to identify themselves within the horde as well as threatened by the horde. That is, one must get the audience member to think of herself as both a constitutive element of society and an object society is acting upon.

These are, of course, not easy tasks. This examination of the zombie horde and speculations about it metaphoric potentialities moves us in the right direction; but doesn't completely answer all the questions. More would need to be done. Further philosophical musing may be beneficial; but, likely such an investigation would be so thoroughly immersed in the sphere of practical aesthetics that it may be better suited for the imagination and praxis of the artist.

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Splitting the Atom of Kitsch: Reflections on Weill, Eisler and the Musical Theatre

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The respective American careers of the two foremost musical collaborators of Brecht, Hanns Eisler and Kurt Weill, pose an interesting question for the history of the musical theatre on this continent, a question which hinges as it were on the following paradox: the paradox of their remarkable success, and simultaneously, of their remarkable failure.[1] For both of them - for all the differences in their political, musical, and lived biographies - were to experience a degree of outward and material success in the New World which bordered on the fabulous: Eisler in Hollywood, as a composer for film, and Weill on Broadway. Here it is not too much to say that each of them re-invented themselves and mastered a new idiom to become among the most pre-eminent, acknowledged and leading composers in their fields. No small matter for two exiles in America, where the fate of banishment was most often also one of cultural isolation and economic marginalization, or for two composers so steeped in the heritage of classical music and the musical language of European modernism, Eisler as a favorite student of Arnold Schönberg in Vienna, and Weill as an equally star pupil of Ferruccio Busoni in Berlin.[2] And yet this success came at a price: for if Eisler and Weill successfully transplanted themselves to America, the same cannot be said for the strikingly innovative model of the musical theatre which both of them had so spectacularly elaborated in their collaborations with Brecht. For in the years 1928 to 1930, in their different ways, Eisler and Weill seemed to have found, in their work with Brecht, the elusive magic formula of a new musical theatre: that is to say, of a musical theatre which avoided the pitfalls both of the elitist, culinary character of opera or the trivial and merely distracting and affirmative *Unkultur* of so-called popular music; a musical theatre which could reach a mass audience with music at once edgy and accessible, as well as with a content which addressed political and social actuality in a critical and provocative fashion; and this both at the level of form and content, and in a manner which at once undercut the fatal segregation of high and low culture, as well as in some instances even breaking the barrier of a merely unthinking consumption and passive reception by the audience.

Thus the question is inevitably raised: why this model didn't take. And in particular, why neither Eisler nor Weill, in spite of their imposing success as composers in America, who certainly both reached mass audiences with their music, the one in Hollywood and the other on Broadway, could in any wise emulate their previous success. In other words, a spectre continues to haunt the musical theatre of our days, the spectre of Bertolt Brecht, and the ghosts of Weill and Eisler in their collaborations with Brecht.[3]

The case is, also somewhat paradoxically, perhaps more interesting and acute in the case of Weill than of Eisler. And this because, in marked contrast to what orthodox Brechtians usually like to think, and despite his otherwise unimpeachable and as it were doubly avant-garde credentials as both a staunch Communist and unwavering disciple of Arnold Schönberg, Eisler in America was in this sense rather more of a sellout than was Weill, and during his time in exile made no further attempts at a musical theatre

along the lines of *The Mother* or *The Measure Taken*. And while busy co-writing his book on *Composition for the Film*, which at once eloquently denounces the American film industry as corrupt, and at the same time provides a workable formula for how to best write music for it, Eisler then proceeded to do just that; and thus seemed in his own production to incarnate the unresolvable contradictions of his friend, co-writer and political antipode Theodor W. Adorno, who believed that in the face of the nefarious power of the culture industry, there was no middle ground, only the mass art of distraction and shallow amusement, or a resolutely hermetic art of refusal. For astonishingly enough, Eisler's art in American exile will move between just these two extremes. For the erstwhile Communist composer now becomes as it were schizophrenic: in his day job, a purveyor to the entertainment industry and the Hollywood dream factory; and in his other, more nocturnal and clandestine identity, a recondite and uncompromising, and perhaps rather less Brechtian, than in fact Adornoite producer of absolute works of art. Thus, the twice Oscar-nominated Eisler of the Hollywood period oscillates between film scores for the oil industry promo *Pete Troleum* and the swashbuckling crowd-pleaser *Spanish Main* on the one hand, and, to save his artistic and political conscience - and perhaps his sanity - the limpid post-Schönbergian score of his chamber work *Fourteen Ways of Describing Rain*, or the glorious summation and modernist actualization of the art song in his *Hollywooder Liederbuch* on the other. Scores for films whose political conception he could at least partially believe in, such as Brecht's *Hangmen also Die*, remained the exception.[4] In other words: the characteristic and peculiarly edgy Eislerian "middle ground", the innovative but accessible musical work with a provocative social-political theme and potential mass appeal, has now somehow vanished beneath the composer's feet. With his customary acerbity, Eisler, in his conversations with Hans Bunge, himself famously summed up this situation with reference to Brecht's statement that the very idea of operative and interventional art seemed to have lost its purpose in the face of that universal agitprop, of the unremitting agitation for Coca-Cola, with which he now saw himself confronted.[5] But this cannot disguise the fact that the student of Schönberg and collaborator of Brecht now found himself in a situation which, for all its outward and fleeting material resplendence, he actually experienced as a deep and ongoing violation of both his artistic and political being.[6]

By way of contrast, Weill was not so defeatist, and still made the daredevil attempt to take the citadel: to capture Broadway for the idea, not of the musical, but of the musical theatre. And it is perhaps important and helpful for us not to simply to look with snobbish Brechtian scorn or crude Adornoite contempt, in short with a quite misplaced *alteuropäische dédain*, upon such efforts. For contrary to both the Brechtian and Adornoite stereotype, Weill by no means now forsook his aesthetic ideals simply to write catchy tunes for the commercial theatre, and secure himself a Buick and a country mansion in the process.[7] Rather he embarked on a sustained experiment which commands our respect and attention: to bring more challenging and serious contemporary themes to the mainstream American theatre, and find a new musical idiom commensurate to this task. After all, if the work Weill did produce for the American stage was of necessity diverse, experimental, and uneven, and by no means free of artistic compromise, the pacifist *Jimmy*

Johnson, the gritty and multiethnic *Street Scene*, or the anti-apartheid *Lost in the Stars* are, for example, each in their way works that, pack a certain social-political punch, and are, at least in their intention, serious, edgy, and subversive. So that if there is one thing we can say for certain about the American Weill, it is that he was always, in the sense of his ongoing project of a popular musical theatre of critical potential and contemporary relevance, testing the limits of the genre, and not simply servicing an invidious cultural apparatus in its insatiable need for escapist froth.

In other words: if there can be no doubt that Weill's perception of Broadway - as the authentic form of American popular theatre - was in some senses delusional, that would still seem in itself not constitute an intrinsic reason for this illusion not to have produced a transgressive masterwork for the American stage, in its own way comparable to the masterful transgressions of Weill's Weimar collaborations with Brecht. And nevertheless, I think one would have to say that these certainly not negligible American works of Weill are still, compared with *Mahagonny* or the *Threepenny Opera*, in one sense failures, in that they fail to blow up the form of the musical, the way that the works of Weill and Brecht blew up the form of the opera and the operetta. And here, we do in fact return to a fundamental matter of perception: the basic proposition that indeed, like opera and operetta, the quintessentially American form of the musical is similarly in need of being blown up. For in point of fact, there is perhaps, in terms of the American theatre, then as now, no more urgent and more pressing task.

For the inmost logic of the musical - and where it holds the theatre and all its critical potential in a vicelike grip - is surely one of American kitsch: of unrelenting and merciless affirmation, of a pathological need to constantly reassure the audience that the world in its current state is indeed just wonderful, and that life in it - such as it is - still quite in order and eminently worthwhile. "Die Welt ist schön" - "the world is beautiful" - what infuriated Benjamin, in his essay on the *Artist as Producer*, about a certain genre of photography, which, under its tranfiguring gaze, turned even vistas of human misery and abandonment into charmed landscapes of the aesthetically and visually appealing, could certainly be deemed both the constant explicit text and unfailing underlying subtext of the American musical - and indeed, almost its genetic code.[8] And if, in his youth as *Bürgerschreck*, Brecht was once asked what he thought was kitsch, and then referred with a shrug to the entire standard dictionary of contemporary German literature, his reaction to a similar question concerning the opera or the musical would undoubtedly have been similarly gruff.

And indeed, nothing more telling that, in such "hit" musicals as *Les Miserables*, a classic tale of popular misery should be turned into a kind of crackling hearth and blazing fireplace, where middle class audiences can now warm their hands and hearts at scenes of working class oppression. So that one can say that the singular place of the musical, like that of the formulaic Hollywood film, in the American psyche is this function of placing what might otherwise inspire dread or reflection under the redemptive spell of trivializing denial, of constant inspirational moral uplift, ready emotional identification and simple cheery inanity. Thus, "the hills are alive", in Rodgers and Hammerstein, less with the sounds of *Anschluß*, than with those insinuating saccharine melodies which are then

called - perhaps the most egregious case of self- and false advertisement in the whole history of the genre - "music", and one of the grimmest political conjunctures in twentieth century history is gratefully dissolved into heartening family drama, spectacular Alpine scenery, a Cinderella story, and sweet major triads.[9] "Springtime for Hitler": in Mel Brooks' satire *The Producers*, where the said theatrical entrepreneurs are desperately seeking to create a flop, and endeavour to turn the history of the Third Reich itself into a kind of repellent mock inspirational success story and affirming heartwarming exemplum, this demonic compulsion of the musical, its Midas gift of turning everything it touches into schlock, has perhaps found its most telling expression; for of course, the musical then becomes - in real life, as in the story - with a kind of relentless inevitability, a fabulous success. For in the genre as a whole we are indeed basically confronted with such a perpetual false spring, where trivialization, like hope, grows eternal in the Broadway breast.

And has this pathological need for inspirational uplift, for denial of unsettling bitter realities, for ready emotional identification and the spurious quick reassurances of the "happy end", not come to characterize much of American dramaturgy itself, even of the "progressive" sort, and even when it seeks to be most critical? So that the very ideas of the drama and the narrative themselves have since become irrevocably entwined with this type of compulsive dramaturgical curve? In that sense, one can ask oneself the question if, at the deepest level - the level of the questioning and overthrowing of all such fatal underlying mechanisms - Brechtian dramaturgy, and the dramaturgy practiced by Weill and Eisler in their collaborations with Brecht, have ever really arrived upon these shores. We recall the legendary *Theaterkrach* of the first attempt to stage *The Mother* in America in the 1930s, where - even off Broadway and with a left-wing and alternative theatrical ensemble - Brecht and Eisler hit an impenetrable wall of Stanislavskyean resistance; of the need to identify, tell a motivational tale, and give positive moral and emotional uplift: and have to ask ourselves if that resistance has indeed ever been truly overcome.[10]

And to get immediately to the heart of the matter: beyond all overarching questions of aesthetic theory and perceptions of the theatrical and of the political, it is also a simple matter of a serious lack of wickedness, of the insolent wickedness which both Eisler and Weill evinced in their German years, but which is sadly missing from the Weill of the American period.[11] For if, as was often said by his admirers, Weill absorbed the American idiom and its particular genius, it was also the American genius of affirmation: a very problematic genius for a composer of Weill's particular talents to absorb.[12]

The perfect example of this is Weill's very different approach to those vast, irreducible monoliths which constitute German or American kitsch. For there can be no doubt that, as we have seen, kitsch is as redoubtable and obdurate an opponent for the serious artist and musician as is capital itself; and there can equally be no doubt that, just as a few years later in Berlin the physicist Werner Heisenberg was to split the atom, Weill and Brecht succeeded in Weimar Berlin in a no less impressive and previously unthinkable task: namely in splitting the atom of German kitsch. The last bastion, the irreducible atom of German kitsch is however the *Schlager*, a genre whose inner properties are perhaps as untranslatable

as the term itself, which is most imperfectly rendered by pop or hit song. For the *Schlager*, as sunken cultural good, is as innately and irredeemably German as is the high cultural form which it both incarnates and trivializes, namely the equally untranslatable German inwardness, or *Innerlichkeit*.[13] And here, in order to understand the scope of Brecht and Weill's accomplishment, we have to reach for the very highest authorities in philosophy and music, namely Ernst Bloch and Franz Schubert: Bloch for his view of the utopian hope contents to be found in all forms of cultural utterance, from the highest and most sublime, to the most profane and sunken; which the philosopher - much like his friend Benjamin and unlike, at least in the more prominently placed pronunciamentos, his secret admirer Adorno - then also proceeded to detect, deeply embedded within popular culture.[14] And the composer Schubert - the last of the great classical composers to have had a living and productive relationship, in his own music, to the spheres both of high and popular culture - for his mysterious utterance, late in life, that, as far as he was concerned - "ich kenne nur traurige Musik" - there only was sad music. For in a paradoxical figure, it is precisely by cutting through to the underside of sorrow which they reveal in the *Schlager*, that Brecht and Weill can extract its utopian hope content. Thus, they can then seek out the enemy - illusion - on its own terrain, and defeat it at its own game.

For let us now at it were briefly return to the scene of that first Berlin splitting of the atom, in the love song of Polly and Macheath from the *Threepenny Opera*. And here I must insist, for reasons that will be explained, on the readily available German language version:[15]

Macheath:
Siehst du den Mond über Soho?
Polly:
Ich seh' ihn, Lieber.
Fühlst du mein Herz schlagen, Geliebter?
Macheath:
Ich fühl' es, Geliebte.
Polly:
Wo du hingehst, da will ich auch hingehn.
Macheath:
Und wo du bleibst, da will auch ich sein.
Beide:
Und gibts auch kein Schriftstück vom Standesamt
Und keine Blumen auf dem Altar.
Und weiß ich auch nicht, woher dein Brautkleid stammt
Und gibt's keine Myrthen im Haar -
Der Teller, von welchem du issest dein Brot
Schau ihn nicht glatt an, wirf ihn fort!
Die Liebe dauert oder dauert nicht
An dem oder jenem Ort.

(English translation:

Macheath:
Do you see the moon over Soho?
Polly:
I see it beloved.
Do you feel my heart beating, beloved?
Macheath:
I feel it, beloved.
Polly:
Wherever you go, there I too want to go.
Macheath:
And wherever you stay, there I too wish to be.
Both:
And even if we have no license from the registrar
And no flowers upon the altar
And though I know not, from where your bridal dress came
And though there's no myrtle in your hair

The plate from which you are eating
your bread
Don't look at long, throw it away!
Love will or will not endure
Here or some other place.)

For it is perhaps revealing that, in my experience, it is quite impossible to find an English language version of this scene which does it any kind of justice. And this because American singers still seem, in their inmost hearts, to want to believe, and to want us to believe, at least a little bit, in the illusion. And so - and perhaps especially at such a traditional fulcrum of the plot as the boy-girl moment - it is at precisely such a dramatic juncture that the Stanislavskyian, if not to say Pavlovian, reflexes seem to then invariably kick in. For it would seem that, especially in a situation of potential romantic transport, a Method actor - and all American actors tend to become, at such moments, Method actors - will above all strive to be sincere. They thus do not seem to understand that the only way to truly and properly convey the power and the seduction of the illusion at this moment is to break with it utterly and completely, as Brecht and Weill here do, thus allowing us to participate in that power and seduction, without at all succumbing to it. For neither Polly nor Macheath believe for a moment in the romance of the Soho moon; just as they both, with equal fervency, wish to dissemble belief in it: Mac to Polly, and Polly, perhaps even more fatefully and forcefully, to herself. And this very tension, this fleeting equilibrium, this *clair obscure* of dissembling and belief which it helps create, is of course the Soho moon's unsurpassed and singular charm.

For it is this truly moonstruck atmosphere which first allows us to appreciate the delectable sleaze of Weill's instrumentation, and all that which renders it at once so utterly sleazy - and so utterly delectable: the deliberate suggestive sexual lure of the saxophone, the ostentatiously and all too consciously palpitating orchestral tremolo, and above all the quick and ready resolution to a suspiciously succulent and demonstrative, and, as it were - replete with Mac's breaking falsetto - artificially heightened and sweetened chord. "The harder the stone, the sweeter the melody": and Weill's melody is here as sweet, as the hearts of Brecht's characters - and the heart of Brechtian social relations - are irrevocably hardened.[16] "Love endures, or does not endure, in one place or another." This is the Brechtian translation of the classic hackneyed declaration of the singularity and intransience of love into the language of contemporary realities, where illusion and disillusionment find themselves in a kind of perfect balance - or, one might almost say, in the volatile state of an at once perfect harmony and disharmony. And it is at precisely this moment that, like the deft hand of a pickpocket, Weill's score, with an almost Schubertian alacrity, instantly shifts to its quite unexpected conclusion in a doleful minor mode. For the all too understandable longing to be, if I may paraphrase the text, in a time and place 'not quite as miserable as the present', can only be conveyed if we also sense - without any illusion of relief - that present misery, in all its unrelievedness, including by seeing through the false relief of illusion itself.[17] "It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given us."[18] It is in point of fact this highest figure of Benjaminian hopefulness, this illumination in the profane, which the merciless debunking and *demontage* of the illusionary world of the *Schlager* in Brecht and Weill then paradoxically gives us: but the lovers Polly and Macheath can only become figures of such hope in all their hopelessness, in all their irremedia-

ble sunkenness, shopworn tackiness and tawdriness, by being uncompromisingly shown in all that forlorn hopelessness, in all that unadorned tawdriness and sham. In other words: a hopefulness which is not illusory can only be accessed through a resolute and unflinching break with the hopefulness based on illusion; and this break can only occur by unmercifully demonstrating the illusion of that very hopefulness itself. Yet this is something which, up to the present day, the whole genre of the American musical is in fact resolutely - one might even say genetically - predicated upon, at all costs, never doing. In other words, if the atom of German kitsch - the *Schlager* - has since been split, the atom of American kitsch - the musical - has yet to be broken down. And Eisler and Weill, as immigrant and *émigré*, can perhaps be forgiven for not even attempting such a truly daunting task: but if it is ever to be accomplished, I am confident it can only be done by using the methods of Weill and Eisler.[19]

Endnotes

1. The author would like to acknowledge his debt to Josh Dolgan, aka So-Called, Canada's preeminent klezmer and hip-hop fusion artist, and long-time connoisseur and aficionado of Brecht, Eisler and Weill, whose passionate defence of Kurt Weill's American oeuvre helped prompt this article.

2. It may be recalled that *The Threepenny Opera* was a flop in its initial abortive 1933 run on Broadway - so foreign did it seem to the world of the American musical - and did not become a hit - not least thanks to Lotte Lenya's tireless efforts - until its legendary 1955 off Broadway revival at the Theatre de Lys in Greenwich Village, in the English adaptation by Marc Blitzstein. In other words, quite posthumously and well after Weill had established himself as a leading composer of the musical theatre in America.

3. It is thus revealing that, in Tim Robbins' film adaption of Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* (1999), a perpetually dissatisfied Brecht should intermittently take on a cameo role precisely in this mentoring capacity - but also as a ghost. Despite his fame as the translator of the perhaps most effective stage version of Weill's masterpiece, and the one which established it in the American repertoire, Blitzstein's own project in *The Cradle will Rock* (1937), with its depiction of the conflict of labor and capital, may fairly be deemed more Eislerian in nature. Despite some considerable success, it has basically remained a one-off, just as Leonard Bernstein's remarkable *Westside Story* (1957) - which, in its tragic love story, inter-ethnic conflict and insurgent choreography, at some level represents a highly effective extrapolation of the problematic and setting of Weill's own *Street Scene* (1947)- has, despite its fabulous success, basically found no imitators. In terms of Brecht's, Weill's and Eisler's musical impact in America, we would however be highly remiss if we did not point out the lasting and powerful effect that the later Broadway revival of *Threepenny Opera* had on at least one listener: Robert Zimmerman. For the later Bob Dylan, as he records in his memoirs, the encounter with Brecht, Weill and Lenya was nothing less than formative, and paradigmatic for his own ideal of the properly uncompromising and aggressive intersection of music and text; indeed, in his recent overview of twentieth music, Alex Ross even detects the influence of Brecht and Eisler's "Song of the Moldau" on Dylan's "The times they are a-changin'" and

comments: "The spirit of Berlin lived on." See Bob Dylan, *Chronicles*, Vol. 1, Simon and Schuster: New York 2004, p. 273-75; Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York 2007, p. 193-94.

4. Obviously, with such innovative scores as that of *Kuhle Wampe* or *Nuit et Brouillard*, and his work with Joris Ivens, the place of Eisler in the history of film music is secure; as indeed sticklers of historical accuracy will quite rightly point out that Eisler's "Regen" score itself - which I have here so casually referenced as an "absolute" work of art - began life as music for Ivens' eponymous film. But this is precisely the tragedy of Eisler in Hollywood: never to have found a film commensurate with his deepest artistic and political impulses. And yet there was a point where this forbidden fruit - a score for a film which addressed contemporary American reality in a manner with which Eisler might have identified - may have been tantalizingly close: if Eisler had been permitted to do the soundtrack of the *Grapes of Wrath* (1940), John Ford's remarkably faithful film version of the great Steinbeck novel, and one of the few honest and probing Hollywood depictions of the plight of the American working population during the Depression , which however then ultimately fell to another composer, Alfred Newman. Apparently, such was Eisler's longing to be involved in such a project, even vicariously, that he then composed his own score for the film, which then never played: the strange paradox and fate of an at once truly hermetic and operative work of art. But, upon closer examination, is this strange and paradoxical category - namely of works that were in their original intention interventional, but then remained, for various reasons, cut off from having any practical impact or effect - not in fact rather more voluminous than that of the successfully 'operational' works of art?

5. *Brecht, Music and Culture: Hanns Eisler in Conversation with Hans Bunge*, ed. and trans. by Sabine Berendse and Paul Clemens, Bloomsbury; London/ New York 2014, p. 13.

6. A thorough and nuanced account of Eisler's situation in Hollywood can now be found in Horst Weber, *"I am not a hero, I am a composer": Hanns Eisler in Hollywood*, Georg Olms: Hildesheim-Zürich-New York 2012. Jürgen Schebera's biography, *Kurt Weill: An Illustrated Life*, Yale University Press: New Haven 1995, similarly gives a detailed overview of Weill's American period. A first coherent and encompassing account of the whole arc of Weill's artistic project, in all its various European and North American manifestations, can now be found in Stephen Hinton, *Weill's Musical Theatre*, U. of California Press: Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 2012.

7. A remarkably judicious summary of the standard reproaches made to the American Weill may be found in Kim Kowalke, "Looking Back: Toward a New Orpheus," in Kim Kowalke (ed.) *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, Yale University Press: New Haven 1986, p. 1-20. On the matter of the Buick see Mathew Scott "Weill in America: the Problem of Revival", in the same volume, p 285-95, especially p. 291.

8. Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, New Left Books: London 1973, p. 95.

9. A rather different soundscape of the *Anschluß* in the Austrian provinces is offered by Ingeborg Bachmann: "At table the children sit in silence, chewing

for a long time on a mouthful, while a storm crackles on the radio and the announcer's voice flashes round the kitchen like ball-lightning and ends up where the saucepan lid rises in alarm above the potatoes in their burst jackets (...) Columns of marching men pass through the streets. The flags strike together over their heads. 'We shall march on and on till everything crashes in ruins,' they sing outside. The time signal sounds, and the children start giving each other silent news with practised fingers.' Ingeborg Bachmann, "Youth in an Austrian Town", in: *The Thirtieth Year*, Holmes and Meier: New York 1987, p. 6.

10. That both Brecht and - rather uncharacteristically - Eisler were not blameless in this debacle does not of course alter the fact that they were right. Unfortunately, however, the understandable and justifiable insistence on certain principles of a new and revolutionary dramaturgy on their part was, in this instance, not coupled with the personal tact and patient pedagogy which both of them were to evince in later comparable situations. This seems to have had the unfortunate effect both of setting the project of a Brechtian dramaturgy in America back by several decades, and of having made work in the musical theatre in the United States something of a non-starter for Eisler. The circumstances of this failed project have been related in Frederic Ewen, *Bertolt Brecht*, The Citadel Press: New York 1967, p. 316-17; James K. Lyon, *Bertolt Brecht in America*, Princeton University Press: Princeton 1980, p. 6-18; and Werner Mittenzwei, *Das Leben des Bertolt Brecht*, Vol 2, Suhrkamp-Aufbau Verlag: Frankfurt a. M./Berlin, 1987, p. 546-51.

11. Interestingly enough, this revocation of wickedness in the American Weill - and its relative persistence in the American Eisler - can perhaps best be demonstrated in their respective treatment of that other quintessentially American musical form, the blues. Crucial to the understanding of the blues is its character as a music of protest - one might almost say, and this irrespective of the latter's own notorious incomprehension and rejection of jazz - of "dissonance" in Adorno's emphatic sense. For indeed, Adorno's paradigm of dissonance may well be meaningfully applied to the whole history of black music in America. For in the blues, as the foundational musical medium of black protest and distinctive self-assertion vis-a-vis the affirmative white mainstream, we also find that very space of negativity, authenticity, and raw expressiveness, as well as of constant innovative and transgressive altering of the basic musical material itself, which led Adorno to privilege the realm of dissonance in his own theory. In this sense, in this irreducible aspect of protest, blues is of course the exact counterpoint to the affirmative impulse of the musical, and the emotionally and musically sanitized worlds of the Great White Way. It is therefore interesting that in Weill's *Street Scene*, the blues appears initially as a further "ethnic" marker among other ethnic markers: in the utopian integrationist mosaic of the piece, where linguistic and musical difference of the diverse ethnicities (and let us not forget that linguistic difference in accent and inflection is a fatal marker of the "Jew" in Anti-Semitic discourse) can now be celebrated in the New World, instead of being a source of exclusion, as in the Old. And yet, however much one wishes to acknowledge such an integrationist utopia - and Weill's own frequent and as it were ecumenical adoption of the blues idiom in his own personal musical utterance - such a use

of the blues in a certain sense represents a neutralizing of the very "dissonance", of the underlying character as protest and difference inscribed in its whole history, as in its very musical material. It is thus interesting that these are the very elements that Eisler should then quote in the *Hollywood Elegies*, where the inferno of the poor and the excluded in Los Angeles is at once encapsulated and evoked in the medium of such quotation. Finally, on this question, one may refer to Brecht's interest, during his time in America, in the unfortunately unrealized project of having *The Threepenny Opera* performed by an all-black cast. For indeed, a *Threepenny Opera* or *Mahagonny* performed by such a cast, in a translation reflecting contemporary black street argot, might well still be a worthwhile exercise today, both as an act of cultural re-appropriation, as well as contemporary recapturing of the original subversiveness of the plays themselves On the history and function of the blues, see Immamu Amiri Baraka's (LeRoi Jones) classic study *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, William Morrow: New York 1963; on Brecht and the project of a black *Threepenny*, see David Drew, "Reflections on the Last Years: *Der Kuhhandel* as Pivotal Work", in Kowalke, *Orpheus*, p. 217-268, especially p. 249, where Adorno unexpectedly figures as an impassioned advocate of just such a project! On the problematic of *Street Scene*, see also Larry Stempel, "*Street Scene* and the Enigma of Broadway Opera" in Kowalke, p. 321-41.

12. Thus, *Street Scene*, the American Weill's perhaps most ambitious and representative work, becomes a kind of testing and meeting ground for all of the diverse conflicting impulses informing his theatrical project. For example, even well-meaning critics have questioned the stylistic disparities which arise from including show tunes in what is basically an operatic fabric; and it can indeed be jarring, for an ear that knows Weill's wry Berlin send-ups of the moons of Soho and Alabama, to hear a tune like "What good would the moon be", where that very moon, with a romantic naiveté that now seems quite artificial, once more plays the innocent. Similarly, to our contemporary ears, the extended musical marking and celebration of ethnic difference - of which Weill could apparently not get enough - seems forced, stylized, and anachronistic, at best an idealized New York of 1900 or 1910, and not 1950; quite apart from the problematic of a rather blithe, if well-meaning, inclusion of the African American into that mosaic, particularly in the context of pre-Selma America. And yet, ultimately, *Street Scene* does question the very agenda of upward social mobility and boy-meets-girl romance which it initially invokes, and over which the crime of passion it depicts then casts a fateful shadow: and indeed, in the commentary by the neighbors and spectators on that crime, Weill's drama attains a remarkable and characteristic power, reminiscent of the chorus in Greek tragedy, and something quite different from anything he had ever achieved with Brecht. So that the judgement, that he had just tried to turn himself into Cole Porter or Richard Rodgers, now clearly falls short and does him serious injustice. This, however, leads me to the belief that perhaps the real issue lies elsewhere: and that Weill's emphatic assumption of an American musical identity is not only something of a mask, but of a survival mask; in some ways not unlike the one donned by the great modern Russian composer Shostakovich, where the latter played the loyal Soviet citizen and functionary, and composed - or

seemed to compose - the happy marches demanded by socialist realism. For Weill too was faced with the most elemental issues of survival: not only of economic survival in America, but of physical survival vis-a-vis the Nazi regime, which had not only expelled him from his homeland, but sought to extirpate every trace of his music, as of his ethnicity. There is therefore much dread in Weill: and it strikes me that this dread haunts his American music, even when it is most seemingly gay and insouciant: so that the problem with it is not that it is so trivial, but that it is so spooked: for Weill seems to be clinging to that very American gaiety and insouciance as if for survival. This leads to the question of whether, in performance, that hauntedness, that trauma, instead of being ignored and suppressed, should not rather be brought out and highlighted. In other words, if Weill, including the American Weill, does not also need, in a kind of return of the repressed, to be played as a European: if, for example, a piece like *Street Scene* does not need to be played with Expressionist excess, Brechtian estrangement, Grosz-like savagery, and the melancholy of de Chirico, instead of that faux naturalism of well-scrubbed street urchins and naively sincere protagonists, in which we most often see it. Weill was traumatized: and *Street Scene*, which deals with trauma, is perhaps the place to reflect upon that trauma.

13. In this sense, we must perhaps relativize and nuance Alex Ross's assessment of post-1920s German popular music as a simple expression of American jazz influences, which then continued to hold sway, despite all protests against *"entartete Musik,"* even under the Nazis. For the *Schlager* - irrespective of the possible and often undeniable presence of such influences - remains a quintessentially German cultural form; and one is almost tempted to say, *the* quintessential German cultural form: which in turn makes Brecht and Weill's explosion of it all the more necessary and remarkable. See Ross, p. 179 and 315-21.

14. Bloch in the *Prinzip Hoffnung* (The Principle of Hope) gave both an overarching and encyclopedic account of the hope content of all cultural expression, as well as in *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Heritage of our Times) attempting to do the same for the particular political conjuncture of the Weimar republic - including in the book's repeated tributes to Weill. On the other hand - considering his unabashedly elitist modernism and preeminent role as chief theoretical enforcer of the New Music - Adorno's startlingly open-minded, and in that sense quite Benjaminian and Blochean discussions of the *Schlager* and of kitsch, as of Weill's work, are by way of contrast only to be found in the further reaches of the complete edition of his works, viz. Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* (GS), Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a. M. 1982: GS 16, p 114-122: GS 18, 535-541; 778-787; 791-793; 800-804: and GS 19, 276-78. His lively and insightful contemporary critiques of *Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny* are also available in David Drew (ed.), *Über Kurt Weill*, Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a. M. 1975. On the always ambivalent, at times highly critical, but in principle not disloyal attitude of Adorno to Weill, see also further the excellent account by Drew, *"Kuhhandel"* especially p. 218-220 and 248-253.

15. The version I have in mind here is the German language production of the Sender Freies Berlin, conducted by Wilhelm Brückner-Rüggeberg and supervised by Lotte Lenya. The quote

of the German and English language versions of the text is from the program notes of the CD.

16. Hanns Eisler/ Theodor W. Adorno, *Composing for the Films*, Oxford University Press: Oxford 1947, p. 31.

17. There is a parallel denuding of the *Schlager* as illusion in *Mahagonny*, when Jimmy and his friends attempt, at the critical moment, to convert a pool table into a ship to spirit themselves away to far-off seas, and then sing accordingly. It doesn't work, but the exoticist romanticism of escape to a better, distant land - perhaps, along with the joys and sorrows of true love, the *Schlager's* other classic and most favored theme - has perhaps never been more lovingly dismembered. Interestingly, Adorno devoted some incisive lines to both these scenes; see Drew, *Kurt Weill*, p. 40-42 and p. 61-63.

18. Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, Vol. I, 1913-1926, Belknap Press: Cambridge 1996, p. 356. (My translation - PP). It may be recalled that Marx, in his original critique of religion, terms it "the heart of a heartless world." But is this not also the inmost function, the ultimate hidden kernel of the *Schlager* as well, as the Blochean "hope content" of a sunken cultural world, which here, in the very dregs, emulates the highest? It is this sunken hope content which Brecht and Weill then access in this scene, where we can - and as it were for the first time - finally hear that beating heart, touch the stony center, and taste the encapsulating sweetness of estrangement and illusion. For there is indeed much to be said for a view which would regard Marx's account of the estranged highest hope content of religion - as the "sigh of the oppressed creature" - as the sunken hope content of *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny* as well. Finally, the question can here only be raised, not answered, of how much this acute perception and ruthless puncturing of the bubble of the boy-girl moment owes to Brecht's female collaborator on both these plays, Elisabeth Hauptmann.

19. Perhaps one can cite two musical examples, drawn from film, of how this has in fact been done, and affirmative compulsions similar to those operative in the musical with its ubiquitous inspirational "accentuate the positive" narrative been brought to their well-deserved and long overdue *ad absurdum* conclusion. In Michael Moore's *Roger and Me* (1989), we are offered a vista of the rustbelt desolation of Flint, Michigan to the mellifluous vapidity of the Beach Boys; just as in the climactic concluding scene of Monty Python's *Life of Brian* (1979), shortly before their ultimate demise, the anti-Roman Judaic insurgents on Golgotha still manage to join in a rousing chorus of "The Bright Side of Life", to musically dispel all negative aftertastes that might otherwise arise from the sight of their unfortunate crucifixion. Such moments, in their salutary impishness, at least begin to approach Brecht, Eisler, and Weill in theirs.

Brecht and Steffin: Love in a Time of Exile and War
Written by David Constantine
Poetry International Festival, Southbank Centre, 19 July 2014
Directed by Di Trevis

By Charlotte Ryland, University of Oxford

'Das Frühjahr kommt...'. As the lights fade and the image of a springtime meadow is projected onto the back wall, a lone figure intones the opening lines of Brecht's poem 'Spring' – first in German and then in full in English. '... And the earth gives birth to the new / Without heed.' So began Love in a Time of Exile and War, a staged reading of poems and letters by Brecht and his lover, collaborator and friend Margarete Steffin. Produced by Modern Poetry in Translation and Writing Brecht, the show was written by David Constantine, with the texts by Brecht and Steffin translated by Constantine and Tom Kuhn – many appearing for the very first time in English translation. The production turned the difficult task of staging poetry into a hugely atmospheric, moving and spirited mix of narrative, poetry and music.

Actors Mathew Wernham and Anna Procter portrayed Brecht and Steffin, and their readings from poems, letters and journal entries were framed by Constantine and Tom Kuhn's narration of the couple's story, from their first encounter in 1931 to Steffin's untimely death ten years later. As they read, photographs of the pair and of their era were projected behind the stage. The narrative and selection of poems and letters painted a picture of their growing interest in and respect for one another, and of the central importance of Steffin for Brecht's writing. Along with this – inextricable – is their great love for one another. The music that accompanied the readings, original piano compositions by Dominic Muldowney, brought out the shifts and contrasts within the dynamic of their relationship, from playful to passionate, subtle to strident. This combination of poetry, narrative, image and music captivated the audience, foregrounding the power of these poets' words, the intensity of their relationship, and the horror of the events that overtook them – war, exile and disease.

Although Steffin was one of Brecht's many lovers during his lifetime, her singularity is brought to the fore here, the narrators emphasising her strength and independence, and the fact that she could meet Brecht as an equal: 'Like none other of the women he loved and who loved him, she could answer him back, as a writer, in poems. Before long they were swapping sonnets.' Brecht's sonnets to Steffin are, as Constantine puts it, 'a very characteristic mixture of the highly literary, sexually blatant, aggressive, possessive, comradely, loving, cherishing, tender.' Those sonnets, along with Steffin's own, form the backbone of the reading.

This poetic interchange is portrayed vividly on stage, the actors standing close side by side, brief touches and glances speaking volumes. The simplicity of the onstage action allows the words to take centre-stage, just as they had for the couple themselves. Unable to express their closeness openly, Brecht and Steffin chose a secret formulation. The southern German greeting 'Grüβ Gott' meant for them 'I am touching you', and many of the letters read on stage end simply with 'g. g.':

When we were first divided into two
And one of our beds stood here and one stood there
We picked an inconspicuous word to bear
The sense we gave it: I am touching you.
(Brecht, 'The first sonnet')

While Brecht went into exile in 1933, Steffin's suffering was of a different nature – tuberculosis plagued her for years, and eventually took her life at the age of thirty-three. As the narrative enters this phase of disruption and separation, the poems exchanged take on a despairing tone, Steffin's in particular dominated by images of pain, loneliness and unrest:

Last night I dreamed that I was lying by you
And you said to me: Bring me where you are.
But still my chest was hurting as before
And my right arm was heavy, dull and slow.

For Brecht, Steffin's illness was inseparable from the political situation – TB is the disease of the oppressed, her struggle against it a political act – and this stance is exposed most prominently in Brecht's strident 'Call to a sick Communist', the actor's voice dipping from the declamatory to the vulnerable as he describes 'our great struggle, which / Has to be waged from a position of weakness / In utter misery'. The couple's commitment to the struggle for justice is represented in their shared reading of the 'Ballad of the Waterwheel', of which Steffin takes the final – hopeful – stanza:

Then the waterwheel will cease its turning
And the endless play begins to stall.
When at last the water gives up merely yearning
And instead begins to take control.

As political events overtake them, the narrative also shows the couple struggling with their own relationship – missing each other, mistrusting each other, sharing as much as possible despite their distance. Steffin's anxieties are evident in much of her correspondence and poetry, but Brecht's are palpable too. The narrators note that behind Brecht's sonnets to Steffin, whatever their tone, lie 'anxiety, diffidence and vulnerability' – qualities that Steffin had seen in Brecht at their first meeting. The enforced separation that the couple undergoes gives rise to a second shared image, to join the intimate 'g. g.'. Brecht begins to send Steffin miniature elephants of wood and ivory, 'so that she had a small herd of them, to be her guardians.' His '19th Sonnet' ('Encounter with the ivory guardians') is a wry take on the image, presenting the elephants turning on the poet, chasing him to the post office to write the letter he owes her. This poem exhibits the humour in Brecht and Steffin's correspondence, emerging time and again in their letters and poetry, lightening the anguish at the darkest times. The staging did well to bring out this humour, which reaches its peak at the end of the 'Eighth Sonnet' ('At night, by the hedge they hung the washing on…'), Brecht's list of some of their more adventurous sexual encounters. On stage, Steffin closes this list with the mischievous 'You forgot that time in the car'. Showing both their erotic closeness and their playful intimacy, this poem is accompanied by jaunty, tripping music that crescendos as Brecht's words reach their own climax.

Steffin's playful rejoinder here prevents her from appearing simply as the object of Brecht's affections, giving her some agency in their relationship and emphasising her strength of character. In their writing relationship, too, she is shown to hold her own. Hanns Eisler called Steffin Brecht's 'most valued collaborator', and this strand of their relationship is clearly laid out in the reading. Steffin's editing of Brecht's writing is presented as scrupulous – of Arturo Ui, Brecht noted in his journal, 'Grete calculated that 45 out of every 100 lines were faulty.' Brecht's respect for Steffin as a fellow writer is clear in the attention he pays to those remarks, and is articulated in his poem 'The good comrade M.S.':

I came to you as a teacher and as a teacher
I might have departed from you. But because I learned
I stayed.
[...]
Often
With a smile I cross out a line myself already guessing
What she would say about it.

The anxiety in the couple's poems to each other rises as the political situation worsens, their need for one another clearly growing as their freedom comes under threat. But it is Steffin's illness that finally draws their correspondence to a close. As her sickness worsens and Brecht's concern for her grows, the onstage dynamic shifts. Longer speeches are discarded in favour of short, stilted sentences, the to-and-fro reflecting their closeness and their fear of imminent separation. Steffin's death in June 1941 is narrated through Brecht's account of his last visits to her in the sanatorium, and her final telegrams to him. Days after being informed of her death, Brecht and his family sailed for the USA. The reading closes with his journal entries and poems as he struggles to come to terms with the great loss: 'It is as though my guide has been taken from me just as I enter the wilderness.' The poem 'Wreckage', for example, focuses on everything that is there, where Steffin is not:

There's the wooden box still for the notes when a play is being constructed
There are the Bavarian knives, the lectern is still there
There is the blackboard, there are the wooden masks
There's the little radio and the army trunk
There is the answer, but nobody asking the questions

Brecht's response to Steffin's death in the subsequent months remains desolate and admonitory: 'Death is good for nothing. / Not everything has to be for the best, no unfathomable wisdom resides in such matters. There can't be any consolation'; and, more concretely, 'Hitler killed her, and hunger. Hitler is still alive and hunger rules the world.' The narrative, too, closes with similar words, noting the rise of a far right ideology in twenty-first-century Europe, and the ongoing struggles against hunger, injustice, inequality and oppression. This is a fitting and necessary coda to this story of two lives, dedicated to serving others and a greater good, but it is also fitting that an account of their shared experience should end with a poem. The performance closes with Steffin and Brecht reading 'An die Nachgeborenen' together, in both German and English. And this call to all those born after – which includes, of course, the spellbound Southbank audience – gives way to a final line: 'You forgot

that time in the car.' Steffin gets the last word, then, one that paints a picture of her effervescent, playful self, meeting Brecht as an equal and enriching both of their lives.

The production was intensely moving, a hugely effective transfer from page to stage, with words and images that resonated long after its end. And in telling this story, a new, more forgiving image of Brecht emerged. Sasha Dugdale, editor of Modern Poetry in Translation, sees 'the shaping of a radical new view of Brecht' as the legacy of the event: 'We are accustomed to see Brecht as the hardened womaniser, but in this piece he came across as both vulnerable and loving, and if Steffin suffered then she suffered above all at the hands of an unjust and cruel world. Brecht and Steffin had no options, no escape routes, and they both worked to the same end: a better world for all those who came after.'

All quotations are from Bertolt Brecht and Margarete Steffin: *Love in a Time of Exile and War* by David Constantine and Tom Kuhn.

Many of the poems by Brecht in the production are published in Bertolt Brecht, *Love Poems*, translated by David Constantine and Tom Kuhn (W.W. Norton & Co, 2014) and in *Modern Poetry in Translation* (No. 2, 2014, see mptmagazine.com)

A film of Brecht and Steffin: Love in a Time of Exile and War is available on the Writing Brecht website: brecht.mml.ox.ac.uk/media

Photo: Brecht, Henry Peter Matthis, and Margarete Steffin. Akademie der Künste

Judith, An Epic Film Adaption Based on Bertolt Brecht's "The Jewish Wife". Adapted and directed by Farrokh Asadi. United States Premiere on February 24, 2014 at Smith Hall North Central College, Naperville, Illinois.

Reviewed by Keven McMahon and Gregory H. Wolf, NCC, Naperville

Farrokh Asadi's film, *Judith*, is an adaption of Brecht's "Die Jüdische Frau", which appeared in the collection *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches*. As Brecht's first openly anti-Nazi piece, the play centers on the problems encountered by a Jewish woman as she decides to leave her Aryan husband and how the two lie to themselves about the length of her "trip". Though Asadi's film, which had been unveiled at the 14th International Brecht Symposium in Brazil, in 2013, differs from the play in some respects, it retains the core message of the play. "My primary goal in producing this epic adaptation was to not simply duplicate the original play," said Asadi, "but to show a contemporary audience the social forces behind events that have essentially become commonplace in today's society."

Asadi begins the film with a montage of footage and images of war, terror, destruction, and desperation, from the Second World War through modern conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. This montage creates the universal context for the message in Judith. The viewer literally sees Judith's dilemma, but also what every Judith (the jederman) faces. By interweaving images of Nazi Germany with modern-day images, particularly those involving the United States, its wars, and problems, Asadi employs a Brechtain Verfremdungeffekt to demonstrate visually that the horrors of Nazism

were not an isolated affair; rather, they are an everyday manifestation and result when people refuse to question authority and injustice.

A noticeable difference between the play and the film is number of characters depicted in each. In Brecht's play, only Judith and her husband Fritz have speaking roles, while the lines of the other characters are inferred through the one-sided telephone conversations Judith makes as she packs her bags and awaits Fritz's arrival from work. Asadi, however, added speaking roles to the parts of Anna, Gertrude, the Doctor, Max, and Lotte. The characters expand the focus of the film. Viewers become acutely aware that Judith's friends and acquaintances recognize her dilemma, yet choose to do nothing.

Asadi alters the order in which Judith phones her various acquaintances (Anna, Gertrude, the Doctor, and finally Lotte). Judith's conversations become shorter as she becomes more honest and open with the recipient of the call—indicative of her own growing acceptance of what must be done. By rearranging the sequencing of the phone calls, Asadi forces to audience to consider Judith's motives for lying or misleading certain characters since we immediately know the true nature of her departure after the call to Anna. Despite changing the ordering, Asadi keeps dialogue between characters as it appears in the original.

Asadi organizes the film's scenes and transitions differently than in the original drama. Brecht wrote "Die Jüdische Frau" as a non-episodic, continuous production with few stage props and no scene changes in order to be simple and direct. In contrast, Judith was produced so that each interaction is one, separate scene transitioned by scene with a narrator and an animated sequence of Brecht's satirical fable, "If Sharks were Men." By having a clear separation of each interaction, Asadi allows his audience to reflect and compare the conversations with each other, thus allowing them to interpret the various relationships presented. These scenes, fairly simple in their design and structure, remind the audience that what they're seeing is not reality, but a production. "By breaking down the story as episodes of events," explained Asadi, "I hope to allow the audience to interpret these events through the collective behavior of the characters' relationships." To further the alienation effect and destroy the illusion of reality, the actors address the audience directly, as does a narrator between the scenes to indicate the changing mood and explain

the film. Like "Die Jüdische Frau", Asadi's Judith transcends its time and place to thematize the universality of oppression, suffering, and fear. Thus, the film forces us to consider modern issues and how we ourselves confront injustice.

Perhaps the most dynamic tenant of Brecht's work is his belief that art is transformative. Asadi combines his own creative elements with the original piece by Brecht to inspire a modern audience, most likely unfamiliar with the original piece, and calls the viewer to action and stop the cycle of injustice and oppression. Art has this tremendous ability to reach across the ages and inspire new generations. Although Brecht's piece was written more than 75 years earlier, the viewer can sense the universal themes in Asadi's filmic adaptation and apply them to his or her own life. "I see Epic Theater as a venue for methodical critical thinking (scientific) that can empower its audience with the knowledge that every individual can effect change on the world in which he/she lives," Asadi said in an interview with the authors. "In this production we tried to challenge the audience through the use of documentary clips, slides, music, intelligent humor, animation, and multiplicity of roles." The viewer of the film is likely familiar with the Holocaust and the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany, and so has a context in which to place the story of Asadi's adaptation. Viewers understand why Judith is leaving, but also see how casual many of the other characters react in the face of injustice. And it is here that the audience must also realize that the seemingly insignificant injustices they witness everyday have just as much potential to develop into a greater problem if no one takes action. We have a responsibility to one another. Art reminds us of this responsibility, and can often be the catalyst of change in an unjust and corrupted world.

"Brecht, Iran, the United States, and Epic Films: An Interview with Director and Filmmaker Farrokh Asadi." By Kevin McMahon and Gregory H. Wolf

You are originally from Iran. Explain how you were introduced to Brecht. How did his literature speak to young Iranians at the time? Was Brecht considered subversive in Iran at the time?

My experience with the Brechtian Theater started in 1968 with Bahram Beyzaie's *Four Boxes*, an Iranian participatory style play (Ruhowzi) similar to epic theater. However, the production of this play was banned by the Iranian government, both before and after the revolution. At the time, I was a student at Tehran University College of veterinary Medicine. I discovered Brecht as a revolutionary artist who aimed to expose the social truth. He tried to transform the performance stage into a social scientific laboratory, where the genealogy of events and actions could be treated down to their socioeconomic origins. I found a strong link between the humanistic objectives of science and Brecht's Epic Theater: to investigate and make sense of life while making it justified for us to live.

During both dictatorial governments, domestic and foreign literature with social and political criticism was accessible to Iranians. Amongst the most popular foreign writers were many German authors such as Goethe, Schiller, Kafka, Hesse, Böll, Grass, Frisch, Durrenmatt, and Zweig. Above all, of course, was Bertolt Brecht. Bertolt Brecht soon became more of a common literary and artistic icon, and his work became very important to young Iranian students, including myself. Brecht's humanistic and socialistic language as well his epic theory of communicating with the audience was the main reason for his popularity among Iranians. In 1959, the

first play of Bertolt Brecht was translated into Persian (*Drums in the Night*). Shortly after the 1960's, most of Brecht's plays, poems, and articles were already translated into Persian. At the same time period a number of his famous plays were staged including *A Man's a Man, He said yes/He said no, the Exception and the Rule, Round heads and pointed heads, life of Galileo, Mother Courage and her children, Mr. Puntila and his man Matti, the good woman of Szechwan, the Visions of Simon Machard, the Caucasian Chalk Circle, Antigone,* etc...

My country was exposed to intense foreign interventions in many periods of her history. As soon as the Nazis attacked the Soviets at the beginning of World War II, the USA, the UK and the Soviets joined forces to invade Iran. A hidden competition began between the Soviets and the West to gain control of Iran, and shortly, the Soviets refused to withdraw from Iran. Additionally, they attempted to divide Iran which ultimately leads to the Iran crisis of 1946. This is precisely the time I was born.

In 1953, Dr. Mosaddegh, an enormously popular and democratic Iranian prime minister, was overthrown in an UK-USA operated coup d'état. After the coup, the Mohammad Reza Shah became increasingly autocratic and arbitrary arrests and torture by his secret police, the SAVAK, was used to crush all forms of political activities. The Iranian Revolution began in January, 1978, and the Shah escaped one year later. Khomeini, an influential religious opposition, returned from exile and shortly tens of thousands were executed by the Islamic regime and all the political organizations were forcefully banned. Moreover, in 1980, the American supported Iraqi army invaded Iran triggering the Iran-Iraq war. This war continued until 1988, and resulted in an increasingly repressive and monocratic Islamic Republic government.

You have a long history as a theater director, founded The Epic Players in Chicago, and made your first film, Judith, What about Brecht's themes, motifs, and styles speak to you personally and inspire you to create your own art?

I am inspired by Brecht's work because it addresses some very profound questions: How can theatre be both instructive and entertaining? How can it be divorced from false spiritual traffic and turned from a home of illusions to a home of experiences? Today, we consume music, television and films that are distracted; we use smartphones and the Internet, and we have adapted to superficial but immediate interactive communication. What opportunities does Brechtian Theater play in our time? Brechtian Theater does not claim to provide answers to its viewers; rather it strives to create a space for shared thinking. It addresses those who do not wish to be given answers, but who seek to create their own questions and answers through the material with which they have been exposed to.

Brecht was known for use of "epic theater" in his plays as a means of provoking self-reflection and critique. You call your film Judith an epic adaption of Brecht's short piece "Die jüdische Frau." What is an epic film? What does that mean?

Brecht originally wrote the *Jewish Wife* in a non-epic and non-episodic dramatic format during his exile in Denmark (~1935). *Judith* is an epic-style adaptation of this play that has been filmed using the fundamental criteria or key features of Brechtian epic theater, with the hope of reinforcing active cognitive participation from the audience.

I chose the *Jewish Wife* because the concept of the play is relevant under today's political climate, and offers an examination of the regimes around the world that are oppressive, manipulative, dishonest, corrupt, and create fear and misery in their societies. The name Judith, who is also the protagonist of both the original play and the film's screenplay, was chosen to replace the original title of Jewish Wife in order to apply a more universal theme to the concept of the play that can

ultimately take place during anytime and anyplace in the world. I have also added a few characters in my film that do not physically appear in the play to produce more depth and interaction between the main characters. Ultimately, I believe this may create interplay of social forces from which the film's messages emerge. Nowadays the play's meaning is usually blurred by the fact that the actor plays to the audience's heart. The figures portrayed are imposed on the audience and are falsified in the process. Contrary to present custom they ought to be presented quite emotionlessly and objectively.

What were the artistic challenges making your film? How did the actors and actresses react?

Producing this epic style adaptation of "the Jewish Wife" was extremely challenging for me and my entire cast of inexperienced actors composed of my children, son in-law, daughter in-law, and grandchildren. Every member of my cast was involved both genuinely and intellectually during the process, yet struggled to "demonstrate" their characters instead of a more traditional approach of "becoming" them. Budgeting and finances presented major concerns since the entire production was funded solely by me, as has always been the case with my independent ventures with theater productions and specifically with the productions of the Epic Players of Chicago. Another critical challenge both for me and my cast members was how to accurately convey the play's message and more importantly, how to encourage the audience to ask such profound questions as "why is this happening," by simply showing them "what is happening."

You have argued that theater can be scientific. What does that mean? How is Judith like science?

Science is defined as a systematic study of anything that can be examined, tested, and verified. Today different branches of science investigate almost everything that can be observed or detected, and science as a whole shapes the way we understand the universe, our planet, ourselves, and other living things. Scientific theater is defined as a type of methodical critical thinking approach that can empower its audience with the knowledge that every individual can effect change on the world in which he/she lives. Brecht aimed to transform the stage to a social scientific laboratory, and in many ways, science and Brechtian theater have one common intention: to investigate and make sense of life. In

adapting "the Jewish Wife" into "Judith" we tried to follow a systematic process and to inspire our audience to adopt an attitude of inquiry, analytical, and critical approach to the story.

What makes Brecht's literature transformative and transcend time and space to speak to audiences today? How does your film challenge a contemporary audience?

The timelessness and relevance of the themes and socio-political context of "the Jewish Wife" cannot be dismissed. This is what ultimately connects audience members of all ages, race, and gender to the human experiences during troubled times. According to Brecht: "The one tribute we can pay the audience is to treat it as thoroughly intelligent." In this production we tried to challenge the audience through the use of documentary clips, slides, music, intelligent humor, animation, and multiplicity of roles. This production, we hope, creates an environment for the audience that is not only entertaining, but also prepares them to question the political and social issues that the film addresses. The theme of the film is universal and timeless and the characters are valuable, especially when performers allow the audience to realize that the performance is not specifically about the Jews and Nazi Germany, but about fascism in general. This is why we tried to alienate our audience through the "V" effect, thereby destroying the illusion of reality. Throughout the eleven brief episodes of this production, even though the settings may slightly change, the emphasis is consistently set on the characters' actions.

Charles Laughton / Bertolt Brecht / Hanns Eisler: "Dear Brecht...": Audio Documents of a Collaboration: Hollywood/New York 1944-1947

(2-CD + 116 page booklet, Bear Family Productions, 2014)

Review by Andy Spencer

As fascinating as this two-cd collection is at times, one caveat at the outset: From the packaging one may get the impression that what we have here are recordings by Laughton, Brecht, and Eisler, but that's only true in a qualified sense. The ordering of the material on the two cd's, not to mention the collection's very title, are pretty clear indications that it is the Brecht connection which is a major selling point here, but the playwright himself is nowhere to be heard and he's only really "present" for a third of the two-hour-plus running time. Nevertheless, give it a chance, for although Dear Brecht will be of primary interest to Laughton aficionados, there is certainly enough here to engage Brecht and Eisler enthusiasts.

Bear Family Productions has apparently been around since 1975, but its existence had passed me by until this summer, when I came across a review of *Spain in My Heart – Songs of the Spanish Civil War*, a seven-cd collection accompanied by a 300-page book, weighing in at a hefty 175 euros ($235 stateside). At just shy of 130 songs, this was clearly not aimed at the casual listener. Closer examination revealed that the accompanying book had been compiled by Jürgen Schebera, who, aside from having published on such luminaries as Kurt Weill, Hanns Eisler, and Ernst Busch, is no stranger to mammoth projects, having already teamed up with Bear Family in 2010 to release the 12-cd anthology *Das nichts bleibt, wie es war! 150 Jahre Arbeit-*

er- und Freiheitslieder, which clocks in at over 280 songs.

Given such completest tendencies, it should perhaps come as no surprise that the same pairing is behind the release of the collection to hand, which like its predecessors presents the fruits, one imagines, of hours spent in the archives – along with the Hanns and Steffy Eisler Foundation, the project is co-produced by the Archive Division of Berlin's Akademie der Künste. As such, there are treasures, and there is filler destined for a one-time listen by even the most devoted of Laughton fans.

The two cd's might conveniently be labelled Galileo and spoken word respectively, but for the sake of both brevity and clarity, it is perhaps prudent to take things chronologically, which means beginning with the second cd and Laughton's recordings for Decca Records of September, 1944, namely Dickens' *Mr. Pickwick's Christmas*, and two shorter texts from the Bible: The Oldest Christmas Story (Luke Ch. 2), and The Story of the Three Wise Men (Matthew Ch. 2). Their inclusion here is warranted by the fact that the incidental music is composed and directed by Eisler, whom Laughton had encountered at the house of Salke and Berthold Viertel in Santa Monica in March. Laughton enjoyed reading aloud to friends, Brecht and Eisler proved willing listeners, so when Eisler suggested to Laughton that he might compose some music for the September sessions, Laughton agreed. Contrary to the accompanying booklet, this is not the first time that all three recordings have appeared on cd: The Dickens tale was first released by Decca as a 78rpm, but proved so popular that it went through a number of re-releases on lp, often together with a 1941 production of *A Christmas Carol*, starring Ronald

Colman as Scrooge, a coupling which Deutsche Grammophon maintained for a 2005 cd release. The two Biblical tales were also released first on shellac, with The Oldest Christmas Story reappearing on the 1994 Nimbus cd *Prima Voce: Spirit of Christmas Past 1908-1944*. The virtue of "Dear Brecht..." is that it collects Eisler's collaborations with Laughton into one place and thus invites a consideration of them in the context of the programmatic work he did on Jörg Ivens *Fourteen Ways of Describing the Rain* in 1941 and the scoring that he was doing in Hollywood at the time on such films as Clifford Odets' *None But the Lonely Heart*, which premiered a short month after these recordings were made.

Following on the heels of all this Christmas cheer, the second component of the cd proves a much harder slog. The success of Laughton's recordings for Decca resulted in the record label contracting the actor to follow up with a further dip into the Bible, this time into Genesis. Brecht suggested to Laughton that he might add greater nuance to his reading voice by rehearsing the text in a number of different "voices", and that's what we now get: eight different readings of the same text. There is the standard reading, the rhythmic reading, readings in Yorkshire and Cockney accents, a reading by a soldier "in the foxhole" etc. Over 45 minutes in total. Schebera tells us that these private recordings from May, 1945, were made "virtually under Brecht's supervision", but that still doesn't make them any the more entertaining. Even Laughton gives up the ghost at one point, breaking off the reading in the voice of a butler with a curt "this is no good, cut it". Perhaps these different takes could serve a pedagogical purpose for aspiring actors, I'm just not sure that I'll ever be playing them again.

It's the *Galileo* cd which contains the real rarities. The story of the collaboration on the play between Brecht and Laughton has been well documented, most famously by Brecht himself in "Building up a Part: Laughton's Galilei", from the *Galileo Modellbuch*, extracts from which are included in the accompanying booklet. Brecht's essay refers, however, strictly to the preparations for, and seventeen performances of, the Hollywood production of the play in July and August 1947. That production is represented here by almost 15 minutes of Eisler rehearsing the between-scene music and the street-singer's ballad in July 1947. The production would then travel to New York for six performances in December at the Maxine Elliott Theatre on 39th Street. By this time, however, Brecht was no longer in the US, having left directly following his enforced appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee on October 30.

Thus it was that during the New York run of the play Laughton betook himself off to a recording studio in Carnegie Hall with Ruth Berlau and Nick Persoff, who played Andrea in the east coast production. Brecht had longed for the opportunity to stage a Broadway production, and now that it was happening, he was unable to attend, so Laughton recorded a 45-minute report over several 78rpm shellac sides and mailed them off to the Zürich Schauspielhaus. His main aim, he states at the outset, is to inform Brecht of "one or two of the things which we have altered", but he can't refrain from prefacing his remarks with the prediction that "it will not take a very long time before we have a very big smash hit on our hands". Laughton is basing this on the reaction of the audience of the night before, not on the critical reception, which had been "bad". At the end of the recording Laughton sends his (and Elsa's) best wishes to Brecht, in the hope that they will be working together again soon, and that *Galileo* will prove a great success. As we now know, neither came to pass.

Nevertheless, as a snapshot of a moment in time, when the possibilities did appear open, Laughton's report will intrigue listeners familiar with the play for it does,

at root, document his struggles with the production and it will be up to the listener to decide whether the changes which he introduced in Brecht's absence helped or hindered. One thing which does become clear, is that although Brecht is several thousand miles away, Laughton remains apprehensive as to the playwright's reaction to the changes, peppering his commentary with professions of fidelity: "We haven't done anything without very gravely considering whether you might approve or not." Further illuminating light is shed on the relationship between the two men when Laughton is careful to remind Brecht that what he is hearing is not the actual stage-production, a seemingly obvious point to make, "But I thought if you heard the record before I said this you might lose your temper and shout."

In a wonderful twist, this works to our advantage as in order to win Brecht over to the changes introduced into the latter stages of the play, Laughton feels compelled to act out (as far as is possible in a recording booth!) Galileo's final meeting with Andrea, and these eleven-plus minutes with Persoff are the true highlight of the tapes. The whole report is evidence for Laughton's seriousness of intent, for his insight into the play, and to his understanding of the American audience, but here in particular we actually hear the actor rising to the challenge of the material, and that alone is worth the price of admission.

The Threepenny Opera
Translation: Mark Blitzstein
Direction: Scott Miller
Ensemble: New Line Theater
St. Louis
Theater: Washington University South Campus Theatre

Reviewed by Paula Hanssen: June 4, 2015

Scott Miller's director's notes in the program include Brecht's take on capitalism: "...he's still talking to us. He's telling us that there is a price to pay for amoral, unfettered capitalism, for wild income inequality, and for an apathetic electorate. Brecht and Elizabeth Warren." He and his company use staging, costumes and wonderfully effective blocking to bring Brecht's 1928 musical adaptation of John Gay's, *The Beggar's Opera*, into contemporary 2015. New Line Theatre presents this dark and darker, perhaps darkest musical, a clever, as well as hilariously 'amoral' look at his / our society. Even though the Marc Blitzstein translation has been criticized for its lack of intensity, this show maintains all of its 'bite' and its black-hearted charms.

Scott Miller is no freshman in the theater world. He founded 'New Line Theatre' in 1991 and has written the book, music, and lyrics for nine musicals, and, his play *Head Games* has been produced in St. Louis, Los Angeles, London, and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. His 2006 musical *Johnny Appleweed* was nominated for four Kevin Kline Awards.

This ironic morality tale with its sarcastic, brutal paradoxes opened in London as *The Beggar's Opera* in 1728 as a sardonic look at John Gay's world, presented as one of the most classic venues ever put on stage, as an opera. Elisabeth Hauptmann happened to read about the London production in 1927 and recog-

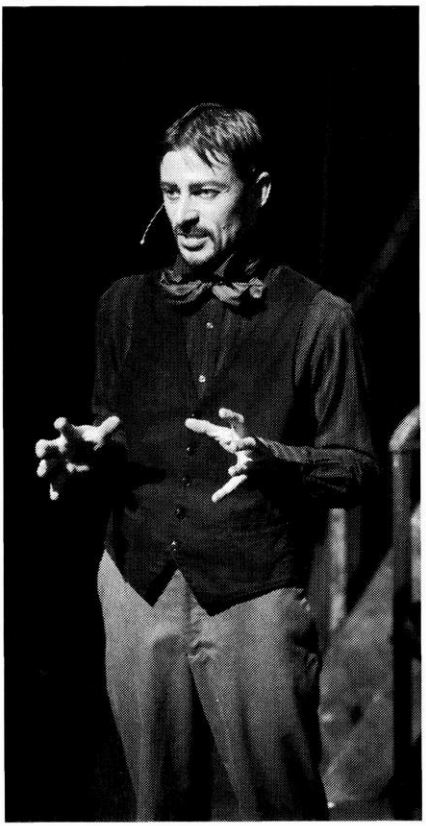
nized it as a play that Brecht would want to adapt. Brecht, Elisabeth Hauptmann and Kurt Weill adapted the play to 19th century London, and called it the *Threepenny Opera* for the Berlin premiere in August, 1928. It ran for months, until the National Socialist government cancelled it. There were two thousand American performances off-Broadway in the 1950's – and, it has been translated into eighteen languages and performed more than 10,000 times.

The New Line Theatre production was both impressive and complex. The story line: the murderous and womanizing London criminal Capt. 'Mac'heath – Mac, sung well by Todd Schaefer - avoids arrest from the chief of police, "Tiger Brown," because he is also Brown's chum from their days as soldiers in the India campaigns. Mac juggles the affections of Polly, his common-law wife and daughter of the Beggar King, Mr. Peacham, and the affections of Lucy Brown, daughter of Tiger, not to mention the flirtation with prostitute Jenny Diver. As Mr. Peachum, Zachary Allen Farmer is one of the darkest characters and played with exquisite timing; his energy kept the story moving, aided well by Mrs. Peacham's reactions; she was played by Sarah Porter, vocally superb for the role. Cherlyn Alvarez is an excellent Polly, especially in "Pirate Jenny," the white dress suggesting purity, while she dresses down the 'gang', proving her ability to run Mac's 'business.' The audience was especially responsive to the songs – of course for "Mac the Knife," which was no remake of Bobby Darin's version. It was loud, sexy and raucous.

The supporting cast members were engaged, dynamic and presented the story with epic theater touches, like the narration they provided at the beginning of each scene, taken from scene titles provided by Blitzstein. The on-stage band of trombone, percussion, guitar, banjo, trumpet and reeds played from behind a set 'window'; the band could have been less hidden to engage the audience even more with the music. The set was jaunty, unstable-looking, perfect for Mac's sentiment and for the leagues of poor characters.

The Riverfront Times calls New Line "St. Louis' premier company when it comes to raw-nerve theatrics," and the company has entries in the *Cambridge Guide to the American Theatre* and *Theatre World*. Paul Friswold at *Riverfront Times* (June 4, 2015) recently wrote:

"For the next three weeks you have a choice in how you stay informed about current events: You can either suffer through another local newscast as the tone whiplashes between banal levity and grim images of oppression, crime and human misery — or you can soak up the horrible truth at New Line Theatre's near-perfect production of *The Threepenny Opera*."



Polly (Cherlynn Alvarez) sings "Pirate Jenny" to Crookfinger Jake (Kent Coffel, in New Line Theatre's *Threepenny Opera*. Preceding Page: Todd Schaefer as Macheath. Photos by Jill Ritter Lindberg

CIBS

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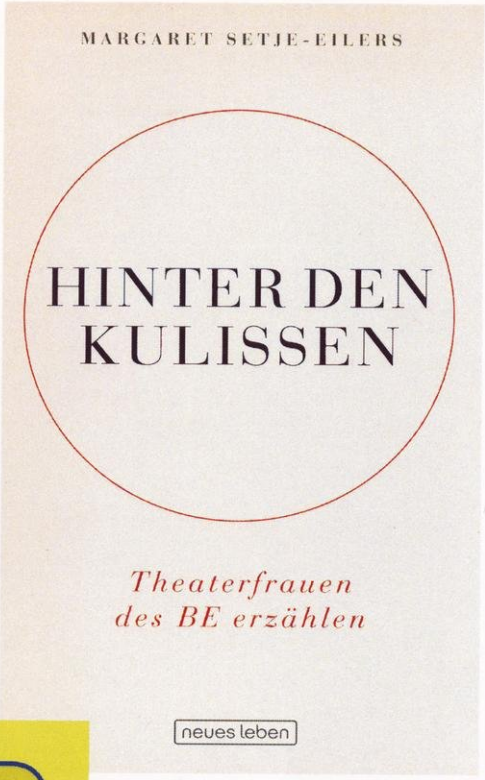

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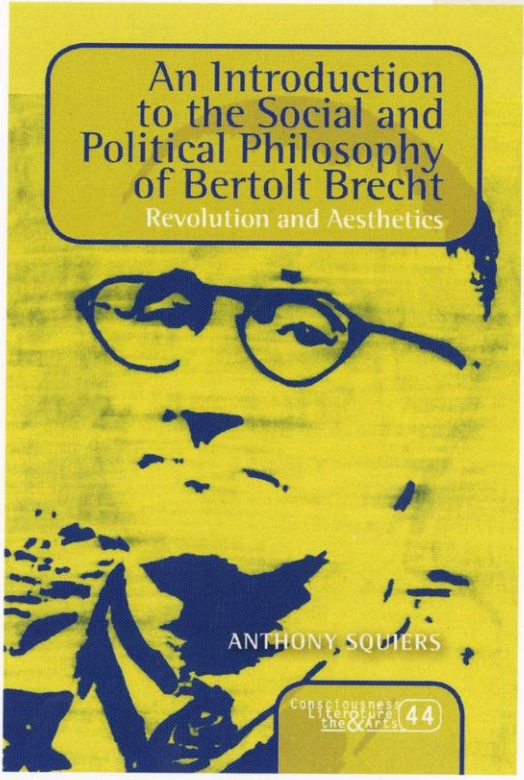

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