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COMMUNICATIONS

from the International Brecht Society



VOLKSBUHNE, Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin, 30 May 2001

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June 2001

INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY *COMMUNICATIONS*

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All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor. *Communications* welcomes manuscripts relating to all facets of Brecht's work. Manuscripts should conform to the *MLA Style Manual* and should not exceed 7,500 words. You are encouraged to include with your manuscript the text in Word Perfect or Microsoft Word on IBM formatted 3½ diskettes or CD.

The Editor wishes to thank Professor Carl Weber, Drama Department, Stanford University, for his continued support.

See the inside back cover for information on subscriptions and membership. Membership in the IBS includes subscriptions to both *Communications*, and *The Brecht Yearbook*. The Managing Editor of *The Brecht Yearbook* is Stephan Brockmann, Associate Professor of German, Department of Modern Languages, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburg, PA 15213.

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For International Brecht Society news, information, and to exchange ideas, visit our Home Page
<http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/german/brecht/>

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EDITOR'S NOTE

In 2000-2001, very few — mostly small— theatres in the US staged plays by Brecht: *The Brecht File*, *Galileo*, *In the Jungle of the Cities*, *Mahagonny*, *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, and *Threepenny Opera*, reviewed in this issue of *Communications*. German theatres did not include much Brecht either. For this reason, the REVIEW section is slim by comparison to previous years. The most talked-about production in Germany, this past season, was *Baal* at the Volksbühne in Berlin. It got mixed reviews. Most critics echoed the feelings of those who sat through this very abstract and very noisy show (see 20). While this futuristic *Baal* at the Volksbühne may have alienated audiences, other plans of staging Brecht for the twentyfirst century are being discussed in Berlin. With the financial help of media mogul Peter Schwenkhof, Florian Havemann plans on turning *Threepenny Opera* into a *Tenmillion Opera Spectacle* (P. 11).

Contributions in the ARTICLE section examine a variety of Brecht-related issues. **Antje Krüger** argues that Brecht's techniques of "montage" and "complex seeing" anticipate the principle of intertextuality used by modernists and postmodernists. **Nels Jeff Rogers** focuses on commonalities and differences between Brecht and Adorno and proposes that Adorno's critique provides a necessary corrective to Brecht. **Meredith A. Heiser-Duron** closely examines Brecht's behavior and tactics in the summer of 1953, in the context of the cultural, political, and economic context of the East German state, and **Vera Stegmann** explains how Brecht influenced Pablo Neruda, who employed practices of the epic theatre in *Glory and Death of Joaquin Murieta*, written in 1967. Likewise the Turkish **Theatre Against the Wall Collective** acknowledges being influenced by Brecht, as does **Tom Hayden**, author of *Doors in the House Burned Down*. Last but not least, in **Martin Jankowski's** poetic narrative "bertolt" Brecht becomes the proverbial Brechtian protagonist.

As always, **Helgrid Streidt** from the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv compiled the bibliography as a service to our readers. The sheer number of recent publications proves Brecht to be an inexhaustible source for academic debate. IBS will do its share to further the discourse on Brecht in the new millennium.

I would like to thank all those who have helped with this edition of *Communications*, most notably **Britta Kallin**, the new associate editor, **Siegfried Mews** and **Marc Silberman**, who has always been generous with advice and help. Contributors will need to send their submissions on hard copy and IBM-formatted diskettes.

Gudrun Tabbert-Jones, Santa Clara University

(FORMER) PRESIDENT'S REPORT

After some soul searching, I concluded in the fall of last year that it would be in the best interest of the IBS if I exempted myself from being considered a candidate for the position of President. After all, personnel changes hold the promise for new endeavors and initiatives as well as continued growth of the IBS. Little did I realize when I decided not to run for reelection that what amounts to a wholesale changing of the guard was about to take place. We are fortunate indeed that we are able to retain the valued services of Gudrun Tabbert-Jones, Editor of *Communications*, and David W. Robinson, Secretary/Treasurer, who will continue to lend their expert support to the IBS; however, Vice President Michael Morley and the Managing Editor of the *Brecht Yearbook*, Maarten van Dijk (apart from myself), will retire from their posts.

The IBS owes a special debt of gratitude to Maarten van Dijk who, because of a debilitating illness, is no longer able to fulfill the demanding tasks that managing and editing the highly regarded and well-established *Yearbook*, the twenty-fifth volume of which was published last year, require. Maarten's work contributed to a considerable degree to maintaining the scholarly standards of one of the most significant scholarly publications in the area of Brecht research. We wish both Maarten and Michael well and hope that they will continue to be supportive of our common enterprise.

We shall miss our colleagues who have so dedicatedly served our association; at the same time, I am pleased to announce the names of the colleagues who have been elected officers. The new President is Alexander Stephan of Ohio State University, a well-known, widely published scholar and an expert in exile literature. Erdmut Wizisla, director of the Brecht Archives in Berlin, is no stranger to those engaged in archival research. He is the newly elected Vice President. Stephen Brockmann of Carnegie Mellon University specializes in post-World War II German Studies; he will assume the editorship of the *Yearbook*. Congratulations are in order; I am sure that the new officers will continue the work of their predecessors with both dedication and circumspection.

The IBS appears to be in sound health. On the basis of a fairly detailed analysis that was submitted to the MLA, our allied organization status was extended for the next seven years--a vital, indispensable prerequisite for both continuing and facilitating our work via annual meetings within the framework of a larger professional organization. Inasmuch as the IBS does not exclusively rely on the meetings held in conjunction with the MLA, one of the challenges the new (and old) officers are facing will be the organization of the next Brecht symposium, presumably to be held in Berlin in 2003. There is no reason to doubt that they will be equal to the task and repeat or exceed the success of the symposia in Augsburg (1995) and at the University of San Diego in La Jolla (1998).

Siegfried Mews, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

TREASURER'S REPORT

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President	Alexander Stephan	40
Vice President	Erdmut Wizisla	41
Secretary/Treasurer	David Robinson	41
Editor: <i>Communications</i>	Gudrun Tabbert-Jones	40
	Vera Stegmann	1

MEMBERSHIP DISTRIBUTION BY YEAR

Year	Paying individuals.	Paying institutions.	Complimentary	Total
2000	114	92	19	225
1999	123	88	19*	230
1998	155	87	19*	261
1997	104	88	19*	211

*Estimate

MEMBERSHIP DISTRIBUTION BY NATIONALITY (Institutional Members in Parentheses)

Germany 27 (16)	Finland 1 (1)	Norway 1 (0)
Australia 6 (3)	France 1 (0)	Peru 1 (0)
Brazil 3 (2)	Hong Kong 1 (0)	South Africa 1 (0)
Canada 7 (4)	Israel 2 (1)	Sweden 2 (0)
Colombia 1 (0)	Italy 1 (0)	Switzerland 1 (0)
Crete /Greece 1 (0)	Japan 4 (0)	UK 9 (1)
Denmark 1 (0)	Netherlands 1 (1)	USA 44 (62)

FINANCIAL REPORT

This year's financial report makes use of a new reporting period: the previous calendar year. Since *Communications* is now published only once a year, an annual financial report can follow the practice of our primary bank (Sea Island Bank of Stateboro, Georgia), which provides an end-of-year balance. January 1 is a slack time in IBS financial transactions, and so a good time to establish as a reference point. As a result of the transaction to the new procedure, this report overlaps in part with the report in *Communications* 29: 1 -2. Note: the holding account for credit card payments will henceforth be silently included as part of DOLLAR SAVING. The account will simply be emptied at the end of the year.

FINANCES FOR CALENDER YEAR 2000.

DOLLAR CHECKING

Opening Balance	\$ 725.36
Receipts	\$ 14,607.65
Disbursements	\$ 14,226.37
Closing Balance	\$ 1,106.64

DM CHECKING

Opening Balance	DM 2,289,19
Receipts	DM 1,445,00
Disbursements	DM 2,764,91
Closing Balance	DM 969,28

DOLLAR SAVINGS

Opening Balance	\$ 21,042.78
Receipts	\$ 5,325.15
Disbursements	\$ 10,032.00

TOTAL ASSETS ON December 31, 2000:

	\$ 17,442.57
	DM 969,28
Closing Balance	\$ 16,335.93

MINUTES — IBS BUSINESS MEETING AT THE MLA, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Dec. 28, 2000

PRESENT: Marc Silberman (chair), David Robinson, Gudrun Tabbert-Jones, Britta Kallin, Dorothee Ostmeier, Astrid Oesmann, Bill Rasch, Vera Stegmann, Roy Jones

I. REPORTS

David Robinson reported that the IBS treasury currently holds almost \$18,500. A message from Siegfried Mews was read indicating that he will not be running for an IBS office in the future. Gudrun Tabbert-Jones reported that the next *Communications* will be appearing in late summer; she also introduced her new associate editor, Britta Kallin, assistant professor at Georgia Tech (Atlanta, GA). Possibilities were discussed of publishing *Communications* on-line or in a CD-ROM format. David Robinson will include a survey about members' interest in alternate media and explore posting the summer 2000 issue on the IBS web site as an initial experiment. A message was read from Maarten van Dijk concerning the plans for volume 26 of the *Brecht Yearbook*; the editorial board is still reading manuscript submissions at this time.

II. ELECTIONS

Marc Silberman reported that Alexander Stephan (The Ohio State University) has been nominated for the position of IBS president and that Erdmut Wizisla (Director, Bertolt-Brecht-Archive) is possibly willing to be nominated for the position of vice president (Silberman will be meeting with him in Berlin to discuss the nomination in early January). Both Robinson and Tabbert-Jones will run for an additional two-year term in their respective offices. David Robinson will send out the election ballot to all individual members with the membership renewal notices in Spring 2001, and Robinson and Tabbert-Jones will tally the results, to be published in the summer issue of *Communications*.

III. FUTURE IBS SESSIONS

Ralf Remshardt, the IBS liaison to the Association of Theatre in Higher Education has organized a session on "Brecht and Technology" for the annual conference to be held in August 2001 in Chicago. Silberman reported on the nomination of John Willett as Honorary Member of the MLA, to be voted upon by the organization's members in a general spring ballot; the success of the nomination is virtually guaranteed. Willett told Silberman that he would be interested in coming to the MLA conference in December 2001, to be held in New Orleans, barring any unforeseen problems. It was decided to have one session devoted to Willett's life work under the title: "John Willett: Politics, Theater, Criticism." The idea is to appeal to an audience that knows Willett's work on Weimar Germany as well as on Brecht without ignoring the important connection he has always sought to maintain with political engagement. Tom Kuhn (Oxford University) and Antony Tatlow (Trinity College, Dublin) have indicated their interest in participating (Silberman will coordinate the requests for waiver of membership for them by the 1 April deadline). The session will be planned "flexibly" so that Willett can either give a keynote address followed by responses or that short comments can be made by a panel to which Willett can respond. Silberman will apply to the MLA for special funds set aside for speakers (deadline April 15) that will help cover

travel and hotel (the IBS treasury can help cover some of the costs not covered by the MLA). There is no chair yet appointed for the session. The second session will be organized and chaired by Dorothee Ostmeier (University of Washington, Seattle) on “Brecht as Filmmaker and Filmscript Writer.”

IV. IBS SYMPOSIUM

Silberman reported on initial discussions about the 11th IBS symposium to be held probably in summer 2003, including the suggestion to develop a cooperative framework with the Walter Benjamin Gesellschaft and the Ernst Bloch Gesellschaft for a possible Berlin conference. A possible focus would be the *Mahagonny* text(s) on the occasion of its 75th anniversary, a focus that could be expanded to include music, collective production, images of America, Weimar topics, etc. No person has yet been identified in Berlin who is willing to be responsible for the on-site organization.

V OTHER BUSINESS

It was suggested that the IBS explore possibilities of becoming an affiliate of the German Studies Association, possibly by proposing an IBS session first for the next annual conference (in Washington DC, deadline Feb. 15, 2001) and if it is a success following through a formal proposal to the GSA Executive Board.

Minutes by Marc Silberman

ANNOUNCEMENT: 11TH SYMPOSIUM (June 2003)

August 7, 2001: Twice this summer a group of IBS members and friends met in Berlin for preliminary discussions about the next international symposium sponsored by the IBS. At this early stage the tentative plan is to organize the symposium around the 75th anniversary of the Brecht-Weill *Mahagonny* musical in late June 2003, in Berlin. With the rich Brecht-Weill text as a point of departure, this will be an opportunity to explore in an interdisciplinary fashion issues such as utopia/dystopia, consumerism and capitalism, networking and urbanity, pleasure and globalization.

A small organizing committee has been constituted to make arrangements, seek funding, and produce a call for papers; committee members are Alexander Honold (Humboldt Universität, Berlin), Klaus Siebenhaar (Hanns Eisler Musikhochschule, Berlin), Marc Silberman (University of Wisconsin, Madison), Florian Vassen (Universität, Hannover). Contact has also been established with 3 partner societies who will be cooperating in the event: Walter Benjamin-Gesellschaft (Karlsruhe), Deutsche Kurt Weill-Gesellschaft (Dessau), and Ernst Bloch-Gesellschaft (Ludwigshafen).

Look forward for further news in the next issue of *Communications* or check the IBS website for updates!

Marc Silberman, University of Wisconsin, Madison

IN BRIEF

AUS DEM BERTOLT-BRECHT-
ARCHIV

In den letzten Jahren gab es im Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv eine Reihe personeller und struktureller Veränderungen. Bereits 1998 ging Dr. Günter Gläser in den Ruhestand, Mitarbeiter des Archivs über dreieinhalb Jahrzehnte, Herausgeber der Brief-Ausgaben und der Fragmente-Bände der *Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*. Im April 2000 verließ uns Karin Pfothner, die ebenfalls das Pensionsalter erreicht hatte. Ende 2000 wechselte Dr. Heidrun Loeper in die Archivabteilung Darstellende Kunst, die wie das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv zur Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste gehört. Lediglich die Stelle von Frau Pfothner konnte durch eine Umbesetzung innerhalb der Archivstiftung wieder besetzt werden: Seit April 2000 arbeitet Dr. Rolf Harder im Handschriftenbereich des Archivs. Er verfügt über langjährige Erfahrungen in der Archivabteilung Literatur und ist durch Publikationen und Editionen, vor allem zu Johannes R. Becher, bekanntgeworden.

Nach den erfolgreichen Ausstellungen zu den 100. Geburtstagen von Brecht und Helene Weigel, die das Archiv erarbeitet hat, ist die dringendste Aufgabe der Abschluß des *Kommentierenden Verzeichnisses* von Brechts Nachlaßbibliothek (Suhrkamp Verlag). Innerhalb des laufenden Jahres beginnen wir, die Neuzugänge der Bibliothek über den elektronischen Gesamtkatalog der Bibliothek der Archivstiftung zu erschließen. Langfristige Projekte sind die Digitalisierung und elektronische Verzeichnisse der Handschriften sowie die konservative Sicherung von Handschriften, Fotografien und Filmen. Benutzung und die Auskunftsleistung bewegen sich auf einem kontinuierlich hohen Niveau; zahlreiche Recherchen beziehen sich zur Zeit auf die Neuausgabe des *Brecht-Handbuchs*. Die Benutzung erfolgt nach Vereinbarung. Wir bitten um Voranmeldung, die in der Regel nicht später als zwei Wochen vor dem geplanten Termin erfolgen sollte.

Dr. Erdmut Wizisla—Archivleiter
ewizisla@adk.de

GRUSS AUS BERLIN

Berlin, Januar, 2001: Zum Jahres- oder Jahrhundert-Ende ein konstruktiver Gruß aus Berlin -- in dem ich nochmals unsere brainstormings zu einer Tagung des IBS in 2001/2002 aufnehme und etwas weiterspinne. Wir hatten die *Mahagonny*-Thematik länger reflektiert/in eine engere Wahl gezogen. Nun ist in dieser Spielzeit an der Hamburgischen Staatsoper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* mit viel Aufsehen aufgeführt worden: Regie: Peter Konwitschny, Musikalische Leitung: Ingo Metzmacher. In der nächsten Spielzeit (2001/2002) wird das Stück wieder aufgenommen.

Das Stück entstand zwischen 1927 - 1929. Die Uraufführung war 1930, das Songspiel wurde 1927 uraufgeführt -- es wäre im Jahre 2002 ein 'Jubiläum' (75 Jahre) zu begehen.

Auf die *Mahagonny*-Idee kam ich nach dem Telefonat mit Jan Robert Bloch, der auf seines Vaters große Zuneigung zu diesem Stück/zu den Songs usw. hingewiesen hatte. Auch Adorno wäre zu nennen: alle beide haben einige ihrer Auffassungen von künstlerischer Produktion an diesem Stück exemplifiziert. Und die Weill-Stücke (allg.) werden immer mehr beachtet (EU & USA).

Ferner bietet das Sujet eine Reihe von Thematiken an: Gewissermaßen ein Exemplum, das mit kultur-wissenschaftlicher Phantasie entfaltet werden könnte: Literatur, Musik, Erlebnisgesellschaft, Kulturindustrie, Risikogesellschaft, gender studies, Kolonialismus, the American way of life etc. Verschiedene Wissenschaften/Disziplinen könnten sich um das Thema scharen (auch z.B. Stadtsoziologie, Kriminologie; um uns fernerstehende zu nennen). [.....] Ich denke, das könnte auch anzeigen, daß Brecht (Weill) inmitten stehen! - Brecht/Weill: *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. A Matter for Cultural Studies, Performative Studies, Social Studies, Musical Studies etc.

Passage from a letter written by Gerd Koch to Siegfried Mews, January 2001.

DIE ZEHNMILLIONENOPER
Wie das Berliner Schiller-Theater mit der
teuersten Brecht-Produktion aller Zeiten
wiederbelebt werden soll

Frederik Hanssen

Dass da noch niemand drauf gekommen ist! Natürlich, das Musical für die Hauptstadt ist die *Dreigroschenoper*! Gewitzte Bettler, die sich im Dollardunst der blattgoldenen Zwanziger eingerichtet haben. Keinen Pfennig in der Tasche, aber eine große Klappe. Die Verhältnisse, die sind halt so. Was soll der Berliner mit Import-Ware aus den USA, mit *Elisabeth*, *Titanic* oder gar dem *Aida*-Musical? Zu dieser Stadt passen auch keine braven Soldaten -- wir wollen elegante Messerträger! Außerdem ist die *Dreigroschenoper* nicht nur das erste deutsche Musical überhaupt, sondern auch 73 Jahre nach der Uraufführung immer noch das allerbeste. Warum hat keiner der Unterhaltungsmultis daran bisher gedacht?

Wahrscheinlich, weil sie ahnten, dass die Brecht-Erben einem profitorientierten Traumfabrikanten niemals für mehrere Jahre die Rechte an der *Dreigroschenoper* herausrücken würden. Da muss schon einer wie Florian Havemann kommen, um zwischen Peter Schwenkow, dem Chef der Deutschen Entertainment AG und Besitzer der Stella-Hits vom *Phantom* bis zum *Glöckner*, und der Erbgemeinschaft des großen B. B. zu vermitteln. Havemann ist Elektriker, Maler, Autor, Regisseur, Musiker, Schauspieler und einer der drei Laien-Verfassungsrichter im Land Brandenburg. Und er ist der Sohn des obersten Staatsfeindes der DDR, Robert Havemann. Er kennt den Brecht-Clan seit Kindesbeinen und ist mit jeder Menge weiterer Künstler befreundet, die das kommerzielle *Dreigroschenoper*-Projekt zur Gelddruckmaschine machen könnten. Für die Show, die -- mindestens zwei Jahre lang, vielleicht auch vier -- im Berliner Schiller-Theater laufen soll, will Havemann zwei gleichrangige Starbesetzungen zusammentrommeln: Den Mackie Messer sollen abwechselnd Klaus Maria Brandauer und Martin Wuttke spielen, das Ehepaar Peachum will er mit Angelica Domröse und Hilmar Thate, wahlweise mit Hanna Schygulla und Ekkehard Schall besetzen. Als Polly wünscht er sich Nina Hagen respektive Meret Becker. Für eine

solche Megashow würde Peter Schwenkow zehn Millionen Mark bereitstellen.

Geboren wurde die Idee vor eineinhalb Jahren, als Havemann Friedrich Kurz kennen lernte, den Mann, der 1986 mit *Cats* den deutschen Musical-Boom auslöste. Weil Kurz das Projekt aber lediglich wie jedes x-beliebige andere Vorhaben betrieb, lief Havemann im Mai zu Kurz' Erzrivalen Schwenkow über. Schwenkow griff zu, boxte den Plan in seinem Aufsichtsrat durch, obwohl der zunächst nur eine Million Mark für vier Monate Laufzeit bewilligen wollte. Jetzt muss die Stella nur noch ihre favorisierte Spielstätte bekommen, nämlich das Schiller-Theater. Ende des Monats läuft die Bewerbungsfrist um die 1993 geschlossene Bühne aus. Wenn sich der Senat schnell entscheidet, könnte im September 2002 die Premiere über die Bühne gehen.

Inszenieren will Florian Havemann die *Dreigroschenoper* nicht selbst. Allerdings denkt er auch nicht an einen der üblichen Jetset-Regisseure: "Die Schauspieler sollen die Stars der Show sein." Für den Mackie Messer Song hat er auch schon eine Idee: Der Hit des Abends, die erste Nummer des Stückes, soll abwechselnd von Showgrößen aus aller Welt vorgetragen werden, von special guests, die mit ihrem Kurzauftritt wie in den Dauer-TV-Serien immer wieder die Leute locken. Man stelle sich das vor: Vor ihrem Auftritt in der Max-Schmeling-Halle singt Madonna noch schnell im Schiller-Theater den Mackie-Messer-Song! Angesichts der Tatsache, dass Havemanns Partner Schwenkow inzwischen der größte Unterhaltungsverkäufer Europas ist, gar keine so abwegige Idee. Warum ist da bloß vorher keiner drauf gekommen?

Tagesspiegel, 28 Juni 2001

FRANKREICH FEIERT BRECHT ALS ERZIEHER EUROPAS

Sabine Glaubitz

Im Pariser Theater Odeon zeigt man das ungebändigte Frühwerk *Baal Brecht, hier und jetzt* heißt eine Aufführung im Chaillot. Der bekannte Theatermann Laurent Terzieff führt die Revue *Bertolt Brecht, der Dichter* auf, und unlängst ist der deutsche Dichter und Dramatiker in die renommierte "Pleiade"-Reihe des Verlags Gallimard als moderner Klassiker aufgenommen worden. Bertolt Brecht steht damit in Frankreich jetzt im selben Rang wie Molière, Voltaire und Camus.

"Als vor mehr als zehn Jahren die Mauer fiel, meinte die Tageszeitung *Libération*, das Interesse an Brecht müsse nun nachlassen. Im Gegenteil, Brecht ist heute aktueller und beliebter denn je," sagt Jean-Marie Valentin, Herausgeber der Brecht-Ausgabe in der "Pleiade"-Bibliothek. Die auf vier Bände angelegte Edition beginnt mit dem schwierigsten Teil, den *Schriften über das Theater*. "Wir haben mit dem komplizierteren Band begonnen, denn Brechts Theorie ist weniger zugänglich als seine Stücke und Gedichte."

Der mehr als 1500 Seiten umfassende Band mit Texten zum Theater ist in 13 Kapiteln untergliedert. "Die *Pleiade*-Ausgabe umfasst auch bisher in Frankreich unveröffentlichte Brecht-Texte, die in der *Großen Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* enthalten sind," erläutert Jean-Louis Besson, Mitherausgeber der Dünndruck-Edition.

"Brecht ist bekannt als Schriftsteller, doch gehört er zu den wenigen, die auch der Theorie zugeneigt waren. Er ist der größte Theatertheoretiker des 20. Jahrhunderts," meint Literaturexperte Valentin. Mit der Ausgabe will Valentin den "Stückeschreiber" als führenden Vertreter einer "europäischen und deutschen Ästhetik des Theaters" darstellen.

Neue Presse, 19. April, 2001

EUROPE 856-857 (PARIS): SPECIAL ISSUE ON BRECHT (Août-Septembre 2000)

Articles in French or translated into French by: Philippe Ivernel and Jean-Marc Lachaud, Nadine Gordimer, Volker Braun, Marielle Silhouette, Marc Petit, Manfred Wekwerth, John Willet, Nicolas Tertulian, Bruno Tackels, Thomas Weber, Wolfgang Fritz Haug, Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, Patrice Pavis, Frederic Jameson, Fraco Fortini, Marc Moreigne, Günter Heeg, Berard Sobel, Jean-Claude Fall, and Peter Palitzsch.

Note: several contributions were originally presented at a conference in October 1998 at the University of Paris in Nanterre.

BERTOLT BRECHT EN EL PERU

Sara Joffré

Hacia ya mucho tiempo que no se estrenaba en el Perú una obra grande de Bertolt Brecht.

A mi modo de ver las razones estaban en que durante todo el tiempo que siguió a la separación de Alemania y el retorno de Brecht a la República Democrática Alemana, Berlín Oriental, lo calificó para muchos de comunista.

En los años de 1980 en adelante en nuestro país se vivía un clima que no permitía ningún contacto público con nada que se pudiese tener por rojo y a Bertolt Brecht, entre nosotros, se le tenía por demasiado rojo. A partir de 1989, con la caída del muro, y la desaparición de los límites entre occidental y oriental, se fue teniendo menos miedo.

Por mi parte, desde 1968 en adelante, he tenido la costumbre de celebrar el 14 de febrero, como un acto teatral comunitario y motivador porque considero muy útil que los jóvenes de mi país tengan siquiera una idea de la producción brechtiana.

En febrero de 1998, en una de estas celebraciones conocí a una directora de teatro, Chela De Ferrari, que asistió muy atenta a las reuniones que durante siete días consagramos a la exposición de afiches, charlas y comentarios por diversas personas que habían trabajado o conocían la obra de Brecht.

Fue así que para el 10th Simposio de la IBS, asistí acompañada por Chela De Ferrari, quien, ya antes de encontrarnos tenía proyectado preparar una obra sobre Brecht, y aprovechaba la circunstancia para conocer más aún sobre él, ya que es una persona muy cuidadosa y exigente en su trabajo teatral.

El jueves 27 de agosto de 1998, con el apoyo del Goethe Institut y el Centro Cultural de la Pontificia Universidad Católica se estrenó la pieza *Coraje en el Exilio* Homenaje a Bertolt Brecht.

Dramaturgia: Chela De Ferrari, Els Vandell, dirección Chela De Ferrari. Con la actuación de Ramón García, Ana Cecilia Natteri, Javier Valdés, Els Vandell, Jorge Villanueva y Doris Appel.

El jueves 27 de abril del 2000 ocurrió otro suceso más sorprendente todavía. Ahora se estrenaba en el Centro Cultural de la Universidad Católica ya directamente una pieza del propio Brecht: *GALILEO GALILEI*.

El director Luis Peirano declaraba: "Conoci la obra hace treinta años y quedé fascinado con ella..."

Intervienen 18 actores pero inevitablemente es la figura de Galileo Galilei (actor Alberto Isola) la que lleva el peso de la acción. Ya que como una gran contradicción Bertolt Brecht ha creado personajes que dan la mayor ocasión para el lucimiento de una figura estelar cuando el teatro se concibe a la manera, digamos, occidental de pensar.

El impactante éxito de público que la puesta obtuvo me parece que ha sido una demostración más de cuán recóndita admiración contenida existe entre nosotros por el inteligente trabajo teatral de Bertolt Brecht. Reafirmado ésto una vez más, ojalá podamos ver aquí otras obras brechtianas. Ya que, no habiendo presupuesto estatal para solventar grupos independientes, sólo las entidades poderosas pueden llevar a Brecht a escena ya que el sistema de derechos de autor, que en este caso no es el del 10% del ingreso bruto por entradas, como ocurre con otros autores, convierte a Bertolt Brecht en el Perú en un artículo absolutamente de lujo.

Peru

INJUNCTION AGAINST HEINER MÜLLER'S *GERMANIA 3* LIFTED

The Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe (Germany) has lifted the 1998 injunction against the publication of Heiner Müller's last play, *Germania 3* and hence strengthened the freedom of art in the Federal Republic. On July 25, 2000, the Court granted artists greater freedom in the fair use of copyrighted text material if it does not lead to economic disadvantage of the original author.

The Brecht heirs had sued and won in the first instance in Munich an injunction against the publisher of *Germania 3* *Gespenster am toten Mann* (Kiepenheuer & Witsch) because, as they argued, it cited long passages from Brecht's *Leben des Galilei* and *Coriolan*, although the heirs had explicitly denied the request to use the material.

The Court decided that Müller had not stolen property from the Brecht heirs but rather he reused material in the cultural public domain in a legitimate artistic way to honor Brecht critically by having his texts speak for themselves. Further, he had not slandered Brecht by parodying several Brecht poems. Finally, the ironic naming of Brecht's partners Helene Weigel, Elisabeth Hauptmann, and Ruth Berlau as "the three Brecht widows" is not to be considered an insult.

HANNS EISLER SONGS

Eric Bentley, who will celebrate his eighty fifth birthday this year, is planning to publish a volume of one hundred Hanns Eisler songs, including piano-vocal scores and texts in German and English (many by Brecht). Bentley already published 42 of the songs in the 1960s, a volume still available from the Music Sales Corporation in New York. We'll have an update when the publication is available.

UPCOMING EVENTS

IBS SESSIONS AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION (Dec. 27-30,2001)

As in the past, the IBS will sponsor two sessions at the Modern Language Association conference, scheduled for December 27-30, 2001, in New Orleans.

I. JOHN WILLETT: POLITICS, THEATER, CRITICISM

Thursday, 27 December, 2001
7:00-8:15 p.m., Bacchus, Marriott

Presider: **Marc Silberman**, University of Wisconsin, Madison

1. "Nothing Special..."
Speaker: **John Willett**, London, England
2. "Translating Brecht: Of Gestes, Jests, and Gists."
Speaker: **Tom Kuhn**, St. Hughs College, Oxford University, England
3. "Translation in Cultural Limbo,"
Speaker: **Anthony Tatlow**, University of Dublin, Ireland.

Respondent: **John Rouse**, Univ. of California, San Diego.

II. BRECHT CINEASTE: SCRIPTING AND MAKING FILMS

Friday, 29 December, 2001
10:15-11:30 a.m., Exhibit 5, Marriott

Presider: **Dorothee Ostmeier**, University of Washington

1. "Physiognomy and Montage—A Re-Reading of Brecht's *Kuhle Wampe* through Bela Balazs' Film Theory."
Speaker: **Christian Huber**, University of Washington.

2. "Hitler in Hollywood: *Hangmen Must Die* "revisited."
Speaker: **Siegfried Mews**, UNC at Chapel Hill.
3. "Gestus at Warners: Lorre and Brecht."
Speaker: **Gerd Gemünden**, Dartmouth College.

KURT WEILL CALENDAR 2001-2002

New York (May 18): "Kleine Dreigroschenmusik," Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (Reinbert de Leeuw, conductor)

Croydon (May 19): *Threepenny Opera*

Los Angeles (May 26): "The Kurt Weill Celebration at the Ford." (Roger Kellaway, conductor). Ford Amphitheatre.

Los Angeles (June 1): *The Threepenny Opera*. Theatre West.

Montreal (June 6): *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Leonor and Alvin Segal Theatre. (Alan Bern, conductor, Bryna Wasserman, director). Yiddish-language production.

Indianapolis (June 8): "A Celebration of Kurt Weill, Kleine Dreigroschenmusik, Lady in the Dark excerpts." Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra (David All Miller, conductor), Hilbert Circle Theatre.

Avignon (Juli 1): *L'Opera de quat' sous*. Festival "Off."

Macerata (July 10): *Der Lindenbergflug*. Teatro Lauro Rossi (Bruno Bartoletti, conductor).

New York (July 16): *The Seven Deadly Sins*. The New York Philharmonic (Michael Stern, conductor). The Great Lawn, Central Park.

Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (July 17): *Die sieben Todsünden*. Alfredo Kraus Auditorium.

Staten Island (July 20): *The Seven deadly Sins*. The New York Philharmonic (Michael Stern, conductor). Miller Field, Gateway National Recreation Area.

Leicestershire (August 14): *The Threepenny Opera*. Youth Arts Leicestershire.

Paris (November 26, December 2): *Die sieben Todsünden*. Opera National de Paris (Alexandre Polianichko, conductor).

Manitoba (January 2002): *The Seven Deadly Sins*. Breakfast production (Ann Hodges, director).

Paris (February 2002): *Mahagonny Songspiel*. Opéra Comique.

25th IMISE Meeting – Naples / Italy July 3-10, 2001

Venue: The Anglican Church & Annex, the Ancient Monument that Garibaldi intended to be a symbol of estrangement, in Via S. Pasquale a Chiaia, a historical district of Naples. Venue should be considered a Forum for free debate. Therefore use of Church implies neither its approval nor its disapproval of views expressed during the Conference.

Theatre Workshops are being coordinated by Prof. **Heinz-Uwe Haus**, Dept. of Theatre, PTPP, University of Delaware.

First Workshop: “Re-Reading the Past – Theatrical Perspectives,” **Heinz-Uwe Haus**, coordinator. Sessions include:

“Theatre as a Transcultural Event,” “Students on *Threepenny Opera*: Learning Fundamentals of Directing,” **Heinz-Uwe Haus**, coordinator.

“Theatrical Masks - Symbolic Representations of Mystic Reality,” by **Nina A. Kovacec**, University of Ljubliana, Slovenia.

“Dialectic as a Factor in Alienation,” by **Ingrid Sonnichsen** and **Barbara MacKenzie-Wood**, Dept of Theatre, Carnegie Mellon University, PE/USA.

“Do we need Brecht’s ‘Appendices for a Short Organum’ for the Future?” by **Heinz-Uwe Haus**.

“Theatre and Social Order - Brecht’s *Good Person of Sezuana* in the New Millennium,” by **Charles Helmetag**, Villanova Univ., PA.

Second Workshop: “The Universal and the Particular in European Art, Literature and Theatre,” **Heinz-Uwe Haus**, coordinator. Sessions include:

“Interwoven Contexts: Signposts on the Road to Transformation,” by **Heinz-Uwe Haus**.

“ ‘Theatre Unbound’ - and which Identity is Gained?” by **Jürgen G. Sang**, University of Hawai at Manoa, Honolulu.

“Exploring Identities through Narrative Strategies,” by **Vera Stegmann**, Lehigh University, PA.

“Alienation Effects and Gestic Music - Kurt Weill’s Impact on Epic Music,” by Prof. **Guy Stern**, Wayne State University, Detroit.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

THE PARTY'S NOT OVER - MARXISM 2000

4th International Conference of the Journal
Rethinking Marxism
University of Massachusetts at Amherst

21-24 September 2000

Panel on "Brecht Now! Return of the Repressed"
Saturday, September 23, 2000

1) **Max Statkiewicz** (Department of Comparative Literature, University of Wisconsin-Madison)
"Brecht's (Non-)Philosophical Theater"

Brecht's theater is often called "philosophical." Since in Western thought there is an old tradition of "philosophical theater" associated with Aristotle and because Brecht has always insisted on the non-Aristotelian character of his theater, one should examine his alternative, "non-Aristotelian" sense of the philosophical. In my paper, I attempt such an examination by comparing the classical formulations of *amazement (to thaumazein)* as the principle of philosophy and theater in Aristotle with the Marxist critique of the classical tradition, in particular with the "Althusserian view of the new practice of philosophy and of the materialist philosophical" theater. I propose to situate Brecht's theater in the context of what Althusser considers to be a (non) philosophical, Marxist, irruption of praxis in the history of Western philosophy. I analyze the function of plot as central in both the *Poetics* and the *Short Organon for the Theater*. Whereas for Aristotle plot is the *arkhe* in the full sense of the word, that is, the beginning and the principle of tragedy, for Brecht, it is only a beginning. The genuine principle of the theater is *Verfremdung* or estrangement of plot achieved through its displacement in the dialectical play with the other elements of the epic/dialectical theater, especially the actors, "recounting (*erzählen*) of their characters." Such play provokes the sensation of

"intellectual freedom and high mobility" directed toward the practical, political transformation of the world. More than any other aspect of Brecht's theater, this dialectical displacement of the plot marks its departure from the Aristotelian tradition of the Western theater and moves drama in the direction of praxis. The resistance to the classical theater consists above all in the resistance to the principle of the coherence of the plot, and it is paradoxically this resistance that renders the epic/dialectical theater philosophical in the sense of presenting an initial aporia. Since, however, Brecht's aporia always interrupts an ideological continuity, one has to accept, with Althusser, the continuous character of *Verfremdung*, which corresponds to the "eternal" character of ideology. It is this notion of "continual wonder" that also accounts for the displacement effected by Brecht in the tradition of the philosophical theater. For Brecht, it is less a question of making theater philosophical or philosophy theatrical, than of thinking and performing the relationship between the two the old debate between philosophy and theater as the best way of affirming the continued actuality of the ideological struggle. If, in a sense, the epic/dialectical (non-)philosophical theater is more philosophical than philosophy, it is because it keeps wonder alive -- a wonder supplemented by a political solidarity with the oppressed, by an anger against the ideology of the status quo, and by a passion for the transformation of the world.

2) **Ana Bernstein** (New York University)
"Man in Paris."

In many of Brecht works and more specifically in his early poems, sketches, and plays, human beings are frequently portrayed as fragmented, disarticulated or dismembered bodies. The dead, rotten, and putrid body is a constant trope in his early work. Brecht seems in fact fascinated by the representation of the body -- in whole and in parts -- both as a locus of pleasure and of decay, of contingency. Sensual pleasures share their space with consumption, with fluids, excrements, and the activities of the lower

stratum. Surplus and expenditure are elements of the same economy. In this paper I look at the display and deployment of the body -- and its agent, man -- in three of Brecht's early plays: *Baal*, *Drums in the Night*, and *A Man's a Man*. The issue of the body was already posited in *Baal*, Brecht's first play, in the grotesque and Rabelaisian figure of the poet with an indiscriminate appetite, who in his solipsistic view regards the world solely as a source of pleasure and fulfillment of his needs. In *Drums in the Night*, the severing and decomposition that marks the body of the soldier Kragler echoes the violence with which the social body of Germany is fragmented, dismembered, crushed, subdued during the turbulence that follows the declaration of the Weimar Republic. And in *A Man's a Man* we see the total dismantling of a man, with the audacious purpose of reassembling his parts as a complete different man, the machine-soldier. In these early works we find that Brecht's bodies are frequently grotesques, linked to the fulfillment of sensuous needs and the expenditure of the body. Sometimes they become just a "hunk of flesh" or "cold meat", showing the contingency of the human body. It is often a sick body, opposed to the later "healthy body" idealized by Nazism. It is a body totally devoted to its materiality; it is a machine, an alienated body. The recurrence of images of dismembered bodies in his works speaks about the historical conditions in which Brecht was living, with the First World War, the revolutionary movements in Germany, and the Russian Socialist Revolution. Those were years of unrest, of political uncertainty and great economic difficulties. It seems indeed remarkable that in a time when so much importance is being attributed to the body and studies related to the subject proliferate in fields such as cultural studies, feminist theory, queer theory, and performance studies, almost no attention has been paid to this formative aspect of Brecht's work. The study of the representation of the body in Brecht is a fundamental and neglected aspect of his work, necessary for a better understanding of another body -- the body is of his work. The scholarship that has been produced in the last decades tends to favor the mature political Brecht, frequently overshadowing the young and more transgressive Brecht.

3) **David Anshen** (Department of Comparative Literature, State University of New York at Stony Brook)

"Plumpes Denken in the *Threepenny Opera*"

Brecht's advocacy of "Plumpes Denken" (crude thought) presents a puzzle. At first glance it appears to mean simplistic thought, reductive thought, thinking that is only concerned with or capable of direct and simple apprehension of reality. The two terms "crude" and "thought" seem like opposites. Crude signifies unrefined, simple, people or objects trapped in their own unreflective immediacy. Thinking on the other hand, suggests the noble, elevated, and profound process of activity and consideration. If there can be "crude thought" it must be a thought that begins by working on the empirical features of life, the surface phenomena. It must be obvious and comprehensible. But thinking cannot end there. If it is to be useful it must also contain something new, a new vantage point or angle upon the familiar that allows insight into processes and realities beneath the appearance of things. This seems true logically and corresponds to our reading of Brecht. We know that to experience Brecht's art is to revel in the ambiguities, the subtleties, the wry humor and the understated ironic features of his language, his images, his metaphors and the situations he dramatizes. The power of Brecht's aesthetic truly rests on crude thought, understood as a dialectical method from a certain angle. Roland Barthes points out that the art of Bertolt Brecht is often separated from his ideology. Many critics valorize his aesthetic achievements as triumphs despite his commitment to Marxist politics or his aesthetic theories. This division is felt to be particularly sharp in regards to his most well-known play, *The Threepenny Opera*. However, the power of this work resides in its capacity to capture the kind of "crude thought" that Brecht advocated. My paper demonstrates, through a close reading of the play, that the real political efficacy of the work does not reside exclusively in its explicit social critique but rather in the way it allows the spectator to experience the pleasure of thinking in new ways about old things.

4) **Matthew Hart** (University of Pennsylvania)
"Brecht and the Scientific Age"

[the author of this paper was unable to deliver it at the conference]

Turning to the subject of "Brecht Now!" would appear to demand two types of approach: a concentration upon those elements of Brecht's political critiques most germane to the current conjuncture; and a return to theoretical questions that, while at the forefront of Brecht's aesthetics, have since become marginal in Marxist aesthetics. The category and questions of science fulfils both of these conditions. This paper thus argues that the present importance of Brecht lies, in part, in his direct attempt to "theorize a theatre fit for the scientific age" ("Short Organum") within the imperative of a politically committed Marxist theatre. In the first instance, the argument will focus consecutively on the legacy of nineteenth-century Naturalism, Brecht's sense of the realistic, the problematics of Enlightenment and positivism, and the relationship between technology and dramatic form. The discussion of political commitment takes place firmly in the shadow of T. W. Adorno's 1962 essay of the same name. These questions are finally approached within an attempt to address the question of "science" as a category within Marxist theory itself, suggesting that Brecht's greatest contemporary relevance lies in the fact that he brings this "repressed" element of 19th century materialism to the surface of our current criticism. In the current criticism, the questions raised by Brecht's scientific proclamations are seen, above all, as questions of form: "Formal structures which challenge the lying positivism of meaning can easily slide into a different kind of vacuity, positivistic arrangements. . . . The extreme is literature which undialectically confuses itself with science and vainly tries to fuse with cybernetics" (Adorno). Peter Burger has argued that "An art no longer distinct from the praxis of life but wholly absorbed in it will lose the capacity to criticize it, along with its distance." I will question, however, whether Brecht's use of the formal structures of science constitutes an art "wholly absorbed" in the praxis of life. In order to answer this question I will develop a formulation of Brecht's science as constituting a

dialectical relationship between a science of the inorganic society and the inorganic work of art. In so doing I hope to show how his dramaturgy deals with the "scientific age" and the putative scientificity of Marxism itself.

BRECHT-TAGE 2001
Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus

February 25 - March 2, 2001

Thema: "JUNGLE B. - 15 Arten, mit Brecht umzugehen"

June 5

Vortrag: "Die im Schatten sieht man nicht."
Zum 60. Todestag von Margarete Steffin.
Simone Barck im Gespräch mit **Stefan Hauck**.

July 3

Film und Diskussion: "Unter dem Strohdach, Brecht und Dänemark."
Dokumentarfilm von **Rudy Hassing** und **Hans Christian Nørregaard**.
Kommentar zur dänischen Originalfassung
Hans Christian Nørregaard.
Moderatorin: **Sabine Kebir**.

BRECHT-BECKETT SYMPOSIUM
2001

May 4 - 5, 2001

A symposium of invited speakers, hosted by the School of Drama and the Graduate Centre of Arts Research of the University of Dublin, Ireland, to discuss re-reading Beckett and Brecht in relation to each other.

From roughly the middle of the 20th century, and for about 30 years, Beckett and Brecht dominated Western theatre by virtue of their

difference. Their work was considered antithetical in virtually all respects. In terms of slogans, they stood for a theatre of the absurd or for a theatre of political commitment, defining each other by their incompatibilities. Only their successors began to question the dichotomies and to draw on both their legacies.

Yet looking back we recognize shared interest and common ground: for example, their innovations in the new media, their modernism, as directors of their own work, and also in the shape of their thinking and writing.

The Symposium included the annual Beckett lecture given by Herbert Blau, and consisted of lectures followed by discussions and round table sessions.

The participants included: Walter Asmus, Herbert Blau, Sue-Ellen Case, Keir Elam, Frederic Jameson, Hans Thies Lehmann, Moray McGowan, Peter Palitzsch, Anthony Tatlow, Carl Weber.

ATHE ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO

August 2-5, 2001

“BRECHTECH: TECHNOLOGY AND BRECHT”

Chair: **Ralf Remshardt**, University of Florida

1. “Alienating Brecht’s Epic Theatre: the Extensive Use of Technology on the Contemporary German Stage.”

Speaker: **Elisabeth Hostetter**, Rowan University.

2. “Power, Knowledge, and Technology: A Centenary Staging of Brecht’s Turandot.”

Speaker: **Anja Klöck**, Universität Mainz.

3. “Brecht’s Media Theory and the Internet.”

Speaker: **Dorothee Ostmeier**, University of Washington.

IN MEMORIAM

Einar Schleaf died on July 21, 2001, in Berlin at 57 years of age owing to heart problems. Dramatist, novelist, set designer, photographer, and excellent recitator, Schleaf can be counted with Peter Zadek and Klaus Michael Grüber among the premiere post-war theater directors in Germany.

Born in 1944 in the village of Sangershausen (Thuringia), he left to study art in East Berlin in 1964. There he became the pupil of set designer Karl von Appen, himself a Brecht pupil who designed major productions at the Berliner Ensemble. Schleaf’s work with director B.K. Tragelehn during the early 1970’s gained him a reputation as one of the most promising young talents in the GDR. But his unusual productions of Wedekind’s *Spring’s Awakening* and Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* at the Berliner Ensemble made him the unfortunate target of political pressures. He left for the West in 1976 where he found a congenial working atmosphere in Frankfurt am Main and developed his signature style using large choral ensembles and chanting. After Reunification, Schleaf was invited back to the Berliner Ensemble by Heiner Müller, where he produced the successfully scandalous *Wessis in Weimar* by Rolf Hochhuth as well as an acclaimed staging of Brecht’s *Puntilla*.



PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

BAAL AN DER VOLKSBUHNE, BERLIN

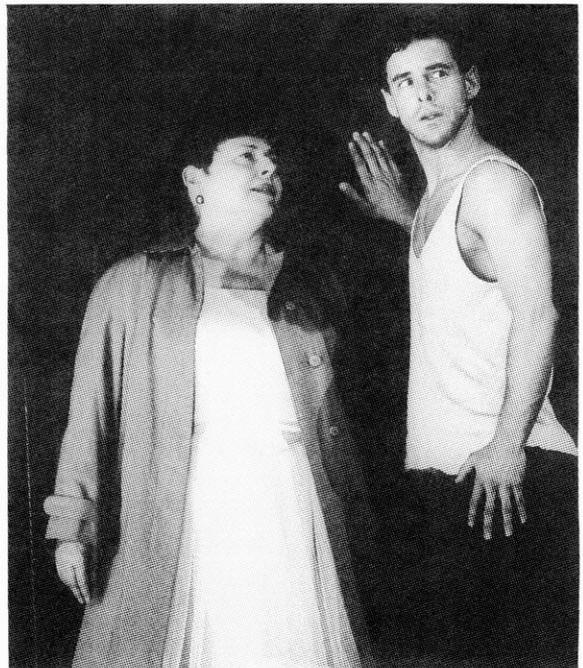
Ernst Schumacher

Eine Meinungsäußerung des Publikums während der Premiere von Brechts frühem Stück *Baal* in der Regie von Thomas Bischoff in der Volksbühne gab es erst, als sich der schon angeschlagene Freibeuter Baal in der von Morbiden und Moribunden gefüllte "Spitalschenke" verirrt und er den Schaubudenkünstler Gogou seine Weltsicht mit dem Satz begründen hört: "Geschichten, die man versteht, sind schlecht erzählt." Da kam bei einem Teil der Zuschauer ironische Zustimmung auf, was darauf schließen ließ, dass diese Minderheit wohl auf die ganze Inszenierung schloss, was vom größeren Teil eher als Störung des Kultspiels empfunden und mit eherner weiterer Andacht beschwiegen wurde. Immerhin konnte es sich bei dem Regieverfahren ja doch um "Verfremdung," nicht bloß um Entfremdung bis zur Befremdung handeln.

Es ist schwierig, den als dramatischen Erstling herausgeschleuderten *Baal* einem Publikum von heute, dessen libertäre Grundgesinnung alles hingehen lässt, als "tua res agitur" zu verkaufen. Die Anckung aller Werte der "guten Gesellschaft," die Anbetung wie Verachtung "des Fleisches," der Protest gegen die "Verwurstung" von Talent statt produktiven Gebrauchs wie Brecht selbst 1952 die Fabel auslegte, ohne verkennen zu können: "Dem Stück fehlt Weisheit."--all das reicht schließlich erst in den Sechzigern wieder aus, um für die "Blumenkinder" und kommunen jugendlichen Bohemiens einen provokativen Happen darzustellen. In der DDR wirkte, so bei der Erstaufführung in Erfurt, noch das vertretene Recht auf "Ichsucht" als Korrektiv gegen eine durchdisziplinierte Kollektivität. Aber als *Baal*

in den Achtzigern gar auf die Bühne des Berliner Ensembles kommen musste, erwies es sich nur als "Opas letzte Nummer" für den überreifen Ekkehard Schall nach der Wende für den abgeschliffenen Volker Spengler. Zuletzt konnte sich über eine musikalisch dominante Interpretation in Jena und im Orph-Theater Berlin wieder etwas von der Wut heutiger Jugend artikulieren.

Was nun in der Volksbühne, die schon bei Brechts *Sezuan* (Regie Kriegenburg) nichts anderes als Bekundung von Frust von sich zu geben wusste? Dass Thomas Bischoff, der schon Hans Henny Jahnns verquasten *Gestohlenen Gott* und Werner Schwabs verschwollene und verquollene *Volksvernichtung* in das Prokrustesbett seines Stilwillens gepresst hatte, die sonst fast nie gespielte erste Fassung des *Baal* nicht einfach vom Blatt spielen würde, war sicher wie das Amen in der Kirche. Schon das Bühnenbild von Uta Kala macht unübersehbar deutlich, in welche Richtung es gehen soll: In die einer extremen Stilisierung, Aussparung von jeglichem Ex- und Interieur, Abweisung von "Menschlich-Allzumenschlichem." Fatalerweise erinnern die vier aus dem perspektivischen "schwarzen Loch" herausführenden, ineinander



schiebbaren Portale an die Monumentalarchitektur eines Albert Speer. In Kostümierung und Maske weist alles auf Eliminierung von Individualität soweit wie nur möglich. Das Mobiliar: Krankenhausbetten auf futuristisch abstrakten Bühnenwagen. Das Licht: immer Magie vermittelnd. Kurz, bekundetes, überdeutlich gemachtes Anti-Milieu, das dann konsequenterweise seine Ergänzung findet in einer völligen historisch-konkreten Entsozialisierung von Figuren und Motiven. Herauskommen soll ein Exemplum, die Botschaft eines "Passionsspiels," Verkündung "eines vor- und nachchristlichen Gottes aus dem Geist heidnischer Mythologie nach der Erfahrung und dem Ende des Monotheismus, nach dem Gegenstandsloswerden christlicher Ethik und dem Verschwinden des Glaubens an eine gütige und gleichzeitig gerechte Transzendenz." Nein, billiger ist das nicht zu sagen und zu haben, bei Bischoff und seinen Dramaturginnen!

Dieser Epiphanie in Gestalt des Baal opfert Bischoff alle ausgemalten Intimitäten, genau besehen, das ganze Weibwesen um Baal: Weder die aufgerissene Verlegergattin Emmi noch die abspenstig gemachte Braut des Freundes, noch die aufgeklaupte Sophie, noch die zugelaufene Anna dürfen als aktive Frauen aus Fleisch und Blut auftreten. Sie werden nur zitiert durch daneben stehende Seniorinnen des Volksbühnenensembles. Was sich an körperlicher Verschmelzung doch nicht ganz fleischlos macht, wird durch einen roten, wenn es abwärts geht, schwarzen Tänzerinnen-Engel gemimt. Nur der armen Mutter wird Individualität zugestanden, freilich, damit es auch hier ja zu keiner "organischen!" Ein- und Mitfühlung kommen kann, auch sie wider Strich gebürstet, weil von einer jugendlichen Darstellerin gespielt.

Was für das Verständnis noch nicht reicht, wird durch ein Tanz-ensemble rhythmisch vor- und nachexerziert. Damit es in die bornierten Köpfe eingeht, wird Deutung durch die Techno-Musik von FM Einheit eingehämmert. Ja, aber worum geht es denn nun wirklich? Um nicht mehr und nicht weniger als um die Bekundung, dass sich ein Ausnahmensch wie Baal nur total verweigern kann, den Weibern so gut wie Unternehmern und Bürokraten, und wenn er jemanden brauchen kann, so nur einen Männerfreund, eben Kumpan Ekart, der

auch ein Versager ist. Daraus leitet sich ab, wie dieser Baal sich zu gerieren hat: als schwarzer Schwärmer, Wahr-Sager, Verkünder, Messias! Was er zu verkünden hat, belfert er in höchster Stimmlage heraus, Gefolgschaft erwartend, als - Führer! Markus Meyer, vom Aussehen dem jungen Brecht wie aus dem Gesicht geschnitten, weist von der ersten Verlautung an den einzig richtigen Weg: den nach rechts! Es ist der faschistoide Duktus, der der postulierten Verweigerung den herrischen Zug gibt und der unter den Zuschauern dem Rechtsanwalt Horst Mahler so richtig "klammheimliche Freude" bereiten musste. Von dieser Anspruchshaltung darf sich der Protagonist nur einmal befreien, wenn er am Totenbett der Mutter menschlichere Töne anschlagen darf, aber auch das gehört ja zu "einem rechten Mann." Gegenüber diesem Verkünder hat auch Freund Ekart kein selbstständiges Profil, ist er doch sowieso nur das andere Ich. Dafür muss Axel Wandke dann den "Choral vom großen Baal" herausbrüllen, auf dass ja die anarchistische Selbstbezogenheit durch "Wut und Zynismus" in höherer Protesthaltung aufgehen kann. Bischoff wählte den richtigen Weg, den Versuch zu machen, *Baal* den Naturalismus auszutreiben, was nur bedeuten kann, zu stilisieren. Aber ein Reduktionismus, dessen Kern eine faschistoide Weltansicht von einem neuen Glaubensverkünder, der da den "rechten Weg" herkommen muss, nahe legt, muss Brecht sich im Zinksarg umdrehen lassen. Die "Volksbühne Ost" als noch nicht "national," so doch "rational befreite Zone": frei von sinniger Sinnlichkeit so gut wie von konkreter Sozialität, messiaserwartend jenseits von "Gut und Böse," das ist neu, das stimmt finster.

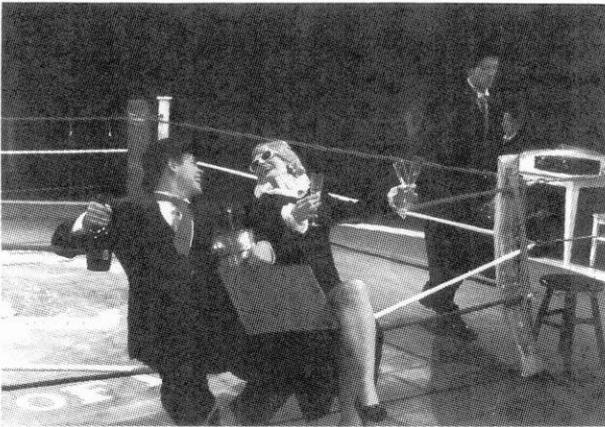
Berliner Zeitung, Nummer 88 14./15./16. April 2001.

**AMERICAN
VERGANGENHEITSBEWÄLTIGUNG IN
THE BOXING RING**

**The US premiere of Tabori's *The Brecht File*
in Knoxville, Tennessee**

Peter Höyng and Vera Pantanizopoulos-Broux

When Peymann opened his first season at the Berliner Ensemble with Tabori's *Die Brecht-Akte*, January 2000, I could not help but write: "Great goals ahead, but the highly charged first production did not measure up to the occasion" (*Communications*, 2000, p. 18). One year later we find ourselves in Knoxville, Tennessee, known neither as a location for a strong political consciousness, nor as a hot spot for avant-garde theater. Yet, the U.S. premiere of *The Brecht File* at the Carousel Theater on the campus of the University of Tennessee was truly a success thanks to the imaginative work of director Veronika Novag-Jones, and the editing work of dramaturg Klaus van den Berg. Tabori's play thematizing the political harassment and



interrogation of Brecht due to the pervasive Red Scare of the late 1940s turned into an evening of intense, fast paced, insightful, and critical entertainment.

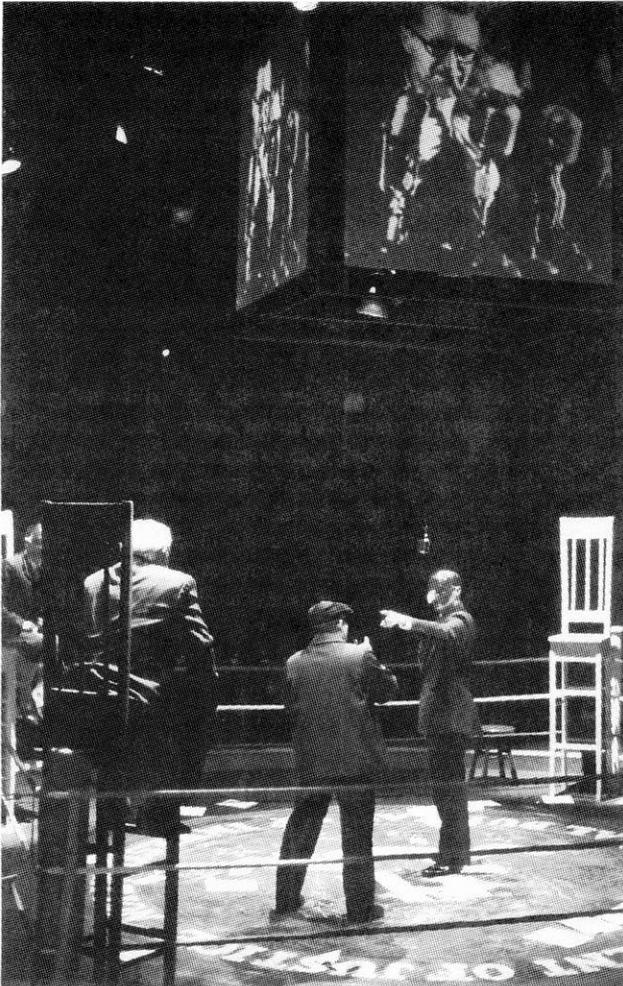
The play began before its beginning: we are seated in an intimate circular theater--reminiscent of a circus setting so dear to Tabori--surrounding the center stage, which has been transformed into a boxing ring with a large FBI insignia on the floor

(Scenic Design Michael Heil). We are listening to a jazz tune, composed by acclaimed jazz musician Sirone and performed by students from the music school, to which the actors in blue suits, carrying briefcases, march in and file out in pairs to each of the four sides of the boxing ring. Let the fight begin.

The microphone drops down, the ring master starts animating his audience (Andrew Sellon), and introduces the seductive Marilyn Monroe look-alike (Chevy Anz) into the ring, where she attempts to entice us with the Star Spangled Banner. However, the apprehensive audience remained seated. The Brechtian stage did not spark an open response. Rather it created an uncertainty in the audience that pervaded the evening regardless of its entertainment value. Confronted with the Red Scare, with Brecht as a more or less unknown German author, and with the open structure of the play, the audience seemed overburdened. Thus, the opening boxing act served not only as a *leitmotiv* for the rest of the play but also, in retrospect, as a symbol for the uneasy relationship between the play--not the production--and the audience.

Why then was the production so much more striking than in Berlin? First, dramaturg Klaus van den Berg provided with the permission of George Tabori a more concise play by cutting scenes and editing the remaining text. Second, Veronika Novag-Jones's brilliant idea to place all the scenes either within or outside the boxing ring produced coherence for the entire show that the play lacks.

Not only did the boxing ring signify the overall fight between the FBI and Brecht but it also exhibited the fighting within the FBI and particularly between the two agents Shine and Gallagher. The ropes in and of themselves created a visual focal point and at the same time an enveloping inside and surrounding outside sphere, giving way to a flexibility of spatial appropriations. Be it the swimming pool of Brecht's neighbor, the wedding ceremony of the gay couple Shine and Gallagher--both scenes outside--, Brecht's home in Los Angeles that Shine and Gallagher bug, various FBI offices or the HUAC hearing in Washington, the boxing ring and its ropes remained



it made the emphasis on Brecht all the more remarkable. Yet the applause goes not only to Heuvelman but also to each member of the cast who was so engaged and made the evening so engaging. Perhaps the most intriguing of all was the “Buzzard Scene” (second to last), in which Dan Owen, Bonnie Gould, Chevy Anz, and Ethan T. Bowen sit atop their HUAC perches while experiencing like Kafka’s Gregor Samsa a metamorphosis. Different from Kafka’s character, however, the four personify aggressive buzzards with red (!) masks, attacking Brecht who looks at first so small in the ring but grows by his defense.

Equally impressive was the gay FBI spy couple Tony Cedefio as Gallagher—he played Hitler in Knoxville in Tabori’s *Mein Kampf* in 1998—and Thomas Webb as Shine. Whereas in Berlin *Die Brecht-Akte* revealed little about Brecht and instead revolved around Shine and Gallagher, in Knoxville the odd couple was pivotal yet not central to the plot. At the same time, Novag-Jones managed to make Shine’s and Gallagher’s divergent life paths forcefully apparent. While the character Shine ultimately converts to Brechtianism, Gallagher stays behind. While Shine literally frees himself of his fat suit and initiating his transformation, his lover Gallagher becomes physically entangled in the ropes, marking his own delusional self-hatred. It speaks for the playful humor—so characteristic of the

the perfect polyvalent emblem throughout the play.

In addition to this visual coherence, Novag-Jones and van den Berg decided to make Brecht ever present, thus providing the diverse scenes with a continuity and its thematic purpose. He encircled his enemies by constantly walking around the ring, smoking his cigar, listening in awe to the damaging gossip of civilians and FBI officials and calmly interjecting at times witty comments by reciting or even singing from some of his texts (well selected by van den Berg). David Heuvelman’s punctilious embodiment of the playwright was so convincing (including Brecht’s awkward sounding English) that

production throughout—of Novag-Jones that Shine reaches his new identity in the end by imitating even the appearance of Brecht (fabulous costumes by Marianne Custer).

The ending: During the finale, reminiscent of a Broadway musical, all actors regather in a bandstand-style party within the boxing ring. The exuberant tone of the music, which both accompanied as well as guided the performance with its own interpretative rhythms throughout, inspires the entire cast to dance and sing along. Meanwhile, our eyes are once again guided to the display screen above center stage where an image of Brecht flashes

onto the screen with a final proverbial Brechtian question: "What was he like?"

And after having experienced this evening, we can answer at least this much: Brecht is the winner in this short two-hour-long political match. He is



portrayed as an individual with a subdued sense of self-assurance, often in dialogue with himself and the audience. He is the quintessential fox-witty, clever, calm, and patient. The lesson to be understood in this interpretation of Tabori's *The Brecht File* is that of instilling a

resistance to complacency. Shine in particular becomes some what of a role model for civil disobedience and for questioning authority. The representation of the US political persecutions during the early Cold War era serves as a reminder of the ideological fragility of democracy in the name of democracy. In the course of these ideological witch hunts (the complete Brecht file is now available on the internet at <http://foia.fbi.gov/brecht.htm>) the FBI claimed to uphold moral goals--listed at the bottom of their insignia: fidelity, bravery, integrity--which the HUAC investigations transformed then into their opposites: infidelity, cowardice, dishonor. Tabori's/Novag-Jones's/van den Berg's *The Brecht File* in Knoxville, Tennessee, succeeded in both: exposing the need for an American *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* of the McCarthy era, but doing so with a show punch. And now for the next round: a reopening of the Knoxville-version in Berlin.

University of Tennessee

BRECHT IN BRITAIN:
***The Good Woman of Setzuan* at the**
Cottesloe, National Theatre,
and *The Mother* at the Liverpool Everyman

Laura Bradley and Tom Kuhn

There has recently been a minor spate of modern German drama in Britain: the Almeida Theatre has staged Wedekind's *Lulu* in its temporary venue at King's Cross, using a new translation by Wes Williams, adapted by Nicholas Wright from the original 'Monstertragödie'. Now productions of Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan* and *The Mother* are touring the country, offering contrasting interpretations of what 'Brechtian' theatre means today.

The Good Woman of Setzuan is a production by the 'theatre in education' department of the National Theatre, directed by Stephen Powell, with a cast of just eight. Tanika Gupta's version is substantially shortened and simplified, based on a new literal translation by Laura Gribble. On the whole, Brecht's text is handled sympathetically: the translation is lively and colloquial, just occasionally motivations and continuities are obscured by cuts. Apparently, the Brecht Estate insisted that the company should indicate where the production departs entirely from the original text, and so on these occasions a red lightbulb suspended high above the stage is extinguished. A quaint, flickering *Verfremdungseffekt*. The rest of the event is, however, somewhat more problematic than mere deviation from the text.

Despite Powell's assertion in the NT education workpack, 'The play is what it is, it needs no help from us to remain an exciting and challenging piece of theatre', his production offers all manner of both welcome and unwelcome 'help'. This staging targets the 15-25 age group, and Powell's approach is avowedly 'interactive'. In a pre-show event, part workshop, part warm-up, the company and the play are introduced and some of Brecht's ideas aired and demonstrated. This is quite engaging and can clearly go down well with a young audience, even if it did seem a little gimmicky in the Cottesloe Theatre.

Then the play begins. In an attempt to make 'the filth, the injustice, the hopelessness familiar' to

a disappointed, still post-Thatcher Britain, Powell's actors present themselves as blokey contemporaries on an almost featureless stage. A fold-down container serves well as both tobacco shop and factory, while the gods are portrayed as modern idols: footballer, supermodel and rock-star -- a play which rather misses Brecht's point. Although the actors' caricatural gesturing does not quite approach *Gestus*, the wide range of strong accents ensures that they intrude clearly between character and audience: Shen Te is played as a laddish Glaswegian, while the other accents include French, Japanese, and proletarian British. Nonetheless, it sometimes feels as if the company believes that epic theatre just means hamming it up. The message to the audience seems to be: come on up, you can do this as well as we can.

And indeed, involving the audience turns out to mean bringing a selection of volunteers on stage to shuffle round awkwardly in the first scene, and then to operate an entirely redundant piece of stage machinery: a bicycle generator fires up the lights, to applause, at the start of each scene (we are in the National Theatre, there's no shortage of power sockets). Even worse, an 'audience discussion' is inserted before the final courtroom scene. On the night we were there, the audience seemed to consist largely of tourists and drama teachers (who, it must be admitted, enjoyed all this); they were good-naturedly provocative, keen to keep the discussion going -- if only for the company's entertainment. It was hard to perceive what anyone actually thought. The apparent conclusion was that we must keep our Shen Tes and Shui Tas ('which we all have inside ourselves') in balance: Yin and Yang. Although it was clear that some social criticism was at work, the production did not seem to contain any analysis, let alone project a solution. It was left to a member of the company to recall the distant question, 'What about the workers?' Yet it was precisely their production which had muddled the social thrust of the play.

Whereas this production eliminates all mention of changing the world from the end of *The Good Person*, Visiting Moon's staging of *The Mother* conveys Brecht's political message with crystal clarity. Several of the company's actors are former members of the 1970s Agitprop troupes Red Ladder and MayDay Theatre, and their serious

approach to Brecht's text conveys their political commitment. Nonetheless, staging an overtly didactic, let alone Marxist play remains a daunting challenge, particularly when the actors' convictions are alien to many of the spectators.

Director Annie Castledine's light touch, however, provides a refreshing change after the NT's heavy-handed approach. The performance is fast-paced, thanks partly to the omission of the two penultimate scenes, and contains flashes of humour. Steve Trafford's new translation preserves much of the clarity of the original German; despite occasional infelicities, and adds some topical allusions. This time, pseudo-Brechtian gimmicks are absent from the functional, uncluttered set. A curved, cream-coloured wall at the back suggests light and clarity, and the few props brought on by the actors at the start of each scene transforms the setting with the minimum fuss. When the action moves to the teacher's home, a snatch from a Bach Partita performed on the piano on stage signals the shift to a petty-bourgeois milieu. In a humorous touch (which this time includes a socially critical comment), the Tsar's portrait is hung from an easel and has to be removed before the reading lesson can begin.

During the first scene, most of the actors sit in front of the back wall, watching their colleagues perform. Visiting Moon's seven actors display great versatility and teamwork, covering no less than twenty-seven roles and offering excellent performances of Eisler's songs, adding to the production's energy and impact (another contrast with *The Good Person*, which offers a bland rock accompaniment to the songs). Musical director Timothy Sutton adheres to Brecht's instructions, and so the songs are delivered straight to the audience, like the announcements of the scene titles. Yet although the production thus relies primarily on the epic techniques inscribed in Brecht's text, Castledine does resort to one intrusive *Verfremdungseffekt* by splitting the lead role. Apparently, it would be unfair to allow one actress to hog the main part in a production conceived as a genuinely collective enterprise. But the staging failed to communicate this rationale, which was only revealed in the post-show discussion. Moreover, the contrast between the two characterizations of the mother, played in the first five scenes by Gillian Wright as a naive country bumpkin (with a Lancashire accent), and

thereafter by Elizabeth Mansfield as a serious, thoughtful revolutionary, implies that she needs to acquire different qualities (and a middle-class accent) in order to serve the Communist cause.

In the Bible scene, however, Visiting Moon's skill in conveying Brecht's social criticism comes to the fore. Sue McCormick's landlady sings the hymn 'How great Thou art' with all the piety of a born bigot, and her crocodile tears of sympathy magically vanish as she slurps her tea. Recent events conspire to lend the mother's anti-superstition speech an acute topical relevance: Wlassowa's suggestion that insurance policies would offer farmers more protection than prayer against crop failure and foot-and-mouth disease (not far from the original 'Viehseuche') brought the house down in Liverpool, but was apparently received in stony silence in Cumbria, one of the areas worst affected by the current outbreak.

As this episode shows, the production predictably achieved its greatest resonance when the actors connected with the audience's experiences. Yet it was only in the post-show production that one of the actors really succeeded in communicating the reason for staging the play now: to ask 'whether the baby was thrown out with the bath-water' in 1989. Had technical difficulties not prevented the company from projecting topical images of the Seattle protests and child workers in Third World factories, then they might have succeeded in presenting the play as a relevant critique of globalization. As it was, their production seemed more like nostalgia for a bygone era of political activism, than as constructive criticism of the present.

Of these two contrasting stagings, the NT offers the sort of weak, participatory theatre experience which could be tacked onto any play. Visiting Moon, however, forgoes attention-grabbing gimmicks in favour of the clarity of the original text, with the exception of the intrusive mother-split. The problem facing commercial producers, however, seems to be that many spectators find consumer-oriented gimmicks more palatable than stark political lessons. And while the NT production inspires less a desire to change the world than to change the director, Visiting Moon fails to show the possibility of using Brecht's Marxist message to change *our* world today.

Reviewed for *Communications*

GALILEO FAILS TO CAPTURE GRAVITY OF ASTRONOMERS SITUATION

Curt Holman

Whenever you see a show that conspicuously nods to its audience or its own artifice, you can credit Bertolt Brecht. The German playwright advanced the idea of breaking down the "fourth wall" of the theatrical set, an approach that would inspire such diverse artists as Ernie Kovacs, Monty Python and Jean-Luc Godard. The underpinning theories can be involved, but it always struck me that Brecht's means to emphasize his ideas about class and society were meant for the whole world, not just a stage.

Brecht was as impatient with Aristotle's views on dramatic unities as Galileo was with Aristotelian astronomy, so it fits that the playwright would dramatize the great astronomer's life. Putting aside the Bard for Brecht, the New American Shakespeare Tavern offers a revival of *Galileo* from its 1998 repertory production. As a spectacle of the battle between integrity and the status quo, the Tavern's *Galileo* can be sporadically effective, but also repetitious and drawn out.

Brecht's *Galileo Galilei* (Shakespeare Tavern artistic director Jeffrey Watkins) comes across as much a struggling artist as a scientific genius. He pursues wealthy patrons and gets into the telescope business mostly to pay his bills. But his commitment to scientific knowledge is unquestioned, and in the play's "Eureka!" moment, he reveals to his assistant (Marc McPherson) the previously undiscovered moons of Jupiter through a telescope.

The Tavern production, directed by Dikran Tulaine, brings out the play's allegorical aspects. Galileo argues his case, that the Earth is not the center of the universe, to numerous characters who represent specific points of view. Some of these scenes can make engrossing confrontations, as when he pointedly swaps proverbs with the politically canny Cardinal Barberini (Tony Brown, fittingly Machiavellian) or justifies his pursuit of truth to Fulganzio (Neil Necastro), a humble monk who fears the findings will disillusion the humble peasantry.

But the approach also makes *Galileo* feel like a one-note show, and some performances, like Doug Kaye's lisping mathematician, aren't so much emblematic as cartoonish. As *Galileo*'s most idealistic assistant, Mary Claire Dunn seems to view the role as a free-spirited life force or some kind of comic showcase, as she strikes odd poses and makes huge gestures out of place with the rest of the cast. Other players show the passion in the material by bellowing at the top of their lungs or standing on furniture.

The play isn't great history: *Galileo*'s daughter (subject of a recent bestseller of the same name) was a nun, not a marriageable young woman (Jennifer Akin). But Brecht does justice to the circumstances that led to *Galileo*'s persecution. When he published a study in 1632, it was a grievous miscalculation, as he believed that Barberini's elevation to Pope heralded a more tolerant climate. Instead, the Inquisition made an example of his heresy, forcing his public recantation.

Watkins conveys *Galileo*'s cantankerous manner and impatience with fools. But he doesn't really give the role the earthy, multi-dimensional zest suggested by a line like, "He cannot say no to an old wine or a new thought." Maurice Ralston has a funny turn as a doddering cardinal and a sinister one as the chief inquisitor, and it's a disappointment that we don't see his character confront *Galileo* more directly.

As with many Brecht plays, music runs through the show, which the Tavern interprets rather like a protest gathering of 1960s hippies. As the play's chorus, Stuart McDaniel croons and plays acoustic guitar like an earnest folk singer. The second act begins with a seemingly endless, hand-clapping, tambourine-shaking number with the refrain "Independent spirit spreads like foul diseases!"

In the final scene we see *Galileo* judging himself harshly for recanting his discoveries, which appears to be Brecht's own view. (Ironically, Brecht was no model of public defiance, having given evidence to the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947). Brecht's *Galileo* still proves a relevant cautionary tale of a martyr to the cause of truth, and one appreciates the Shakespeare Tavern's eagerness in staging such a knotty work, but neither Brecht nor the Tavern quite capture the gravity of

Galileo's situation.

Galileo played through April 29, 2001, at the New American Shakespeare Tavern.

Creative Loafing, Atlanta, April 18, 2001

AN UPDATED VERSION OF BRECHT'S *DIE MASSNAHME, IN FRANKFURT*

Edmund L. Andrews

Few theatrical works in Germany have been more reviled than *Die Massnahme* (*The Measures Taken*), written by Bertolt Brecht and first performed in 1930. The play centers on a Communist in a country very like China who supports a peasant revolution but who is executed by his comrades because his efforts interfere with ideological goals.

At the time, the play was widely attacked as an apology for Stalinist totalitarianism and the sacrifice of the individual on behalf of revolution. Brecht himself was so shaken by the criticism that he virtually disowned the play and prohibited it from being performed. Even today, Brecht's heirs have relaxed the ban on only a few, carefully controlled occasions.

It hardly sounds like material for a crowd-pleasing remake, but the much-hated play has now been turned upside down and given a post-Communist spin by two of Germany's brightest young theater directors. And in a development that might have made Brecht smile, the two directors grew up in Communist East Germany and came of age just as the Berlin Wall crumbled eleven years ago.

The directors, Tom Kuhnel, 29, and Robert Schuster, 30, work as a team and now run Frankfurt's renowned avant-garde Theater am Turm. They have drawn on their roots in the east to produce images and ideas that have attracted big followings in the west.

In their hands, Brecht's play has been transmuted into a work titled *Das Kontingent* (*The Contingent*). The structure and the basic moral

dilemma remain, but Mr. Kuhnel, Mr. Schuster and the members of their collaborative theater group have turned it into a critique of Western dogma. Brecht's revolutionaries have been replaced by members of a United Nations peacekeeping force in the Caucasus (but think Kosovo).

The rigid ideology expressed in the play now takes the form of the United Nations' own rules of engagement: absolute neutrality, prevention of violence and an impersonal devotion to "processes" like free elections, or even distribution of food aid.

The tragic central character is now a well-meaning but naïve American named Bill who is outraged by the inequities around him and repeatedly violates his oath of neutrality. Like those of Brecht's revolutionary, Bill's efforts merely lead to more problems, and he is executed by his own United Nations comrades.

The message of the play, which was recently performed for an invited audience at the United Nations in New York, is hardly a paean of praise. Though Bill is caricatured as a bumbling and overly emotional simpleton, the United Nations comes across as a depersonalized enforcer of arbitrary rules that merely provide new opportunities for war criminals. There is no "right" side in the play; the point, instead, is that the West has cloaked itself in its own rigid certainties.

The staging is stark, dominated by gray risers in front of huge blue banners that bear the United Nations emblem. The characters are all dressed in silver-gray uniforms that one German critic described as a "mix of Spaceship Orion and Prada." Atonal music backs up a chorus that, in the tradition of Greek tragedies, provides a running commentary on the action.

"*Das Kontingent* shows that the West has its own ideology," Mr. Schuster said in a recent interview. "The tragedy is that one has to make a decision, but there really is no good choice. No politician can decide in that kind of situation with certainty; it's impossible. But they have to nonetheless."

None of the team's original works so far have dealt overtly with themes like the collapse of Communism or German reunification. But their plays do evoke the sense of being an outsider in one's own land.

When Communism collapsed, the East

Germans found their system almost immediately replaced by another set of rules transplanted directly from a smug, know-it-all western Germany. In "German for Foreigners," produced last year, the actors spend the entire play reciting a litany of schoolbook conversations that are supposed to prepare them for the gamut of social interactions in a united Germany, in effect reflecting the fact that many former East Germans feel like outsiders in their own country.

Mr. Kuhnel and Mr. Schuster joined the Frankfurt theater in 1999. Though it has a long tradition of producing avant-garde drama, the city-financed Theater am Turm had been struggling financially and looking for new creative direction. The men were recruited by the choreographer William Forsythe, a New Yorker who had recently taken over as overall director of the theater.

The two directors formed their partnership while studying drama at the Ernst Busch School for Dramatic Arts in Berlin. Mr. Schuster, a muscular and gregarious man, had started out by acting and staging shows at a church in his hometown of Meissen, near Dresden. Mr. Kuhnel, quiet and bespectacled, grew up in Cottbus, near Berlin, and had originally planned to pursue a career in physics but became bored and veered toward drama by the end of high school.

The partnership evolved out of rivalry. Both men wanted to stage a new adaptation of *Die Massnahme* because they were convinced the themes had a new relevance in the context of Communism's collapse. Though the Brecht family foundation generally prohibited anyone from performing the play, it was willing to make an exception for the Busch school so long as it did not try to publicize the event or sell tickets.

"We both wanted to direct the play in our own way, so we decided, 'Fine, we'll do it both ways,'" Mr. Kuhnel recalled. "As we began rehearsals, we noticed that we didn't have such different subjective views."

Both men had conceived of similar costumes, and both decided to use puppets for some of the characters. From that point on, the two have worked almost entirely as a duo.

Mr. Kuhnel has a particularly sharp ear for music and structure. "He is very structural, almost mathematical," said Christian Tschirner, an actor

**IN THE JUNGLE OF THE CITIES
TRYING TO RESTORE SHOCK TO AN
EARLY BRECHT WORK**

Wilborn Hampton

who went to drama school with the directors and is a veteran of many of their productions. Mr. Schuster, by contrast, tends to become more involved with the story and the actors.

The two men are part of a theater collective of actors and writers called Soeren Voima, most of whose members met at the Busch school in the early 1990's. Original works like *Das Kontingent* and *German for Foreigners* are written anonymously under the name Soeren Voima, and writing is usually a collaborative process, with one or two people taking the lead.

In a throwback to the idealism that accompanied the fall of the Berlin Wall, all members of the collective earn the same amount of money: about 60,000 marks a year, or about \$26,000. But the egalitarian vision is under considerable strain because some actors and writers are capable of earning far more on the open market than others.

Mr. Kuhnelt and Mr. Schuster admit to frustration themselves because actors have the time to earn extra money outside the theater while the directors do not. "It can be the case that the directors actually earn less than the actors," Mr. Tschirner said.

Mr. Kuhnelt is not ready to give up but admits that even many of the more senior actors consider the equal-salary scheme absurd. "It is always an issue," he said. "Does equality lead to less motivation? Should equality be some kind of sacred cow? How long can we keep it going? One cannot absolutely say." It could almost be the theme of their next production.

The New York Times, November 21, 2000

Every young playwright who sets out to put a torch to the existing world order is bound to burn himself at the start, and Bertolt Brecht was no exception. Brecht's early plays were little more than diatribes, experiments in agitprop theater that came to be known as nihilistic expressionism. They excoriated the system that emerged from World War I, created near riots at their opening and are of interest today mainly as curious examples of a young innovator struggling to find his voice.

Brecht's third work, *In the Jungle of the Cities*, is being staged by Irondale Ensemble in a production that is mostly a rant that sheds little light on either the play or its author. Working with a translation by Philip Boehm that is titled *In the Jungle of the City*, the Irondale director, Jim Niesen, uses it as a vehicle to try some experimentation of his own. Even before the play begins, Mr. Niesen has his cast go through a series of exercises like a parody of an acting class doing warm-ups, and by the end he has the play's protagonist and his nemesis wrestling nude in a sexual coupling on the stage floor.

The play is a Faustian tale about an innocent young man, George Garga, who has moved with his family to the city from the country—the singular city of Mr. Boehm's title is Chicago—and is set upon by a satanic capitalist named Shlink who wagers he can corrupt George in six months. He does. Along the way George's sister becomes a prostitute, his girlfriend an alcoholic, and his parents are ruined.

Mr. Niesen seems to be aiming at reclaiming some of the play's shock value. He has George strip naked a la Francis of Assisi and spit in a Salvation Army captain's face; the entire cast shouts most of the dialogue. Scant attention is paid to detail. At one point a character opens a large book in the middle and reads the opening sentence of Dicken's *Tale of Two Cities*, and a poker hand is enacted with each player being dealt three cards.

A translation that is mostly Marxist Cliché doesn't help. Characters actually say "I have nothing to lose but my chains" and "none of us are

free” while talking about “eating crumbs off other people’s tables” and “licking boots” of one’s masters. For the most part the acting is not above rehearsal level. Christian Brandjes works hard at the role of George and is credible in some scenes. Terry Greiss as Shlink is the closest thing to a real character.

The New York Times, May 22, 2001

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CITY OF MAHAGONNY IN PALO ALTO

Michael Vaughn

In creating a fusion of forms unclassifiable by any other category but its own, Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht performed one of the highest of artistic feats. They also made their works very difficult to produce. This element comes to the fore in West Bay Opera’s *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, a production fueled by stage director Jonathan Field’s brilliant vision, but diminished by occasional lapses in execution. *Mahagonny* is such a dark and blunt instrument that you can either play it straight and pound your audience into submission, or take Brecht’s audience-alienation ideas for a spin and load on layers of over-the-top goofiness.

Field clearly chose the latter, introducing all sorts of bizarre characters to lead us through the creation of the ultimate Sin City, then throwing in a dozen corporate icons (Mickey Mouse, Ronald McDonald, Bugs Bunny, Elvis) to serve as croutons. The strategy demands an intense level of energy, perhaps best demonstrated by Ray Renati’s Narrator, a sort of Uncle Sam, blue-face (red-face, white-face), Al Jolson gone to Satan. Two other fine examples are sharp-featured tenor Mark Hernandez as Jack O’Brien, a lumberjack who literally eats himself to death; and a bass-baritone James Brown, who throws sackfuls of joie-de-evil into Trinity Moses, a vulgar triumvirate of pimp, homicidal boxer and (gasp!) lawyer.

Problem is, there are far too many scenes that

drag—as if the whole cast had momentarily lost faith or adrenaline—and one performer, mezzo Dianne Terp as city queen Leona Begbick, who never quite gets on board. What makes this even more damaging is Weill’s music, a march-time jazz barbiturate oom-pah that can pull down the whole ship unless frequently resuscitated.

The ingenues face a whole other set of challenges. As lumberjack Jimmy McIntyre, tenor Jay Eugene Fraley is assigned to somehow squeeze empathy out of a blowhard alcoholic party-pooper. The real character-saver to Jimmy is that he is the only person in town who is troubled by the shallow Vegas-like illicitness that is Mahagonny. But Fraley misses the point by playing him too tough and loud. Had he taken some of the vulnerability and more intimate singing of Jimmy’s jail-time lamentations and transplanted them to some of his earlier scenes, he might have had us.

A great example of just that is soprano Jane Hammett’s reading of Jenny Smith, who wrestles with her feelings for Jimmy while at the same time realizing that she is only his mistress and this is, after all, a cruel, hard world. Jenny is perhaps the only thing close to an innocent in the opera, and Hammett is perfectly willing to pull her lovely voice back to a whisper to show the lack of conviction in her harsh words (“If someone’s going to be kicked, it’s you”). She also lends a beautiful lyricism to “Alabama Song,” painting its desperate pleas for “Whiskey and dollars” with heavenly tones both high and soft.

Musical director David Sloss and his troops handled the show’s technical demands with aplomb, playing backstage with a video monitor for the singers and not once interfering with the stage work—a feat that Brecht himself would have greatly appreciated. Extra credit to Cesar Cancino, who plays honky-tonk piano onstage with his conductor 20 feet behind him, and to Peter Crompton, whose *Mahagonny* makes a fascinating 30-year neon evolution right before your eyes.

Palo Alto Weekly, June 2, 2000

BRECHT'S *TROMMELN IN DER NACHT* IN ZÜRICH

Sonja Augustin

Gemeinsam veranstaltet vom Theater Neumarkt, dem Theaterhaus Gessnerallee und dem Literaturhaus der Museumsgesellschaft, wurde am Dienstagabend am Zürcher Theater Neumarkt das nun bereits vierte "Hope and Glory"-Festival—gedacht als Sprungbrett für junge Regie-Talente—mit Brecht's *Trommeln in der Nacht* eröffnet.

Das Stück verknüpft ein privates Liebesdrama mit dem Berliner Spartakusaufstand von 1919. Gezeichnet vom ersten Weltkrieg und einer ihm folgenden Gefangenschaft im fernen Afrika, kehrt der längst tot gesagte Andre Kragler (Beat Marti) zur Verlobung seiner Braut Anna Balicke (Fabienne Hadorn) mit dem erfolgreichen Kriegsgewinnler Friedrich Murk (Martin Hug) nach Hause zurück.

Anna liebt ihren Andre zwar noch immer, hat sich jedoch von ihren Eltern (Christoph Kopp, Malika Khatir), die als *Fabrikanten* ebenfalls von dem Krieg profitiert haben, in die Beziehung mit Murk drängen lassen, von dem sie bereits ein Kind erwartet.

Der Konflikt zwischen Anna, ihrem Heimkehrer und ihrer spießig auf Prosperität bedachten Familie spielt sich, erzählt und kommentiert vom Journalisten Babusch (Dominique Müller), der auch als Trommler und Musiker fungiert, unter viel Alkohol vor dem Hintergrund der revolutionären Nachkriegswirren und Straßenschlachten ab. Andre und Anna schlagen sich zwar halbwegs auf die Seite der Revolte, ziehen sich jedoch in ihre häusliche Idylle von Ruh und Ordnung zurück: Andre sieht letztlich

nicht ein, warum er freiwillig Kopf und Kragen riskieren soll, um der doch etwas abstrakten Idee von mehr sozialer Gerechtigkeit zum Durchbruch zu verhelfen.

Der jungen Zürcher Regiestudentin Barbara Weber geht es in ihrer Hamburger Diplominszenierung explizit darum, die schon vom jungen Brecht kritisch konstatierte Abwertung von Ideologien zu unserer heutigen, von inflationärer Abnutzung ideologischer Werte geprägten Zeit in Beziehung zu bringen. Sie hat Brechts frühes Drama als expressionistisch verfremdetes Volkstheaterstück in Szene gesetzt, das mit seinen grellen Überzeichnungen oft an *Grand Guignol* oder bitterböse Szenen aus makabren Kindermärchen erinnert. Der Familienzweist in dem wie eine Puppenstube auf die Bühne gestellten Mini-Guckkasten (Bühne: Michel Schaltegrand) nimmt sich als effektiv stilisierte Grotteske zunächst recht



erheiternd aus, ufert dann aber unter Einbezug der Straßenkrawalle, in denen Protagonisten zu viel rötlich wallendem Pulverdampf auch in wechselnde Rollen des revoltierenden Pöbels schlüpfen, ins ziemlich unentwirrbare Durcheinander eines apokalyptischen Infernos aus.

Doch immerhin gelingt es der jungen Regisseurin, eine unheimliche Atmosphäre gespenstisch bedrängender Bilder zu schaffen, und

als besonders ironischer Gag kann etwa die wie im Gemälde von Delacroix höchst dramatisch arrangierte Gruppe von Revoluzzern gewertet werden, die sich heroenhaft todesmutig dem Kampf mit dem Gebläse einer Windmaschine stellen.

Aargauer Zeitung, 19. April 2001

DREIGROSCHENOPER IN FRANKFURT AM MAIN

Stefan Krupa

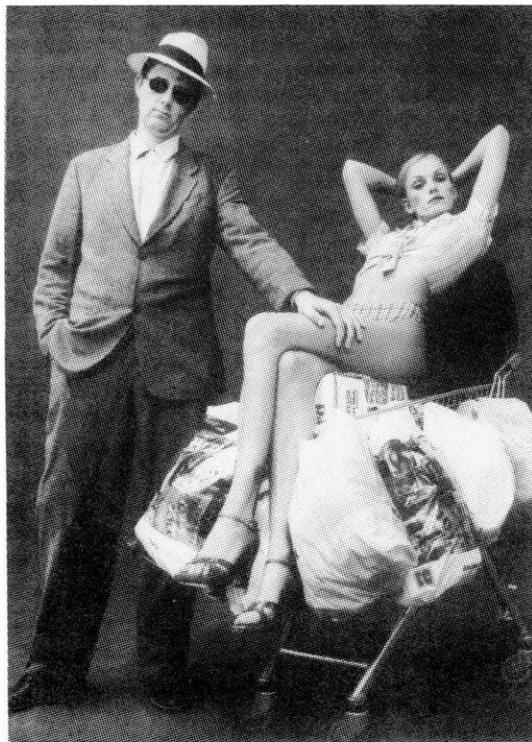
Dass der Komponist Kurt Weill (1900-1950) fast ausnahmslos in einem Atemzuge mit Bertolt Brecht genannt wird, obwohl die Zusammenarbeit zwischen beiden Künstlern nur einen relativ kurzen Zeitraum (1927-30) umfasste und keineswegs der Löwenanteil von Weills kompositorischem Gesamtwerk in dieser Zeit entstand, ist zweifellos dem nachhaltigen Publikumserfolg der beiden großen Bühnenwerke dieser Periode zu verdanken, der *Dreigroschenoper* (1928) und *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (1930), die bis heute Weills erfolgreichste Beiträge für das Musiktheater geblieben sind. Nach Studien u.a. bei Engelbert Humperdinck und Ferruccio Busani wandte sich Weill anfangs einer auf Dissonanzen beruhenden experimentellen Klangsprache zu, die ihm (nicht zuletzt am Uraufführungstheater der *Dreigroschenoper*) den Ruf eines Avantgardisten eintrugen. Diese Tonsprache gab der Komponist jedoch schon früh wieder auf, wie bereits die beiden Brechtoperen verdeutlichen, deren harmonische Sprache weitgehend auf Tonalität ausgerichtet ist.

Nach den kurzen Opern *Der Protagonist*, *Royal Palace* (beide 1925), *Na und?* (1926), *Der Zar lässt sich fotografieren* (1927) und dem im gleichen Jahr entstandenen *Mahagonny*- Songspiel, seiner ersten Zusammenarbeit mit Brecht, ist die *Dreigroschenoper* Weills erstes abendfüllendes Werk für die Musikbühne.

Genau wie ihr historisches Vorbild ist die *Dreigroschenoper* hauptsächlich eine Gesellschafts-

satire, die sich formal des Musiktheaters, inhaltlich des "Milieus" bedient. Die Spiegelung einer korrupt-spießbürgerlichen Doppelmoral in der Handlung wird in der Hauptsache mittels des Textes erreicht, in dem das vermeintlich lose Gesindel ausschließlich bürgerlich-gesetzte Verhaltensformen an den Tag legt. Der Musik kommt hierbei (ohne die eigenständige Qualität der Vertonung zu schmälern) hauptsächlich eine unterstützende Rolle im Rahmen des dramaturgischen Gesamtgefüges zu. Genau wie Gay und Pepusch schufen auch Brecht und Weill mit ihrer Aktualisierung des zeitlosen Stoffes keine Oper im engeren Sinne, aber ein veritables Zugstück des modernen Musiktheaters.

Wie schon die Originalvorlage von Gay und Pepusch eignet sich auch die Brecht-Weill-Version des Stücks für Aufführungen durch kleine Opernensembles oder singende Schauspieler. Weills Musik bedient sich verschiedener Techniken. Als Ganzes betrachtet ist die Musik der *Dreigroschenoper* eine Art Pasticcio verschiedenster, oft in satirischer Brechung genutzter Stileinflüsse, von barocker Polyphonie (Vorspiel und Finale) bis zu



Tanzmusikstilen der späten zwanziger Jahre. Diese bewusste Uneinheitlichkeit der stilistischen Mittel steht gewollt in klarem Gegensatz zum alles verschmelzenden Gesamtkunstwerksgedanken der Spätromantik. Die gleiche Zielsetzung wird durch das kleine Instrumentalensemble symbolisiert, das, eher an Unterhaltungsorchester als an symphonischen Klangkörpern orientiert, eine klare Absage an die in der Entstehungszeit der *Dreigroschenoper* noch vorherrschende symphonische Monstrosität des Bühnenrepertoires (Wagner, Strauss, Schreker, Korngold) erteilt.

Nach der Uraufführung wurde die formale musikalische Anlage des Werkes von manchem Kritiker als neuer Entwicklungsschritt des Musiktheaters apostrophiert. Dies trifft nicht zu, denn als Bühnenwerk mit gesprochenem Dialog und Musiknummern bedienten sich die Schöpfer der *Dreigroschenoper* historisch gewachsener, durch das symphonische Musikdrama überwunden geglaubter Formmodelle zurück, anstatt eine neue Musiktheaterform zu erfinden (was auch gar nicht in ihrem Sinne lag). Das ändert jedoch nichts daran, dass die *Dreigroschenoper*, obwohl klein besetzt und nicht eigentlich "operhaft," zu den bedeutenden Beiträgen des Musiktheaters im 20. Jahrhundert gehört. Sie ist das große Gegenstück zur großen Oper.

Programmheft der Kammeroper, Frankfurt am Main

KAMMEROPER UND DREIGROSCHENOPER

Rainer Pudenz im Gespräch
mit Stefan Krupa

K: Herr Pudenz, in diesem Jahr inszenieren sie erstmalig die *Dreigroschenoper* mit dem Ensemble der Kammeroper Frankfurt. Was gab ihnen den Ausschlag, dieses Stück auszuwählen?

P: Gründe, die *Dreigroschenoper* zu realisieren, gibt es viele. Es ist ein ausgezeichnetes und dankbares Stück. Bertolt Brecht hat einen gehaltvollen Text geschrieben, und Kurt Weill die

musikalischen Teile treffsicher vertont. Die *Dreigroschenoper* ist ein Klassiker der Moderne und immer wirkungsvoll. Sie hat nach wie vor ein Publikum.

K: Wenn auch keine richtige Oper.

P: Das stimmt. Eine Oper im klassischen Sinne ist sie nicht. Aber dieses Ziel hatten Bertolt Brecht und Kurt Weill auch nicht, als sie das Stück schufen. Sie wollten der Moral ihrer Zeit mit den Mitteln ihrer Zeit einen Zerrspiegel vorhalten. Mit einem spätromantischen Klangapparat hatte der Stoff nicht gewirkt. Die *Dreigroschenoper*-Musik ist wie ein Kaleidoskop aus vielen Stilmitteln zusammengesetzt. Da steht Jazz neben barocken Formen--und doch passt es irgendwie alles zusammen. Das Orchester ist wie eine Tanzkapelle der Zwanziger.

K: Ein Rahmen, der der Kammeroper entgegenkommt...

P: Das natürlich auch--*Die Dreigroschenoper* bietet sich für Ensembles wie die Kammeroper geradezu an. In einem riesigen Opernhaus wirkt solch ein Stück eher deplaziert. Die *Dreigroschenoper* ist absolut eine Kammeroper.

K: Warum dann erst jetzt, nach neunzehn Jahren Kammeroper Frankfurt, diese Produktion?

P: Bertolt Brecht ist ein Klassiker und für jeden Regisseur eine besondere Herausforderung. Die *Dreigroschenoper* ist nach wie vor ein Zugstück und wird oft inszeniert. Dadurch ist sie als Stück wesentlich präsenter in der Öffentlichkeit als andere Musiktheaterwerke, auch von Bertolt Brecht und Kurt Weill. Schon deshalb liegt die Messlatte für jede Neuinszenierung höher als bei repertoirefremden Stücken. Die *Dreigroschenoper* braucht erfahrene und umsichtige Produktionsteams, denn sie ist vielschichtig und hintergründig und deshalb eine Herausforderung.

K: Die *Dreigroschenoper* ist ein zeitloser Stoff. Was Bertolt Brecht 1928 auf den Punkt gebracht hat, ist heute noch genau so aktuell wie damals. An der damals karikierten Doppelmoral der Gesellschaft hat sich seither wenig geändert. Sehen Sie in der *Dreigroschenoper* hauptsächlich eine sozialkritische Satire?

P: Die Handlung ist pure Gesellschaftskritik, aber in der Form ist die *Dreigroschenoper* eine Komödie. Das komische Element ergibt sich schon daraus,

dass die ganzen Bettler, Huren, Zuhälter und deren Anhang sich komplett speißbürgerlich benehmen—egal, was für verrufene Dinge sie gerade tun. Einzig Macheath fällt aus der Rolle. Er ist deshalb Verbrecher, weil er anders ist. Was die arrivierte Halbwelt natürlich als Schock empfindet. In diesem Spannungsfeld steckt eine Menge komisches Potenzial. Die Musik von Kurt Weill setzt dem ganzen noch einen drauf. Sie entlarvt das aufgesetzte Verhalten der Personen endgültig.

K: Bertolt Brecht, Kurt Weill, Rainer Pudenz, ist die *Dreigroschenoper* “der Beginn einer großen Freundschaft”?

P: Die *Dreigroschen*-Produktion fand von Anfang an in einer guten Arbeitsatmosphäre statt. Auf solchem Boden gedeihen auch gute Ergebnisse.

Programmheft der Kammeroper, Frankfurt am Main

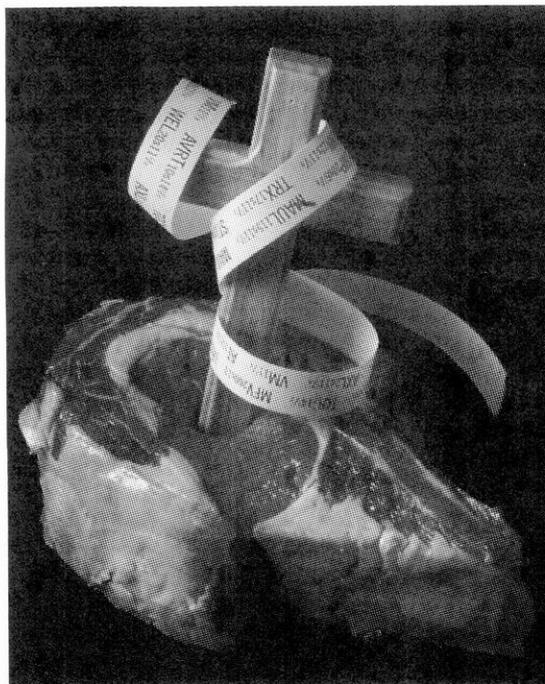
SAINT JOAN OF THE STOCKYARDS

Mary Shen Barnidge

German playwright Bertolt Brecht wrote four plays set in Chicago without ever having seen that city, instead drawing on the social criticism of novelists such as Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, and Upton Sinclair, along with the Hollywood images that make Al Capone our overseas ambassador to this day. Small wonder that the Hog Butcher To The World should come to symbolize the worst excesses of capitalism, with innocent laborers trapped beneath the heel of ruthless money-obsessed authority figures.

The inequities of a century ago have given way to big corporations now making massive monetary contribution to charitable causes—which include the arts. And while one may argue that all this practice accomplishes is to allow the proletariat a greater participation in the exploitation, some modifications in the old stereotypes are in order for an American staging in 2001 of *Saint Joan Of The Stockyards*.

Adapter-director Stefan Brün savvily resolves



**PROP
THEATRE**

PROP THEATRE GROUP IN HONOR OF THEIR TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY SEASON
PROUDLY PRESENTS THE WORLD PREMIERE ADAPTATION OF

Bertolt Brecht's SAINT JOAN OF THE STOCKYARDS

adapted and directed by STEFAN BRÜN

featuring FRED HUSAR, JONATHAN LAVAN, EMILY LOTSPEICH, GUY MASSEY,
JOHN FENNER MAYS, EAMONN MCDONAGH, HERB METZLER, MAUREEN MICHAEL,
SAM MUÑOZ, ROXANNE SAYLOR, DON SCHROEDER, SARA WEHRHEIM
and JENNY MAGNUS as Joan Dark

CASTING BY JERRY FINE
MUSIC BY KURT WEILL
PRODUCTION DESIGNER: JERRY FINE
PRODUCTION MANAGER: JERRY FINE
PRODUCTION OFFICE: JERRY FINE
PRODUCTION OFFICE: JERRY FINE



these tensions by adhering to Brecht's precepts of what translates roughly as "alienation effect," presenting the play's arguments with an ironic edge that forces us to suspend easy judgements in evaluating their validity. Jenny Magnus' clarion voice and Gainsborough face lend an ambiguity to her Joan Dark that leads us to consider the inevitability of her martyrdom, while Jonathan Lavan portrays Pierpont Mauler as a success-weary magnate on the brink of reform—until public outcry demands restoration of the Bad Old System.

The repugnant side of industry is represented by his weasely assistant, played by Guy Massey as a villain more inept than malicious. The Fat Cats rendered by Fred Husar and Herb Metzler are likewise engaging, the latter recounting the details of the Stock Market's Collapse with all the pathos of a messenger in Greek tragedy. And though the framing device cited by Brün in his playbill notes (something about a 1932 radio broadcast by a radical German theatre company) is so minimal as to be evident, but a number of multi-media devices—electronically distorted voice-overs, period photographs of Da Yards and video footage of generic populace projected onto a huge screen, poignant incidental music and atonal vocal

anthems—also guard against propagandistic zeal.

In the end, according to Brecht and Brün, the source of all evil is not money, but poverty—for which no cure has been found. Prop Thtr does not propose to give us one, but it gets us thinking about the possibilities. And that's a start, isn't it?

Windy City Times. February 21, 2001.

BRECHT; ALAS, A CULINARY CLASSIC?

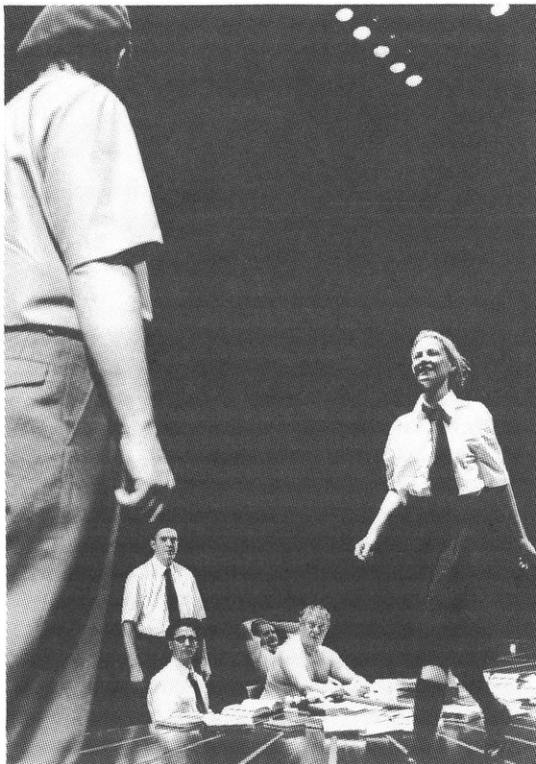
Leben des Galilei. Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf.
Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti

Norman Roessler

Though it may not have the history or the drawing power of Berlin or Vienna, the Ruhrgebiet allows the intrepid theatergoer the opportunity, due to the proximity of several large cities, to take in a variety of performances from many competent and well-financed theater houses. Removed from the glare of theater hubs, one can take stock of individual playwrights and the national theater scene without being inundated with intellectual and theatrical pomp and circumstance. And so I drove the Autobahn between Düsseldorf and Essen in order to view *Leben des Galilei* and *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* and to reflect upon the current status of Brecht in the German theatrical hinterland.

The Düsseldorf production of *Leben des Galilei* was presented in the Großes Haus, a giant theater house and stage, which is testament to the massively subsidized and mechanized German theater. However, Klaus Emmerich (director and stage design) and his production team confined the performance, for the most part, to the forward third of the downstage area. The cavernous upstage was closed off by a mechanical partition, which could be opened vertically to expose a framed area immediately behind the main performance space, or be opened completely to expose the whole stage. After watching a concurrent production of *Hamlet* in the same house a few days later, Emmerich's stage

organization proved to be a sound decision. The *Hamlet* production utilized the entire stage, yet constructed only the sparsest of sets. This had the effect of forcing the actors, especially the lead, to overlap in order to fill the spatial and acoustic void. In contrast, Emmerich not only blocked off the upstage area, but also concentrated the action in a limited spatial grid. Between the partition and the apron ran a walking pit which extended the breadth of the stage in which most of the action was situated.



Galileo (Volker Spengler) sat stage center in the pit and used the stage floor as a simulated desk cluttered with papers, books, globes, and telescopes. Spengler maintained this central position throughout the course of the production leaving only once during the “interrogation” scene. Otherwise, all action revolved around Galileo’s central position. Scenes involving the papacy were performed upstage framed by the partition window. The news of the plague as well as Galileo’s interrogation scene were played in

this upstage area to particularly good effect. The plague was evoked by strobe lighting, as the massive stage machinery whirled around chaotically, and the torture scene was created by showing the silhouette of a person on the rack. The production methods of these scenes gave one high hopes for the carnival scene, but this scene was cut from the performance. This was both unfortunate and, considering the capabilities of the theater house as well as the constituency of the audience, somewhat puzzling.

Volker Spengler was superb as Galileo. In contrast to the other characters, who were dressed in student-like apparel (knickers, starched shirts, ties, and caps) or formal papal regalia, Galileo was clad only in trousers, suspenders, and during more formal appearances, a tank top tee shirt. Whereas the costume design was neither overly impressive nor original, its spare formality did serve the purpose of illuminating the carnality and physicality of Galileo. Of course, Spengler is well able to suggest these traits himself. Blessed with an everyman face which seems to have registered each moment of life with a crevice and a body which is, well, comfortably lived in, Spengler was able to express a multitude of effects, emotions, and ideas simply with a gaze, an expression, or an aside. This acting talent was a necessity. Confined to a sitting position, with his head barely two feet above the stage floor, Spengler rarely had the chance to act with anything but his upper body and face. After watching *Fräulein Julie* at the neighboring Kleines Schauspielhaus, I wondered if the *Galileo* production and particularly Spengler's interpretation might be better suited to this more intimate theater. As for the rest of the ensemble, their performances were solid, with Jost Grix (Ansager / Andreas) and Irene Christ (Virginia) being most noteworthy.

The dramatic interpretation was, in a phrase, “classic Brecht.” The main themes and theater practices were present, and no surprises emerged during the production. Perhaps it is a product of my biased expectations as an American theatergoer (starved for avant-garde theater) and an academic (steeped in the potential of Brechtian theory), but it is somewhat of a disappointment to experience a production of a Brecht work and feel intellectually and theatrically comfortable. This, despite the fact that the Düsseldorf troupe presented an excellent



interesting. A large pool of water, simulating a pond, with a small boat occupying the orchestra pit. A boathouse and small swimming pool sunk in the stage paralleled the pond. Two arches with Vegas-style lighting and an overhead walk, cutting diagonally across the stage, loomed above the

and professional performance. The only Brechtian moment came from the audience. Gymnasium students, who I'm sure were required to be there, heckled and giggled throughout the performance. Finally, Spengler, in a goodhearted, comradely fashion, interrupted the performance and encouraged the students to empty their excess energy before he continued. When this did not work, he and the other actors engaged in an extended fit of hysterical laughter which, at least according to the applause of the high brow audience, appeared to trump the unruly youngsters. Yet the transgressive, circus atmosphere seemed to me something that the master would have appreciated and perhaps utilized.

Regrettably such audience participation was absent at the production of *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*. If I was faintly disappointed with a production of "classic Brecht," I was seriously disheartened by the culinary theater dished up at Essen's Grillo Theater. Although more intimate than the Grosses Schauspielhaus in Düsseldorf, the Grillo Theater seems more like a converted film house and hence provides distorted sight lines and acoustic reception. The stage itself, however, was

center stage. This stage, which rotated, was used effectively throughout the production, usually to denote scene changes. Mathias Kniesbeck (director) and his production team presented an efficient but uninspired production in which the main actors, Claus Boysen (Puntila) and Wolfram Bölzle (Matti) were competent but unable to overcome the banal staging. Granted, *Puntila* is one of Brecht's lightest and entertaining pieces, but I still believe that the production could have been presented with more of an edgy finesse.

In summary, I saw one excellent and one competent production, performed by two good professional ensembles. I only wish I had such opportunities to view Brecht in American theater. Still, I wonder whether on subsequent journeys to Germany if I should even bother to indulge a production of Brecht on stage. For, in the final analysis, should we ever feel comfortable with Brecht?

Temple University

SCHNITTSTELLEN DER MODERNE UND POSTMODERNE IM WERK VON BERTOLT BRECHT AM BEISPIEL DER *DREIGROSCHENOPER*

Antje Krüger

1. Brechts Textproduktion in den 20er Jahren

Mit dem Vorwurf des Plagiats, der auch immer von einer "aufgeregten" öffentlichen Diskussion begleitet wurde, sind Texte von Brecht nicht erst seit Fuegig *Brecht and Company* (1994) konfrontiert worden. Bereits dem Stück, mit dem Brecht sein Durchbruch als Dramatiker gelang, folgte, wie Grimm schreibt, eine "lärmende Plagiataffäre" (14). Gemeint ist die *Dreigroschenoper*, die 1928 mit großem Erfolg im Theater am Schiffbauerdamm in Berlin aufgeführt wurde. Die Faszination des Stückes, die zu einer schnellen internationalen Rezeption führte, schien jedoch zu einem gewissen Maß auf der Widersprüchlichkeit und Spannung innerhalb der Gestaltung des Textes zu beruhen. "Die Öffentlichkeit ist erregt und verblüfft, aber sie applaudiert," berichtet der Kritiker Lunarcharskij 1928, der die *Dreigroschenoper* zwei Monate nach der Uraufführung sah (Hecht 226). Ähnlich reagierte die Berliner Kritik, die sich zwischen den Polen der begeisterten Zustimmung und Ablehnung des Stückes bewegte. Unter den bekanntesten Kritikern war Alfred Kerr, der kurz nach der Uraufführung den Verdacht des Plagiats gegen Brecht aussprach und das öffentliche Interesse auf den Autoren und sein Stück lenkte. Kerr erklärte in einer Besprechung des Stückes, daß Brecht zahlreiche Verse von Villon ohne Kennzeichnung übernommen habe, worauf dieser jedoch mit einer "grundsätzlichen Laxheit in Fragen geistigen Eigentums" antwortete (Eine Erklärung Brechts 316). Diese frühe Auseinandersetzung um den Urheberstatus verweist auf eine wesentliche Problematik der Textproduktion bei Brecht, die ein permanentes Konfliktpotential bis in die Gegenwart beinhaltet.

Brecht scheint ein passionierter Sammler und Leser gewesen zu sein. Bereits in der Augsburger Zeit, aber auch später in Berlin sammelte Brecht

Zeitungsausschnitte und Zitate, die er bei Bedarf für seine Texte verwendete. Wie in der Brecht-Biographie von Hecht nachzulesen ist, versuchte Brecht mit diesen Methoden, die Stoffe für seine Gedichte, Dramen und Prosa der Gegenwart zu entnehmen. Ein Beispiel für dieses Vorgehen ist die Ballade "Apfelböck oder die Lilie auf dem Felde," die auf Zeitungsberichten über den Mord eines Minderjährigen an seinen Eltern basierte. Brecht verfolgte damit das Ziel, Gegenwart so weit wie möglich objektiv zu erfassen, was auch seinem Interesse an soziologischen Studien in dieser Zeit entsprach.

Die Aufnahme von Texten oder Beiträgen, die nicht der eigenen Textproduktion entstammten, entwickelte Brecht von Mitte bis Ende der 20er Jahre in Berlin weiter, in denen er sich durch Bekanntschaft mit Max Reinhardt und Erwin Piscator mit neuen Produktionsformen und künstlerischen Arbeitsweisen auseinandersetzte. So entstanden im politischen Theater Piscators Stücke auf der Basis eines "dramatischen Kollektivs," das aus mehreren Mitgliedern bestand und dem Brecht zeitweise angehörte. Die Stücke wurden innerhalb einer Gruppe erarbeitet und diskutiert, so daß eine experimentelle und wissenschaftliche Arbeitsform erreicht wurde. Offensichtlich scheint Brecht von diesen kollektiven Produktionsformen früh fasziniert gewesen zu sein, wie das *Leben Edward des Zweiten* zeigt, das Brecht Mitte der 20er Jahre zusammen mit Lion Feuchtwanger verfaßte (Grimm 14). Für fast alle Dramen, die nach dieser Zeit geschrieben wurden, gilt, daß sie in Zusammenarbeit produziert wurden. Langjährige Mitarbeiter waren Elisabeth Hauptmann oder Margarete Steffin, aber es beteiligten sich auch eine Vielzahl anderer Künstler oder Literaturtheoretiker für kurze Zeit. Aufgrund dieser Arbeitsweise scheint ein Streit um die Urheberschaft und der Verdacht des Plagiats zwangsläufig zu folgen.

Walter Benjamin, der eine theoretische Kommentierung wesentlicher Aspekte im Werk Brechts vornahm, und die in der Publikation *Versuche über Brecht* nach dessen Tod zusammengefaßt wurden, gehörte zwischen 1930-1939 ebenfalls dem Kreis um Brecht an. Recht genau beschreibt er Mittel des epischen Theaters, wobei ein Schwerpunkt auf dem

Verständnis des *Gestus* liegt. Der *Gestus* beruht laut Benjamin auf der Unterbrechung der Handlung, die durch die bewußte Trennung der künstlerischen Mittel (Text, Musik und Bild) erzeugt wird. "Gesten erhalten wir um so mehr, je häufiger wir einen Handelnden unterbrechen" (9). Interessant ist in diesem Zusammenhang, daß Benjamin gerade das Zitat als grundlegende Methode der Unterbrechung bestimmte:

Man darf hier weiter ausgreifen und sich darauf besinnen, daß das Unterbrechen eines der fundamentalen Verfahren aller Formgebung ist. [...] Es liegt, um nur eines herauszugreifen, dem Zitat zugrunde. Einen Text zitieren schließt ein: seinen Zusammenhang unterbrechen. Es ist daher wohl verständlich, daß das epische Theater, das auf die Unterbrechung gestellt ist, ein im spezifischem Sinne zitierbares ist (26).

Das Zitat kann somit als Mittel des epischen Theaters verstanden werden. Aufgrund dessen ergeben die vielfältigen Textzitate, die nicht nur aus dem Literaturkanon, sondern aus der "Alltagswelt" eines Lesers stammen, einen sinnvollen Kontext, der an das Konzept der Montage erinnert. Zu fragen bleibt allerdings, warum Brecht die Zitate kaum oder selten kennzeichnete. Die Antwort kann wahrscheinlich in Brechts scheinbar so gelassener Vorstellung von der "Freiheit geistigen Eigentums" gesucht werden, die jeden Leser zum gleichzeitigen Produzenten der Texte bestimmt. Die Stücke, die daraus entstanden sind und für die meisten Brecht als Autor zeichnete, erinnern an intertextuell verwobene Gefüge, die vor allem Autoren der Postmoderne oder diejenigen, die an der Schwelle zur Postmoderne standen, wie beispielsweise Joyce oder Borges, als Verfahren für Texte gewannen. Am Beispiel der *Dreigroschenoper*, die ein deutliches Montagekonzept aufweist, möchte ich zeigen, daß sich auch bei Brecht Schnittstellen der Moderne und Postmoderne beobachten lassen.

2. Das Konzept der Montage in der *Dreigroschenoper*

Techniken der Montage, die sich als Zusammensetzung von heterogenen Sprachmaterialien zu einem neuen Ganzen verstehen, existieren seit Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts zunächst in der Bildenden

Kunst, dann im Film und werden später auch für literarische Texte genutzt.

Zwischen 1910 und 1911 montieren Picasso und Braques zum ersten Mal "Fundstücke aus der Realität" in Form von Notenblättern oder Zeitungsausschnitten in ihre Bilder. 1915 setzt David Wark Griffith für den Film *The Birth of a Nation* aus filmischen Sequenzen einen Handlungsablauf mit Hilfe des Schnitts zusammen, den auch Eisenstein für *Panzerkreuzer Potkim* 1925 anwendet. Schriftsteller wie Dos Passos oder Alfred Döblin verwenden die Technik der Montage im Roman (Wischmeyer 2032). Zur Zeit der Entstehung der *Dreigroschenoper* kann somit davon ausgegangen werden, daß die Technik der Montage weitgehend bekannt war, wenn auch eine Etablierung des Verfahrens um diesen Zeitpunkt fraglich ist.

Brecht setzte mit der *Dreigroschenoper* zum ersten Mal konsequent Formen des epischen Theaters um, die bereits im Drama *Fahren* von Plaquet 1924 angewendet und von Piscator als Begriff popularisiert wurden. Brechts Stück entstand in einem relativ kurzen Zeitraum im Sommer 1928, wobei die Zusammenarbeit mit Kurt Weill, der die Musik komponierte, bewußt eng gestaltet war. Die *Dreigroschenoper* ist immer auch im Zusammenhang mit der Musik und der Bühnengestaltung von Caspar Neher zu sehen, so daß eine Deutung als ausschließliches Lesestück zu eng gefaßt wäre. Wichtig war den Künstlern jedoch eine bewußte Trennung der unterschiedlichen Elemente, die zu der spannungsreichen, heterogenen Form führte. So erweist sich die Inkohärenz als Struktur des epischen Theaters, wie Brecht bemerkte:

Die Aufführung der *Dreigroschenoper* 1928 war die erfolgreichste Demonstration des epischen Theaters. [...] Ihre auffälligste Neuerung bestand darin, daß die musikalischen von den übrigen Darbietungen streng getrennt waren ("Über die Verwendung von Musik für ein episches Theater," 473).

Im Kontrast zu Wagners Konzept des Gesamtkunstwerks verweist das epische Theater und in diesem Fall explizit die *Dreigroschenoper* auf die Grenzen der unterschiedlichen Künste, die dennoch auf der Bühne zusammengeführt werden. Singerman bezeichnet diese Struktur, die auf der "Ansammlung von Attraktionen und der Trennung von Elementen" beruht, als Prinzip der "Music-hall,

eines Zirkus oder einer Revue im dramatischen Theater" (235). Die "Trennung der Elemente" bedeutet somit eine Form der Montage, die die einzelnen Bestandteile nicht-linear nebeneinander anordnet und einen organischen Aufbau aufhebt.¹

Das Montagekonzept ermöglichte es den Künstlern völlig unterschiedliche semantische und stilistische Elemente auf die Bühne zu bringen, die zu einer Vielfältigkeit und hohen Flexibilität des Verfahrens führten. So zeigt sich beispielsweise auf der Ebene der Textstruktur, daß die einzelnen Szenen unabhängig voneinander gespielt werden könnten, da auf eine lineare Anbindung der Szenenfolge in vielen Fällen verzichtet wird. Der Beginn jeder Szene erscheint wie ein "Schnitt" innerhalb der Handlung, der eine andere Perspektive und einen neuen Ort des Geschehens wählt. Beispielsweise zeigt das vierte Bild den Pferdestall in Soho, das nächste Bild führt in das Hurenhaus Turnbridge, das sechste spielt im Gefängnis Old Bailey und das achte in Peachums Bettlergarderoben. Die einzelnen Szenen könnten als unabhängige Episoden aufgeführt werden, wobei die eingefügten Songs den Handlungsablauf unterbrechen und die Auflösung der Bühnenillusion bedingen, die das epische Theater mit der Aufhebung eines stringenten Zusammenhangs anstrebt.

Weill unterstützte die fragmentarischen Formen, die die Struktur der *Dreigroschenoper* ermöglicht, mit der Komposition atonaler Musik, die die grotesken und nicht-linearen Elemente des Stückes betont. Wie Brecht in einem Aufsatz von 1935 schrieb, willigte Weill "in die Komposition mehr oder weniger banaler Songtexte ein", die er zum ersten Mal für die Baden-Badener Musikfestwoche komponierte ("Über die Verwendung von Musik für ein episches Theater," 474). Die Musik wurde insofern von der Handlung getrennt und damit in das Stück montiert, indem bewußt auf die Songs hingewiesen wird: "Dies wurde schon äußerlich dadurch bemerkbar, daß das kleine Orchester auf der Bühne aufgebaut war. Für das Singen der Songs wurde ein Lichtwechsel vorgenommen, das Orchester wurde beleuchtet - [...] und die Schauspieler nahmen einen Stellungswechsel vor" (473). Verstärkt wird dieser Effekt dadurch, daß der Schauspieler einen Singenden bewußt zeigen soll, so daß eine Einfühlung des Zuschauers verhindert wird ("Anmerkungen zur *Dreigroschenoper*," 997).

Das Konzept der Montage, das dem Stück einen fragmentarischen jedoch vernetzten Zusammenhang der einzelnen Teile verleiht, entspricht dem Bemühen des epischen Theaters, Illusion durch die Unterbrechung der Handlung auf der Bühne zu zerstören. Auffällig ist, daß die *Dreigroschenoper* dabei sowohl auf der textlichen, musikalischen als auch gestalterischen Ebene eine Neigung zur Banalität oder Trivialität aufweist, die durch die Verwendung von einfachen Mitteln erzielt wurde. So zeigt sich dieses Verfahren bei der Bühnengestaltung dadurch, daß die Ausstattung reduziert und zum Beispiel für den Vorhang nur ein schlichtes Tuch gewählt wurde. "Um Patina mit Neuheit, Prunk mit Schäßigkeit zu mischen, war dementsprechend der Vorhang ein kleiner, nicht zu sauberer Nesselfetzen, an Blechschnüren auf- und zugezogen. ("Aufbau der *Dreigroschenoper*-Bühne," 1000).

Die bewußte Wendung zur Trivialität hat der *Dreigroschenoper* nicht immer Lob eingetragen. Belanglosigkeit, Platitude, Oberflächlichkeit werden mit der Wertung "trivial" verbunden. Eine überraschende Komplexität ergibt sich jedoch, wenn der Begriff der "Oberfläche" auf einer formalen Ebene betrachtet wird. Durch die Reduzierung der Tiefenstrukturen entsteht eine Konzentration auf den Vordergrund, die die Nutzung des Raums im Theater mit neuen Vorzeichen versieht. Durch die Technik der Montage wird eine veränderte Wahrnehmung des Raums vermittelt, die ein Nebeneinander der einzelnen künstlerischen Elemente ermöglicht.

Das epische Montagetheater hat, wie die kubistische Malerei oder die Jazzmusik, weder Tiefe noch Perspektive. Alles wird in den Vordergrund gerückt, und zwar so nahe wie möglich an den Zuschauer heran (Singerman, 236).

Dieser Vergleich erscheint berechtigt, da innerhalb der *Dreigroschenoper* ähnlich wie im Kubismus die Zentralperspektive aufgehoben wird, um die einzelnen Elemente nebeneinander zu montieren. Der Blick des Betrachters wird auf die Bruchstellen innerhalb der Gestaltung gelenkt, die im kubistischen Bild durch die Abgrenzungen der verschiedenen Perspektiven, im epischen Theater durch die Trennung der künstlerischen Mittel erzeugt werden. Dieses Vorgehen hat zur Kritik an der Oberflächlichkeit des epischen Theaters geführt, die vielleicht Kerr in seiner negativen Rezension der Urauf-

führung dazu bewegte, im ersten Absatz die Personen auf dem Programmzettel zu zitieren und diesen mit dem Satz abzuschließen "das wär' aber auch schon alles" (Kerr, *Berliner Tagesblatt*, 1928).

Kerrs Beschreibung ist verkürzt und zu "oberflächlich", da es Brecht gelingt, ein komplexes Verfahren zu entwickeln. Kennzeichen des epischen Theaters, dessen Gestaltung mit "einfachen" Mitteln sich in der bewußten Wendung zur Trivialität ausdrückt, ist die Konzentration auf die Oberfläche und das Bemühen, Vorgänge transparent und demnach sichtbar zu machen. Damit wird Plastizität gewonnen, die sichtbar im Konzept des Gestus einen Ausdruck findet.

Mit der Technik der Montage wird vor allem der Raum des Theaters neu bewertet, dessen Visualität Brecht für die *Dreigroschenoper* bewußt einsetzte. Erstaunlich erscheint, daß die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Raum wie auch die Verwendung der Oberfläche Mittel sind, die vor allem Künstler der Postmoderne verwendeten. Mit dem Konzept der Montage zeichnen sich im Werk Brechts deutliche Schnittstellen der Moderne und Postmoderne ab, die aufschlußreiche Perspektiven auf die Texte eröffnen.

3. Schnittstellen der Moderne und Postmoderne im Werk von Brecht

Bereits Benjamin verweist in seinen frühen Essays auf die Oberfläche bei Brecht, die durch den Verlust von Tiefe entsteht. Er verbindet diese mit der Vorstellung über die "Verschüttung der Orchestra," die die Verringerung von Distanz zum Publikum zur Folge hat:

Der Abgrund, der die Spieler vom Publikum wie die Toten von den Lebendigen scheidet, [...] ist funktionslos geworden. Noch liegt die Bühne erhöht. Aber sie steigt nicht mehr aus einer unermeßlichen Tiefe auf: sie ist Podium geworden (Benjamin 7).

Stücke von Brecht spielen sich auf diesem Podium ab. Wie das Beispiel der *Dreigroschenoper* verdeutlicht, gewinnt das epische Theater mit der Montage künstlerischer Elemente ein räumliches Konzept, das sich auf die Sichtbarkeit des Dargestellten konzentriert. Dies hat zur Folge, daß Tiefenstrukturen, die auch für die psychologische Deutung der Figuren

eine Rolle spielen könnten, an Bedeutung verliert. Eine Vielzahl von Kritikern verstehen diesen Aspekt als Defizit Brechts, wie Antony Tatlow resümiert: "Lacking this necessary psychological depth, the work has insufficient capacity for reinterpretation. It contains no mysteries, everything is on the surface" (Tatlow 218).

Gerade die Verwendung der Oberfläche in Form eines räumlichen Konzepts erscheint jedoch als komplexe Entwicklung bei Brecht, die jedoch unterschätzt zu sein scheint. Eine hierarchische Anordnung des Geschehens wird mit dem Verlust der Zentralperspektive aufgehoben, da die unterschiedlichen Blickwinkel ein Nebeneinander der einzelnen Szenen ermöglichen, und alles im Vordergrund stehen kann. Mit dieser Orientierung im Raum kann ein "gleichzeitiges Sehen" aller Details, die sich auf der jeweiligen Oberfläche befinden, erfolgen. Dieses Verfahren führt zu einer Vielfältigkeit der Formen, die an kubistische Strukturen erinnern. Singerman beschreibt das Vorgehen als Verbindung einer "vertikalen" und "horizontalen" Montage, bei der die Idee der Trennung der Elemente die "Vertikale" und der Ablauf in der Zeit die "Horizontale" repräsentieren (235).

Gleichzeitiges Sehen aller Details, das in der Montage stattfindet, bedeutet bei Brecht "komplexes Sehen", das im Verzicht auf einen linearen Ablauf, der Aufgabe einer übergeordneten, originären Idee und dem Ende eines geschlossenen Zusammenhangs resultiert. An ihre Stelle setzt er assoziative, vernetzte Beziehungen, eine offene Struktur und Intertextualität.

Aber diese Manier, alles einer Idee unterzuordnen, die Sucht den Zuschauer in eine einlinige Dynamik hineinzuhetzen, wo er nicht nach links und rechts, nach oben und unten schauen kann, ist vom Standpunkt der neueren Dramatik abzulehnen. Auch in die Dramatik ist die Fußnote und das vergleichende Blättern einzuführen. Das komplexe Sehen muß geübt werden ("Anmerkungen zur *Dreigroschenoper*," 992).

Deutlich wird in dieser Aussage noch einmal der Aspekt des "Bildhaften", der mit dem *Gestus* zum Ausdruck kommt und mit der Formulierung des "komplexen Sehens" präzisiert wird. Die Beschreibung des "komplexen Sehens" scheint alle

Elemente zu erfassen, die das epische Montagetheater, wie es mit der *Dreigroschenoper* auf der strukturellen Ebene umgesetzt wurde, kennzeichnet. Hervorgehoben werden sollte, daß sich der Begriff "komplexes Sehen" nicht nur auf die visuelle Wahrnehmung bezieht, sondern bewußt kognitive Prozesse berücksichtigt. Brecht verweist damit auf die Entstehungshintergründe seiner Texte und die Methode des Zitats, die seit der Kritik von Kerr den Vorwurf des Plagiats provoziert haben.

Brechts Theater ist nicht nur ein "bildhaftes", sondern immer auch ein "literarisiertes" Theater. Die vielfältigen Vorlagen und Studien für seine Texte, die sich für fast alle der Stücke belegen lassen, verweisen auf die intertextuelle Komponente seiner Textproduktion. Ein gutes Beispiel dafür ist die *Heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe*, die in der Forschungsliteratur auch als "Zitat eines Dramas" beschrieben wird, und deren unterschiedliche Quellen und Vorlagen kaum vollständig erfaßt werden können. Die "Laxheit in Fragen geistigen Eigentums" führt zu einem intertextuellen Modell des Schreibens, das die Frage nach der Bedeutung der Urhebererschaft neu stellt.

Bemerkenswert ist, daß sich manche seiner Stücke wie ein räumliches Hypertextmodell lesen lassen, deren Zitate wie "links" auf ursprüngliche Textquellen hinweisen. Das Internet erscheint aufgrund dessen als ein adäquates Medium, um Texte von Brecht zu präsentieren. Literaturtheoretisch erinnert dieses Verfahren an das Rhizome-Modell von Deleuze und Guattari, die eine räumlich-verbundene Struktur in ihrem Artikel *A Thousand Plateaus* beschreiben. Sie konzentrieren sich ebenfalls ausschließlich auf die Oberfläche von Texten, auf der jeder Aspekt wahrgenommen werden kann. Sie verstehen das ideale Buch als räumliches Nebeneinander von Objekten auf einer einzelnen Seite: "The ideal for a book would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet" (Deleuze and Guattari 518).

Mit dem Montagekonzept der *Dreigroschenoper* und dem Verständnis des "komplexen Sehens" kann eine ähnliche Auffassung nachgewiesen werden, da sich die strukturelle Umsetzung der *Dreigroschenoper* wesentlich auf die Oberfläche konzentriert. Mit diesem Konzept zeichnet sich eine deutliche Verbindung Brechts zur Postmoderne ab, die

sich in grundlegenden Aspekten auf das Verständnis des Raums bezieht. "If modernism is marked by temporality, postmodernism is dominated by spatial understanding," schreibt Marc Silberman über das Verhältnis der Moderne und Postmoderne (7). Moderne und Postmoderne beschäftigen sich mit den komplexen Fragen um Zeit und Raum, die auch bei Brecht aufzufinden sind. Offensichtlich wird, daß Brecht sich als Autor der Transition von Moderne und Postmoderne erweist, da Aspekte der Zeit und des Raums in seinem Werk Bedeutung erlangen. So gewinnt er in vielen seiner Stücke auf der formalen Ebene ein räumliches Konzept, das mit der Nutzung der Oberfläche und Montagekonzepten Vorgehensweisen der Postmoderne widerspiegelt.

The vandalism of world literature, the mix of poetry and kitsch, the attempt to use mass culture positively, the notion of 'complex seeing' in the presentation and reception of art, all these characteristics of Brecht's approach to theatre resonate in postmodernist intertextuality, pastiche and remakes, discontinuity and indeterminacy (Silberman 7).

Auf der inhaltlichen Ebene bleibt Brecht jedoch den Vorstellungen der Moderne verhaftet, die sich in der Utopie der Veränderbarkeit des Menschen und seiner Umwelt äußern, und Brecht als Ziel des epischen Theaters und seines dialektischen Gestus formuliert: "Das Interesse des epischen Theaters ist ein eminent praktisches. Das menschliche Verhalten wird als veränderlich gezeigt" ("Über die Verwendung von Musik für ein episches Theater," 474).

Somit eröffnet Brechts Konzept der Montage mit dem Verweis auf die Oberfläche eine weitaus vielschichtiger Perspektive, als vermutet. Ansatz des epischen Theater ist die Transparenz von Strukturen, die auf der Oberfläche gezeigt und als Voraussetzung zur Transformation gesellschaftlicher Bedingungen formuliert werden. Auf der formalen und inhaltlichen Ebene wird so eine Verknüpfung moderner und postmoderner Elemente geschaffen, die die wechselseitige Anbindung der Strömungen verdeutlicht. Schnittstellen der Moderne und Postmoderne finden sich bei der Betrachtung der *Dreigroschenoper* innerhalb der Technik der Montage, die Grundlagen für das epische Theater beinhaltet. Wenn auch Tiefenstrukturen reduziert sind, so eröffnet sich dennoch durch die genaue Betrachtung der

Textoberflächen eine verblüffende Komplexität. Tatlows Beobachtung von 1983 scheint in diesem Sinn immer noch ein gewisses Maß an Gültigkeit zu besitzen: "We are only beginning to understand the depth of Brecht's work and the complexity of its relationship to our changing world" (215).

1. Der Verweis auf den russischen Theatertheoretiker Meyerhold ist hier interessant, da dieser die Form der "dramatischen Revue" als Aneinanderreihung von kleinen, schnell wechselnden Szenen mit einer unterbrochenen Handlung entwickelte, deren Form sich auch in der *Dreigroschenoper* wiederauffinden läßt (Singerman 235).

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THE BRECHT INDUSTRY POLITICS AND AVANT-GARDE IN A DIVIDED GERMANY

Nels Jeff Rogers

One of the most profound cultural divisions that resulted from the partitioning of Germany at the conclusion of the Second World War was the adoption of Socialist Realism as the official aesthetic of the East and the emergence, by the early 1960s, of modernism and many neo-avant-garde forms as an unofficial counter-aesthetic in the West. Works of Socialist Realism decorated the offices of government bureaucracies in the East while works of Abstract Expressionism adorned bank lobbies in the West. The result was the absorption of once genuinely oppositional art forms—art forms opposed to the commercialization of culture by an emergent consumer society—into the machinations of Cold War propaganda. Art was politicized by government and social forces on both sides of the Wall, and ceased, as a result, to be genuinely oppositional in its own right.

In the middle of these Cold War culture wars were two figures whose names inevitably come up in discussions of avant-garde art and politics: Bertolt Brecht and Theodor Adorno. Brecht, the practitioner, is widely regarded as representative of a politically committed avant-gardism that placed ends above means, art at the service of politics; whereas Adorno, the theorist, is seen as a defender of a hermetic strain of avant-garde art that elevated means above ends, art above the fray of practical politics. Each, in their own manner, defended the possibility of a genuinely oppositional art. And though this intersection of avant-garde art and politics has its origins in the late 1920s, it remains significant for us today primarily because of the forms it often took in the 1960s as a politicized generation of student radicals in Germany rejected what they perceived as the apolitical stance of their one time mentor, Adorno, and embraced a form of cultural praxis they found embodied in the works and theories of both Benjamin and Brecht. Central to the polarization between the positions represented by Brecht and Adorno is a question more pertinent today than it was in either the 1920s or 1960s: Are genuinely oppositional art forms, or genuinely oppositional forms of culture,

still possible?

To understand the continued relevance of Brecht and Adorno for any answer to this question one must, I would like to argue, recontextualize their positions within what Fredric Jameson has termed the “cultural logic of late capitalism,” a logic that came into its own in the 1950s and 1960s, but which has its origins in the emergent mass-media, consumer society of the 1920s—the period during which Brecht and Adorno first began to formulate their positions with regard to avant-garde art and politics. It should be stated from the outset that this is not some attempt to claim either Brecht or Adorno (or both) for some form of postmodernism; but rather, to establish connections between the cultural upheavals of the twenties (the period of the historical avant-garde) and those of the sixties which cast light on the cultural malaise that afflicts us now at beginning of the twenty-first century, when oppositional art has been reduced to the leftist agit-prop reading list that pops up on my computer screen each time I order books from Amazon.com. (And yes, Brecht is included in the list that includes a biography of Che Guevara, the autobiography of Malcom X and works by Bell Hooks).

Brecht’s turn to a politically committed theatre and Adorno’s strident defense of non-committed art were responses to an emergent social totality in which it was increasingly impossible to distinguish between commerce, culture, entertainment and politics. A totality which even a cursory glance at the commercially driven evening news in the era of high drama impeachment trials and ballot recounts confirms as our own. In what follows I suggest that, if “Brecht” and all that this name now entails is to remain viable for us in the 21st century (as more than a name on an Amazon.com reading list), we must take seriously Adorno’s critique of those elements of Brecht’s work which have, in my opinion, contributed to a new global, but largely de-politicized, Brecht industry.

PART I

Brecht and Adorno were united in their belief that autonomous, formally self-conscious art had a central role to play in the de-mystification of capitalist social relations. Both rejected art forms which simply reproduced, or claimed to reproduce, the ap-

pearance of social reality (what are traditionally considered realist forms) and assigned autonomous art a cognitive function that derived from its potential to re-present reality in a defamiliarized manner that made the historically produced, and hence changeable, nature of social reality available to experience. In this regard Adorno is more indebted to Brecht than is commonly acknowledged.¹ Where the positions of Adorno and Brecht differ most notably, particularly after the political upheavals of the early thirties, is with regard to the historical role of the proletariat, Soviet politics and the use-value of art—differences that would land one in East Germany and in the West at the conclusion of the war. Yet in the aftermath of the Cold War and with the disappearance of a traditional proletariat in the highly developed countries of Western Europe and the United States, the similarities largely outweigh the differences which can be reduced to questions of social agency and art’s use-value. Brecht retained a positive concept of social agency, the proletariat as the subject of history, and insisted that the cognitive function of art be put to political ends. Adorno, in contrast, largely rejected the notion of social agency, believing that the historical moment of the proletariat had passed, and felt that the political use of art further undermined its already precarious status in bourgeois society, reducing it to a specialized form of propaganda.

These differences emerged most starkly as Brecht and Adorno responded to the cultural and political upheavals which followed the stock market crash of 1929. Brecht, for example, wrote in December of 1930, that “neither artists nor their historians can be declared free from guilt for our conditions nor can they be released from the duty to work at changing the conditions” (*Über Politik und Kunst* 18) as a justification for his move toward more politicized productions and the agit-prop style theatre embodied first and foremost by *The Measures Taken*.² Adorno, in contrast, moved in the opposite direction, choosing not to ‘take sides’ and to further distance himself from the practical politics of the day. In 1930, he resigned from the editorial staff of the avant-garde music journal *Anbruch*, in order to protest the journals move toward closer ties with the Communist Party.³ Though in different ways, Brecht and Adorno were both responding to the increased

politicization of culture which would not have been possible but for its rapid commodification and the emergence of genuine mass media (from newspapers to pulp-fiction, radio, recording and film) during the early part of the 20th century.

Prior to Brecht's decision to pursue a more committed form of theatre, Adorno had praised his work, particularly *Mahagonny* and *The Threepenny Opera*. In a review of *Mahagonny* published early in 1930 Adorno praised the manner in which it represented "the social world in which we live, projected from the bird's-eye perspective of an already liberated society," noting that "the bourgeois world is unmasked in *Mahagonny* as absurd when measured against a socialist world that itself remains concealed" ("*Mahagonny*" 114). This positive appraisal of Brecht's work of the late twenties contrasts starkly with the negative evaluation of Brecht's work he would articulate in the now infamous 1962 radio address "Commitment."

PART II

Between 1930 and 1962 Adorno's skepticism toward art forms that made concessions to mass or popular culture became total, a fact reflected in his reception of Kurt Weill's music. In the 1932 essay "Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Musik," one of Adorno's most overtly Marxist essays, Adorno discusses Weill's music for Brecht's plays as a form of critical Surrealism that mixed and 'deconstructed' the ideological functions of both traditional and popular musical forms. This middle ground between the later polarity of Stravinskian pastiche and Schönbergian dodecaphony in *Philosophie der neuen Musik* disappeared completely from Adorno's later writings on music for the same reasons he became increasingly critical of Brecht's later works: they seemed easily co-opted for consumption purposes.

When Adorno returned to a discussion of Brecht's theatre in 1962 his criticism was aimed at three works in particular: *Mother Courage*, *Arturo Ui* and the *Caucasian Chalk Circle*. And while Adorno's criticism is not without its Cold War excesses and personal digs at Brecht, particularly with regard to the folksy language of the *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, his main object of criticism is not, I would argue, Brecht's work itself, but the Brecht industry that was just beginning to establish itself in

West Germany. It might seem ironic that the Brecht industry would take off just after his works had been forced out of production for the last time with the building of the wall in 1961 (Hohnhäuser 198). This last 'ban' on Brecht's works, and the ire his works aroused among members of the CDU government, lent productions of his works an air of political radicality they would not have had absent the Cold War tensions of the period. It was an air of radicality that would contribute greatly to the institutionalization of Brecht over the next decade in West Germany as he became the most performed playwright in the West during the seventies.

In this context, Adorno found Brecht's moralizing works (those already mentioned) particularly inappropriate to the postwar Federal Republic for two reasons. First, was the national repression of guilt and suffering after the war that was just beginning to surface with the Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt. Second, and more importantly, was the strong moralizing tendency already prevalent in the German theatrical tradition, which had again become particularly pronounced after the war and made the work susceptible to manipulation and easy consumption. Of this latter tendency Adorno remarked: "In Germany, commitment often means bleating or parroting what everyone is already saying or at least secretly wants to hear. Hidden in the notion of 'message', of art's manifesto, even if politically radical [today we might even add politically correct] is a moment of accommodation to the world..." ("Engagement" 429). It is a moment of accommodation that leads to commodification, life style advertising, niche marketing and identity politics. The bleating of which Adorno speaks would hardly awaken the critical reflection that both he and Brecht saw as central to autonomous art, it is, however, a bleating that has become familiar to us in the form of sixties rock lyrics, such as 'all we need is love,' which accompany us as we shop for groceries, drive to work and pump our gas. The question has to be asked: does anyone who is buying a ticket to a Brecht play need to be told that fascism is bad? Not in West Germany in the 1960s, and not in America in the year 2000. While one might agree with the message, as I often do in this case, it does not make for genuinely oppositional art, art that forces one to critically examine social reality. In fact, it quite often has the opposite

effect, affirming one's sense of moral superiority.

It is for this reason, perhaps, that Adorno singles out *Arturo Ui* for his harshest criticism. Though Adorno lauds Brecht's aesthetic reductionism, in *Ästhetische Theorie* for example, as an artistic technique that strips capitalism of its abstract camouflage in the sphere of consumption, when applied to politics the same technique results in bad politics and bad art. Adorno notes of *Arturo Ui*: "Instead of a conspiracy of the wealthy and powerful, we are given a trivial gangster organization, the cauliflower trust. The true horror of fascism is conjured away; it is no longer a slow end-product of the concentration of social power, but a mere accident, like misfortunes and crimes" ("Engagement" 417). Not only is Brecht's reductionism bad politics and 'inappropriate' as an oppositional art in the mass-media consumer society of late capitalism, its simplification of reality perpetuates the semblance of freedom that is characteristic of the affirmative, ideological role delegated all art in late capitalist society. In 1949, after experiencing American culture and Hollywood first hand, Adorno had rebuked this type of art in "Cultural Criticism and Society" when he noted that "the semblance of freedom [perpetuated by such works] makes reflection upon one's own unfreedom incomparably more difficult" (13). One need not reject Brecht's late works *en toto*, though one should by all means treat him as he himself treated the *Klassiker*, or reject as negative Brecht's prominence in the West German theatre during the sixties and seventies. As John Rouse has shown in *Brecht and the West German Theatre*, for example, Brecht's most significant impact was in the area of production, acting and stage techniques, changing the institution of German theatre forever, (largely in positive ways, i.e. making it more critical and self-conscious, I might add).

PART III

One must, however, beware of treating Brecht as a *Klassiker*, in the bad sense of the word, now that he is freed from the issues that accompanied his decisions to settle in East Germany. Or, and this seems the real danger as I read reviews of Brecht's plays (particularly here in America), depending on the 'superficial' political content of his works for their meaning. There is nothing radical or opposi-

tional in presenting an audience with a political message with which they already agree—it is but a politically correct form of an entertaining evening.

Brecht's work is, and here I again quote Adorno, at its best when it is "hard to tell exactly what the author 'meant'" as in *Galileo* or *The Good Person of Sezuam* (*Ästhetische Theorie* 55). It is at its worst, when "the demeanor of the didactic drama recalls the American expression of 'preaching to the saved'" ("Engagement" 118). Unfortunately, contemporary productions of Brecht's late dramas, especially here in the U.S., all too often recall the latter and all too rarely the former. In an age when culture is a form of politics, I assume Arnold Schwarzenegger will attend Bush's inauguration and that Garth Brooks will perform the music, Adorno's totalizing critique provides a necessary corrective to a sometimes 'over optimistic' Brecht. What Brecht provides, which is perhaps more important, is a model that we must, in the post Cold War period, again rethink, refunction, retool, if art, as self-conscious cultural production, is to ever blast through the aesthetic arcanum that has become the world of on-line shopping, individualized life-style marketing and identity politics, all of which are, in the larger scheme of things, one and the same.

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Endnotes

1. Adorno's debt to Brecht and his theatrical innovations has, in my opinion, yet to be adequately explored while their differences are often exaggerated. Albrecht Dümmling touches upon this in *Laßt euch nicht verführen* (München: Kindler, 1985).
2. This was a radical departure from Brecht's earlier view, expressed in the twenties, that "in my view it is certain that Socialism, and indeed the revolutionary kind, will change the face of our country inside of our lifetime... As far as the artists are concerned, I consider it best for them to do what they want to do without worrying: Otherwise they can't produce good works" (*Über Politik und Kunst* 11).
3. Adorno's resignation from *Anbruch* is discussed by Susan Buck-Morss in *The Origin of Negative Dialectics* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 33-4. See also, Heinz Steinert, *Adorno in Wien* (Wien: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1992), 133-40.

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BRECHT'S POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DILEMMA IN THE SUMMER OF 1953

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To better understand Bertolt Brecht's critical support for the regime during and after the 17th of June, 1953, this paper redefines specifically what Brecht said, did, and wrote in the period between May and September 1953. During the Cold War, Brecht's actions were frequently misinterpreted or instrumentalized by others for purposes he did not intend. In 1953, Brecht was able to directly chastise the regime and cultural institutions; yet the Politburo decided to award him the theater at *Schiffbauerdamm* in that same year. This apparent contradiction obviously merits further investigation.¹ I am especially interested in the way Brecht instrumentalized his relationships with people such as Johannes Becher, leader of the *Kulturbund* and eventually Minister of Culture, and the philosopher, Wolfgang Harich, to insulate himself from criticism as a literary figure.

This paper results from my research during a National Endowment for the Humanities seminar in 1998.² My specific purpose is to place Brecht's actions into a clearer context than heretofore by addressing previous explanations of his actions, discussing previously unpublished documents, analyzing the political background to his actions and applying a political science model, that of a policy entrepreneur.³ Placing Brecht in the cultural, economic, and political context of a changing East German state under increasingly unstable Soviet control, one can begin to make sense of Brecht's simultaneous political support of the regime and his criticism of the regime's cultural policy.

Using this approach, I hope to clarify not only what he did, but how he did it. Brecht, as a policy entrepreneur, recognized the opening of a "policy window," a schism between the Soviet Union and East Germany. At such a time, individuals or groups seize the opportunity to promote policies they have long favored in order to deal with new problems. The events following Stalin's death on March 5, 1953 opened such a policy window for Brecht: when the East German Politburo decided to crack down economically and culturally, it met with a revolutionary response from the citizens. This was followed by confusion and instability among both East German and Soviet leaderships.⁴

Two consistent aspects of Brecht's otherwise contradictory actions in this time period are his avoidance of "going public" in policy attacks and his informal cooperation, one might even say coalitions, with others. Brecht's tactics allowed him to accomplish fundamental changes in cultural policy, which he had long pursued. The planned nature of these tactics and goals are crystal clear if one reads his diaries, his letters, his published writings, protocols of secret meetings, and eye witness accounts in conjunction with one another.

My intention, therefore, is to draw a fuller picture of Brecht's behavior in the summer of 1953. I want to avoid the debate between Brecht's excusers and accusers, which generally focuses on his motivations more than his actions. Accusers such as John Fuegi tend to argue that he was a coward and an opportunist in this period, that he was not more critical of the regime because he wanted to ensure that he got the theater at *Schiffbauerdamm*. They empha-

size the fact that he followed Ulbricht's ideological line, insisting that 17 June was a West-inspired fascist uprising, that Russian tanks did not shoot, while withholding some of his most critical poems and letters. They ask "couldn't Brecht have changed these same policies adopting a more openly critical stance?" Excusers, such as Werner Mittenzwei, tend to argue that he had no real choice but to support the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (hereafter SED) during a workers' uprising if he hoped to play an important role in the DDR. They emphasize the critical nature of some of his political actions and imply that his motivations were more selfless.⁵

Of course, Brecht can be criticized for changing cultural policies and institutions only within the confines of accepted political structures. He can also be criticized for doing nothing to improve the political or economic situation of the average worker. This debate, however, in my opinion, obfuscates more than it reveals about Brecht's actions. Most authors are so involved in either accusing or excusing Brecht in this period that they fail to address his actual tactics or the overlapping nature of his goals.⁶

I believe Manfred Jaeger described the problem of the accuser/excuser, black-white paradigm most aptly in 1973:

Er [Brecht] wusste sich mitten in einem gesellschaftlichen Aufbruch, in den er seine Korrekturen einbringen wollte, was schwierig, aber nicht sinnlos, riskant, aber nicht unmöglich war. Diese widersprüchliche Einheit von Zustimmung und scharfer Kritik ist offenbar schwer zu beschreiben. Je nach der politischen Position des Chronisten wird jeweils eine Seite absolut gesetzt.⁷

Ronald Speirs makes an important distinction, suggesting Brecht was more loyal to the East German regime than he was critical of it, but that cultural policy was a strong exception to this rule.⁸ Ronald Hayman takes an interesting position in this debate, suggesting Brecht saw his lies as justifiable, either because he was cynical and wanted his theater, or because he was committed to the state and wanted to counteract the damage of the tanks.⁹ I want to suggest that Brecht may have been both committed and cynical.

My argument is that without Brecht's use of policy windows and consistent, persistent tactics emphasize-

ing his domestic reputation, his international prestige, and his personal contacts, Brecht could not have achieved even his minimal goals. He bargained, giving those in power a number of comfortable choices, and log rolled, bringing together individuals with different interests to support one set of ideas.

These tactics are important to consider, because Brecht was not just any kind of intellectual. He was a playwright and a director. Therefore, he was dependent on the East German state not only for his theater, which he had spent four years trying to obtain, but for his theater budgets (including his own salary), the type and number of plays he could produce, who would come to his plays, who would review his plays, and when they would review them. At the same time, of course, his theater would have been of no comfort to him if he had no artistic control. It was, therefore, in his personal interest to get his theater and yet to change hard-line cultural policies.

If Brecht completely supported the East German regime, he would have lost his Western support. If he completely opposed the regime, he would have lost much of his domestic support. That does not necessarily mean Brecht was a coward or a hero. Ironically, he may have been both simultaneously. His well-known diary entry from 4 March shows how closely intertwined the personal, professional, and the political were in his own eyes:

unsere aufführungen in berlin haben fast kein echo mehr. in der presse erscheinen kritiken monate nach der erstaußführung, und es steht nichts drin, ausser ein paar kümmerlichen soziologischen analysen. das publikum ist das kleinstbürgerpublikum der volksbühne, arbeiter machen da kaum 7 prozent aus. die bemühungen sind nur dann nicht ganz sinnlos, wenn die spielweise späterhin aufgenommen werden kann, dh wenn ihr lehrwert einmal realisiert wird. (das gilt obwohl wir alles tun, für jetzt, für die theaterabende, für das publikum von jetzt unser bestes zu liefern.)¹⁰

Most importantly for the purposes of this paper, he recognized the major limitations on his *Spielraum*, his room for maneuver, especially in his personal relationships. Acknowledging his political limitations, he achieved the cultural and political goals

most personally meaningful to him.

A cultural war was fought out in the summer of 1953, but the battle between the so-called formalists, artistic reformers who were interested in modernism and did not adhere closely enough to the communist party line, and the communist party, which preferred to emphasize realism, had begun officially in March 1951 at the fifth plenum. At this time the East German communist party tried to gain more central control over cultural policy, establishing centralized institutions. In 1951, Brecht had already been under attack for his and Dessau's progressive version of *Das Verhör des Lukullus*.¹¹ There were three related issues facing Brecht in 1953. First, what was the future of two institutions, *das Amt für Literatur* and *die staatliche Kommission für Kunst*, which were created at the fifth plenum to ensure centralized government control over culture? Second, the *Mittwoch Gesellschaft* debated the proper response to the formalism in Eisler's musical contribution to Brecht's production of *Faust*. Finally, what was the future of the editor's position at *Sinn und Form*, the main publication of the *Deutsche Akademie der Künste*, and of the journal itself?

In this paper, I first discuss Brecht's actions in detail during the week 17 June-25 June 1953. I then outline the connections between the three cultural battles mentioned above, which were, at least in the short-term, won by Brecht and other reformers using the 17th of June. While Brecht was not the immediate target in any of these battles, he was clearly a target, as was the DAK of which Brecht was one of the oldest and most famous members.¹² While winning these three battles, Brecht also used the 17th of June to gain his theater, *Schiffbauerdamm*.

Let us first examine his tactics in his direct response to 17th of June both at the *Berliner Ensemble* (hereafter BE) and the DAK. This illustrates his basic position and its contradictions in the three other debates. His initial response to the uprising was at the BE where he held a meeting at noon and spoke for approximately ten minutes. Unfortunately, we have no record of what he said here, but based on one set of memoirs and one book, he allegedly was worried about practical issues--the growth of Nazis and how people's understandable feelings could be provoked and misused.¹³ Fortunately, we do have records of BE meetings on the 24th and 25th of June,

where these same themes were repeated.

We also have records of two DAK meetings which took place on the 17th and 18th of June, in which Brecht took positions which by implication challenged Ulbricht's regime. On the 17th at 4:00 in the afternoon, at an improvised meeting of the DAK *Präsidium*, Director of the DAK Rudolf Engel and another member, Alexander Abusch, suggested that the ten-member group immediately declare their allegiance to the government and call for order.¹⁴ Brecht objected for two reasons. First, he used a stalling tactic: not all the members of the academy were present and the *Präsidium* couldn't claim to speak for them. Secondly, he argued because the party and the administration had not yet had a chance to analyze and respond to the situation itself, the DAK could not respond to a non-response. The protocol states:

Er hält eine einfache Vertrauenserklärung in der jetzigen Situation für falsch, möchte aber ein Projekt ausarbeiten, das die aktive Teilnahme der Akademie und der Neugestaltung des Kulturlebens zum Inhalt hat.¹⁵

Interestingly, the first half of the sentence ("he considers a declaration of loyalty as false"), has been completely crossed out of the protocol. The following section has also been altered:

Herr Bertolt Brecht stellt fest, dass es selbstverständlich notwendig sein wird, über die in der Kulturpolitik gemachten Fehler eindringlich und offen zu sprechen, da auch hier die administrative Form, die unfachmännische Anleitung mehr Schaden als Nutzen gebracht hat. Herr Bertolt Brecht liesse sich davon überzeugen, dass dies nicht im Augenblick die vordringlichste Aufgabe sei, dass darüber selbstverständlich sobald als möglich mit der Diskussion begonnen werden muss, dass aber im Augenblick die Schaffung einer Vertrauensbasis zur Regierung und Partei die Hauptaufgabe sein muss.¹⁶

"*Liesse sich davon überzeugen*" has been crossed out and replaced with "*betonte aber selbst.*" This change is not in Brecht's handwriting. Most likely, Brecht spoke more openly than he had intended to at this initial meeting. Either someone independently changed his words to protect him or he asked someone to change his words.

However, he remained persistent as we see at the second DAK meeting on the 18th of June. Here a “rump plenary” session (four more members were present) decided that a commission be formed to advise the government in cultural policy. Brecht objected to Ernst Meyer’s membership in the commission because, as he said quite critically, “[da] er von vornherein eine Stellung einnehmen wird, die eine fruchtbringende Arbeit der Kommission erschwert.”¹⁷ Abusch replied that different opinions should be represented in the commission. Brecht, making use of others, called for a vote on Meyer’s participation. He lost, but just barely--the vote was 6 to 5 for Meyer’s inclusion, with two abstentions. The group then agreed to meet again on the 20th.

In the background, on the 19th of June, Walter Besenbruch wrote a very critical article in *Neues Deutschland* (hereafter ND) about the problems with cultural change, followed the next day, by a letter from Kuba, the head of the East German writers’ organization, who expressed his anger and disappointment at the workers. On 21 June, ND printed one sentence of Brecht’s three sentence critically supportive letter to Ulbricht from the 17th of June: “Es ist mir ein Bedürfnis, Ihnen in diesem Augenblick meine Verbundenheit mit der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands auszudrücken.”¹⁸

On the same day this was published, 21 June, Brecht wrote a response to Kuba’s letter, an article written in defense of the workers: “Die Arbeiter drängte man die Produktion zu steigern, die Künstler dies schmackhaft zu machen.” This article was published in ND on 23 June. On the 22nd of June the DAK met in a special session with Ernst Hoffmann and Helmut Holtzhauer, the most important members of *die staatliche Kommission für Kunst*. Unfortunately we have no record of this. However, we do know that while they apologized in general for their mistakes, they couldn’t remember any specific ones.¹⁹

Almost one week later, Brecht seemed less ready to challenge the regime at the more public forum of the BE meetings. At the first meeting on the 24th, he spoke only one time, acknowledging the workers’ anger, but arguing passionately against elections, because of the danger of a return of fascism:

Wenn ich das ansehe, was zu sehen war, so

hatte ich den Eindruck in der Frühe, dass es eine ernste und entsetzliche Angelegenheit war, dass gerade Arbeiter hier demonstrieren. Ich spreche ihnen auch hundertprozentig jede Berechtigung zu. Ich wusste, dass sie abgehalten wären, ihrer Erbitterung Luft zu verschaffen, nun verschafften sie sich Luft. Was gegen elf, zwölf, dreizehn Uhr geschah, zeigt das jedenfalls--ich spreche von dem, was ich gesehen habe. Dieses Berlin ist in einem geistigen Zustand, in dem es anscheinend in der Nazi Zeit war.²⁰

At the second meeting on 25 June, only written questions were submitted and Brecht spoke more frequently. Most notably, Brecht appeared to be more optimistic about cultural policy. In response to the question what is formalism and who determines what it is, Brecht replied:

Die Kulturpolitik hat ganz erschreckend schlechte Resultate. Da werden Aufführungen veranstaltet, Stücke in den Himmel gehoben nur wegen des Themas auf Kosten guter Aufführungen und guter Stücke. Das heisst, man hat den ästhetischen und guten Geschmack des Publikums zu ruinieren versucht.²¹

He also stated that in the future, “our” complaints (about the *Faust* criticism) will be responded to immediately.²²

The strongest attacks on Brecht and other reformers had occurred, however, prior to 17 June through the *Mittwoch Gesellschaft* and then again at DAK meetings where certain party members attempted to gain greater control of the journal *Sinn und Form*. Although Brecht was indirectly under attack, he successfully used the instability created by the 17th of June to destroy the two institutions leading these attacks, *das Amt für Literatur* and *die staatliche Kommission für Kunst*, and to replace them with one he thought he could influence, a Ministry for Culture led by Johannes Becher.²³

The *Mittwoch Gesellschaft* was specifically founded to get beyond the spontaneity of the DAK.²⁴ These meetings instituted a forum to critique formalism (individual control and modernism) in artistic works. When one looks back at the meetings of the *Mittwoch Gesellschaft*, which were ostensibly convened to criticize Eisler’s formalism, his anti-national libretto, *Johann Faustus*, one sees a me-

thodical nature to Brecht's approach.

At the first meeting on 13 May, Brecht said very little, but he was one of the first to speak, which was unusual for Brecht. He suggested that they hold several meetings over a longer period of time (with two to four weeks between meetings) due to the complicated nature of the discussions and that they invite a larger group. Of course, he hoped to have time to regroup. He also hoped to include more people who favored his and Eisler's point of view or to at least make the debate more diffuse. He took the same type of actions as at the DAK meeting of 17 June, stalling and angling to gain the majority of the group's support.

The next meeting was held two weeks later on 27 May, following a critical speech by Ulbricht.²⁵ Brecht managed to sidestep Abusch's attempt to analyze *Urfaust* with six theses, which Abusch had introduced at the first meeting. Brecht introduced ten theses of his own to defend himself and Eisler.

Finally on 10 June, with a much larger group present, he went on the attack against Wilhelm Girnus, who served as an editor of ND, and Alexander Abusch. Walter Besenbruch said that "*wühlen im Dreck*," wallowing in filth, was no replacement for an educational approach to the arts. Brecht adamantly protested these terms and asked that his objections be recorded in the protocol. Most importantly, he appeared to sway Johannes Becher from at best a neutral point of view to join in a defense of Brecht and Eisler. Brecht ensured that the debate revolved around his revised theses. Ultimately, he got the whole group to compromise and agree to publish both sets of theses.²⁶ When one member suggested that this group later discuss Brecht's current work, *Katzgraben*, Brecht deflected this, saying it wasn't being performed anyway because one of the artists was ill.²⁷ Although this group was supposed to meet again at a later date, to my knowledge, this never occurred probably due to the defensive posture of the regime after 17 June. The Politbüro had already met on the 9th of June and by the 10th, a new course was announced. However, this was a little too late to placate the workers.

Five days later, on 15 June, Brecht pressed forward with his request for a theater in a letter to Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl. He emphasized the momentary necessity of his international prestige to

the East German state as his main argument for obtaining a theater:

Sie haben vielleicht gehört, dass in Westdeutschland die unsinnigen Gerüchte über Zwistigkeiten zwischen mir und der Regierung der DDR wieder sehr verstärkt aufgemacht werden. Die Übernahme des Theaters am Schiffbauerdamm durch das Berliner Ensemble, das weit über Deutschland hinaus bekannt ist, würde meine Verbundenheit mit unserer Republik deutlich dokumentieren.²⁸

Ironically, on the same date as the last meeting of the *Mittwoch Gesellschaft*, 10 June, Peter Huchel agreed to step down as editor of *Sinn und Form*.²⁹ His resignation occurred at a *Präsidium* meeting of the DAK against Brecht's wishes. According to Peter Huchel, Brecht said, "Sie müssen ihren Laden verteidigen, genauso wie ich meinen Laden verteidige. Das Berliner Ensemble und Sinn und Form sind die beste Visitenkarte der DDR."³⁰ Brecht argued at various DAK meetings that just because there were some problems with the journal, one couldn't throw out the whole thing. That would be typical of past behavior.³¹

In July, largely due to Brecht's support, Huchel rescinded his resignation. Aware of the weakness of the SED after 17 June, Brecht argued strongly against Abusch, suggesting that Huchel should not only continue as editor, but he should be able to pick out the members of a commission to advise him on the content of the periodical. The watchdog nature of the commission was, therefore, completely eliminated.³²

In the meantime, Brecht complained to an East German journalist, Gustav Just, about the partial publication of his 17 June letter to Ulbricht. Just wrote a memo to Ulbricht on 5 July registering Brecht's complaint.³³ On 7 July, the Politbüro discussed removing Ulbricht and only two members solidly supported Ulbricht. On 8 July, Ulbricht wrote a letter to Brecht suggesting they meet some time, probably because Ulbricht needed all the political support he could get. Ulbricht had only narrowly escaped removal from the Politbüro, but Brecht was apparently quite surprised that Ulbricht treated him so positively.³⁴

In the background of the attack on Huchel and the Ulbricht-Brecht exchange, the DAK plenum

worked on a list of ten specific points criticizing the cultural policy of the regime. These ten points were finished on 2 July, and published on 12 July, despite Prime Minister Grotewohl's objections.

While these points were being written, Brecht argued behind the scenes that it was not worthwhile to hold further meetings with the representatives of these two commissions, because they did not genuinely want to change.³⁵ He emphasized that his comments were just for internal consumption. At the next meeting on 30 June, he also suggested a way to save face: the DAK could publish some more general points and then send specific complaints to the parties concerned. Although he admitted that the state had legitimate artistic concerns, he argued passionately "Der Staat darf nicht mehr einmischen, abrosseln oder unterdrücken in Kunst Angelegenheiten."³⁶ He concluded with "Wir werden nicht informiert, immer nur belehrt."³⁷

A key to understanding the connection between the ten points, the destruction of *die Kunstkommission* and *das Amt für Literatur*, and 17 June is Wolfgang Harich's recollection of a meeting with Brecht at the beginning of July. Harich was a respected intellectual and influential professor of philosophy, who spent May-July 1953 in the hospital after completing a trip to West Germany. This meeting reveals the planned nature of Brecht's log rolling, bargaining tactics and his increasing determination to make changes in cultural policy. In response to Brecht's question "What do we want to do (after the 17th of June)?" Harich suggested they should promote a Yugoslavian form of production. Brecht replied:

Sie sind verrückt. Sie werden am Galgen enden. Das ist gefährlich! Ausserdem, ich will nichts damit zu tun haben mit dem Streit zwischen Titoisten und Stalinisten. Sie sollen mich beide spielen. Meine Theaterstücke sollen in Moskau und in Belgrad gespielt werden, da mache ich nämlich nicht Partei. Ich bin für den Kommunismus im allgemeinen, aber nicht für diese Spezialitäten: Stalin-Tito, das ist mir egal. Und seien Sie vorsichtig, wir wollen etwas Reales machen, wir wollen die dümmsten Bürokraten in der Kulturpolitik stürzen. [Die staatliche Kunstkommission, Helmut Holtzhauer, Wilhelm Girnus, Ernst

Hoffmann, Kurt Magritz, den Kritiker.] Schreiben Sie gegen die einen Artikel und ich liefere ein paar Gedichte dazu und dann wollen wir Johannes R. Becher zum Kulturminister haben."³⁸ (author's emphasis)

Brecht worked successfully with an unlikely combination of four people other than Harich. Together, and often with radically different assumptions, they redefined the cultural choices available to East Germany. The four men were Johannes Becher, Otto Grotewohl, Wilhelm Girnus, and Paul Wandel. Brecht's success in arguing for cultural change became obvious by 10 July. Perhaps this was related to the fact that Laverenti Beria's arrest was publicly announced on 10 July and insecurity in the Soviet Union further weakened public trust in East German party leaders.³⁹

Moreover, on 10 July, Becher, as President of the DAK, wrote an official letter to Grotewohl arguing for the ten points on cultural change. Grotewohl's records note that Grotewohl telephoned with Becher on 11 July and they spoke about the publication of these ten points. Becher stated he could barely prevent Brecht and Walter Felsenstein from quitting the DAK, because the ten points were not yet published.

This is noteworthy because, given their different artistic approaches, Brecht was not that close to Becher as an artist and Becher did not initially oppose the attack on Eisler's *Faust*. However, Becher, who argued passionately for the ten points at the fifteenth SED plenum from 24 to 26 July, appeared to share Brecht's view at least temporarily.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Grotewohl, who argued against publication of the ten points, communicated by letter with Brecht about Harich's and Brecht's ideas on small commissions. Brecht wrote to Grotewohl on 12 July, the day the ten points were published:

Erwägen Sie doch den Vorschlag Wolfgang Harichs, kleine fliegende Kommissionen zu schaffen, die überall den neuen Stil hineinbringen. Freilich müssten sie ganz unorthodox zusammengesetzt sein, einfach aus Leuten mit gesundem Menschenverstand, aus natürlichen Sozialisten.⁴⁰

In other words, these commissions did not necessar-

ily need to consist of party members. Grotewohl responded very honestly three days later, on 15 July, indicating his own bureaucratic frustrations and promising to respond to Brecht's and Harich's ideas.

Ihr Vorschlag ist richtig und gut. An der Spitze habe ich schon begonnen mit der Einsetzung eines Operativstabes, um nach unten zu drücken. Aber wie eine zäh-flüssige schwarze Masse Teer liegt es unter mir. In Kürze veranstalte ich eine Kundgebung für die massgeblichen Träger der Verwaltung. Ich werde Ihren Vorschlag über die kleine fliegende Kommissionen dort durchsetzen.⁴¹

Grotewohl's confidential tone is impressive when one remembers that Brecht published two poems satirizing the two detested cultural institutions: on 11 July, *Das Amt für Literatur* was published and on 15 July, *Nicht feststellbare Fehler der Kunstkommission* was published, which read as follows:

Trotz eifrigsten Nachdenkens
konnten sie sich nicht an bestimmte Fehler
erinnern, jedoch
Bestanden sie heftig darauf
Fehler gemacht zu haben--wie es der Brauch
ist.⁴²

On 12 July the ten points were published. On 14 July Harich published his article, "*Es geht um den Realismus. Die bildenden Künstler und die Kunstkommission*," in which he criticized Girnus, Holtzhauer, and Magritz by name.

Most fascinating is the case of Wilhelm Girnus, an editor of ND, who, as Ulbricht's documents indicate, was commissioned by Ulbricht to spy on Brecht. Brecht seemed to be aware of Girnus's role as a middleman, if not a spy, and used it to his full advantage. Although Girnus was involved in the *Mittwoch Gesellschaft* meetings which attacked Brecht's formalism, Brecht gave Girnus his articles in advance (he gave him the 15 July article on 13 July for example). In spite of his critical articles and poems published during the second week of July, on 22 July, Brecht's theater received basic approval of the SED. On 25 July, Girnus and Brecht had a long discussion where Brecht showed him the critical article he planned to publish on 13 August. Still on 27 July, Girnus wrote to Ulbricht:

Trotz der falschen Konzeptionen Brechts in dieser Frage würde ich auf der anderen Seite

eine elastische Behandlung der ganzen Angelegenheit vorschlagen und aus diesem Grunde auch ernsthaft in Erwägung ziehen, dem Berliner Ensemble Brecht ein Theater zur Verfügung zu stellen, sobald die Volksbühne für Wisten bezugsreif wird. Wie man sich zu einzelnen Theorien von Brecht stellen mag, es scheint mir in vielfacher Hinsicht, besonders auch im Hinblick auf die internationalen Auswirkungen, auf die Dauer untragbar, dass man Brecht die Überlassung eines Theaters verweigert. Ich verspreche mir ausserdem eine erzieherische Wirkung von diesem Akt, denn dann wird er beweisen müssen, dass er fähig ist, das Publikum, insbesondere die Werktätigen, durch sein Theater zu gewinnen. Mit den bisherigen Mitteln kann er das nicht.⁴³

It appears Brecht had more influence on Girnus than the other way around. The international prestige argument worked with Girnus just as it had worked with Grotewohl.⁴⁴ However, the wind began to blow in Ulbricht's favor at the plenum meeting from the 24th to the 26th of July, when two members of the reform wing of the party (Wilhelm Zaisser, Defense Minister, and Rudolf Herrnstadt, chief editor of ND) were thrown out and Ulbricht began to reassert his political control. Possibly Ulbricht and those allied with him began to think they could win the support of artists if they could keep artists like Brecht on their side. Finally, in August, Brecht wrote two letters to Paul Wandel, the Minister of Education and later coordinator for SED culture and education departments (in 1952 and 1953 respectively). Brecht decided not to send the first letter from 4 August. In it, he suggested six reasons to get rid of the *Kunstkommission*: He wrote that "Eine Aufrechterhaltung der Kunstkommission würde keinesfalls als Festigkeit, sondern nur als Sturheit betrachtet werden, als Unnachgiebigkeit nur gegen die Vernunft." He signed the letter "*in wirklicher Sorge*."⁴⁵ The second letter was sent mid-August along with one poem from the *Buckower Elegien*, Brecht's poetic response to the 17th of June. Perhaps he felt the vulnerability of the regime as well as the closing of his "policy window" after two more reformist members of the East German Politbüro were removed on 9 August (Anton Ackermann, who was a state secretary in the foreign ministry, and Hans Jendretzky,

who was first secretary of the district party organization in Berlin). Brecht emphasized that he was sending the poem only for internal consumption. The poem is entitled “Die Wahrheit einigt”

Freunde, ich wünschte, ihr wüsstet die
Wahrheit
und sagtet sie!
Nicht wie fliehende müde Cäsaren:
“Morgen kommt Mehl!”

So wie Lenin: Morgen abend
Sind wir verloren, wenn nicht . . .
So wie es im Liedlein heisst:

Brüder, mit dieser Frage
Will ich gleich beginnen:
Hier aus unsrer schweren Lage
Gibt es kein Entrinnen.

Freunde, ein kräftiges Eingeständnis
Und ein kräftiges WENN NICHT!⁴⁶

This poem encouraged the party to admit to mistakes, to correct them, not to believe it could run from them. It is alleged that Brecht sent the whole *Buckower Elegien* to Prime Minister Grotewohl and suggested he read them to the Council of Ministers.⁴⁷ The reader is also reminded that Brecht published a very critical article in ND on 13 August in which he wrote:

Es mag für administrative Zwecke und mit Rücksicht auf die Beamten, die für Administration zur Verfügung stehen, einfacher sein, ganz bestimmte Schemata für Kunstwerke aufzustellen. Dann haben die Künstler lediglich ihre Gedanken (oder die der Administration?) in die gegebene Form zu bringen, damit alles in Ordnung ist.

This article, poems from the *Buckower Elegien*, and Brecht’s diary entry from 20 August all suggest Brecht believed the party could change:

“buckow. TURANDOT. daneben die Buckower Elegien. der 17. juni hat die ganze existenz verfremdet. . . die partei hatte zu erschrecken, aber sie brauchte nicht zu verweifeln.”⁴⁸

When one remembers that Brecht used the word *verfremdet* to mean not just alienation, but to look at something from a new perspective, I think Brecht’s view of 17 June becomes quite distinct. He thought

17 June could show the communist party how to adjust and change its cultural policies. This also clarifies why Brecht, who never joined the communist party, would say the 17th of June was a good time to join the party. Almost all eye witnesses from this time period suggest that he was full of hope in the summer of 1953, a hope which dissipated later in the year.⁴⁹

In conclusion, one must keep in mind the political background to Brecht’s actions, to understand his on/off support for the East German regime. Brecht wrote an official letter to Prime Minister Grotewohl requesting his theater on 15 June after the Politburo declared its “new course” on the 10th of June. Brecht recognized that his international recognition could assist in the success of the new course and he used this to his political advantage in the months after 17 June. On 17 June, at a secret meeting, he was unwilling to declare his “confidence” in the regime, but he was willing in letters written on 15 June and 17 June to declare his “connection” or “bond” (*Verbundenheit*) with the regime. On 7 July, when General Secretary Walter Ulbricht was almost removed from the Politbüro, he wrote a letter to Brecht the next day suggesting that they meet. This further convinced Brecht of his importance to the legitimacy of the regime, a factor which he could use to change cultural policies. On 10 July, when Beria’s arrest in the Soviet Union was finally made public, the momentary insecurity of the East German regime was increased. The next day Johannes Becher and Grotewohl had a telephone conversation, during which Becher emphasized Brecht’s threat to resign from the DAK unless the ten points on cultural policy were accepted. Brecht published poems critical of the regime on 11 and 15 July and encouraged Harich to write a critical article, which appeared on the 14th of July.

In spite of his actions, Brecht’s theater was informally approved on 22 July. Brecht continued his critical conversations concerning cultural policy with Girnus on 25 July. Most surprising is Girnus’s personal recommendation on 27 July that Brecht should get the *Schiffbauerdamm*. Girnus appeared to believe this was a way to finally force Brecht “to put up or shut up” in his support for the regime. Finally in the middle of August, after four reformist members had been removed from the Politbüro in a two-

week period, Brecht decided to send a critical poem to Wandel after earlier hesitation. He probably sensed the policy window closing.

Brecht's tactics were extremely successful in achieving his goals. By stalling, compromising, using his domestic and international prestige as well as his personal contacts, he blunted the attack on Eisler and others (including himself) accused of formalism; he saved Huchel's job and the journal *Sinn und Form*; he helped destroy the two institutions most closely associated with formalism and he helped create a new Ministry of Culture. He also managed to secure a home and theater for himself.

Of course, there was no long-term effect to these reforms. By 1956, there was another political crackdown on artists. However, we have to measure the success of Brecht's various tactics in his own time and place. My research suggests we have to give Brecht more credit for effectively using if not the 17th of June, the political instability that preceded and followed it, to change cultural policy.

As stated at the outset, I would rather not become one of Brecht's accusers or excusers, although I fear I share more in common with the excusers. We cannot be sure of his motivations in 1953. Was he motivated by his loyalty to the state, by his loyalty to close friends such as Huchel and Eisler, by his desire to gain influence among prominent politicians, by his desire for his own theater, or simply by the political opportunities in this period? While we can be relatively sure of his tactics, I doubt we will ever be sure of his motives.⁵⁰

Endnotes

1. Some observers see Brecht's divided support for workers and the regime as representative of other literary figures at the time. See Rainer Eppelman's discussion concerning 17 June in *Enquete Kommission, Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland: Macht, Entscheidung, Verantwortung*, vol. II, no. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Nomos Verlag/Suhrkamp Verlag, 1995), 751-753.
2. I would like to officially thank the NEH as well as the co-directors, Dr. Marc Silberman and Dr. Siegfried Mews for that opportunity.
3. This theory has generally been used to explain Soviet leaders' change to moderate foreign policies after Stalin. See Matthew Evangelista, "Sources of Moderation in Soviet Foreign Policy" in Philip Tetlock, Jo Husbands, Robert Jervis, Paul Stern, Charles Tilly (eds.), *Behavior, Society, and Nu-*

- clear War* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 275-276. See also Richard N. Anderson, Jr., "Why Competitive Politics Inhibits Learning in Soviet Foreign Policy" in George W. Breslauer and Philip Tetlock (eds.), *Learning in American and Soviet Foreign Policy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 100-131 and Richard N. Anderson, Jr., *Public Politics in an Authoritarian State* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1993).
4. In East Berlin, norms were raised by 10% on 14 May 1953. (This decision was to be implemented on 30 June.) However, on 5 June construction workers found out that their wages had been reduced without notice. On 12 June, they were informed that future wages would be calculated according to new norms retroactive to 1 June. In effect, the party had decided to increase norms and reduce wages simultaneously. These new policies were then criticized by a Politbüro member, Rudolf Herrstadt, in *Neues Deutschland* on 14 June.
 5. See Werner Mittenzwei, *Das Leben des Bertolt Brecht* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987) and John Fuegi, *Brecht and Company: Sex, Politics and the Making of the Modern Drama* (NY: Grove, 1994).
 6. My research also indicates that post-Cold War Brecht analysts have not conducted thorough research in both literary and political archives (*Stiftung, Deutsche Akademie der Künste; Stiftung, Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisation der DDR im Bundesarchiv*; Hoover Institution East German Oral Archives; as well as the *Bertolt Brecht Archiv*). I was able to discover several documents in several months of research that have not, to my knowledge, been previously published elsewhere.
 7. Manfred Jaeger, *Sozialliteraten: Funktion und Selbstverständnis der Schriftsteller in der DDR* (Duesseldorf: Bertelsman Universitätsverlag, 1973), 169.
 8. Ronald Speirs, "Brecht in the GDR" in Graham Bartram and Anthony Wayne (eds.), *Brecht in Perspective* (London: Longman, 1982).
 9. Ronald Hayman, *Bertolt Brecht* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983), 120.
 10. Bertolt Brecht, *Arbeitsjournal 1938-1955* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1977), 514-515.
 11. Joachim Lucchesi, *Das Verhör in der Oper* (Berlin: Basisdruck, 1993).
 12. The DAK was known for its spontaneity and lack of communist party members, which made it an object of attack. *Stiftung, Archiv Akademie der Künste, Berlin-Brandenburg, 17/59 (Präsidium meeting 25 March, 1953.)*
 13. *Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv* (hereafter BBA) Z42/79 (Käthe Rüllicke-Weiler-Weiler interview with Gerda Goedhart). See also Mittenzwei, 497-500.
 14. Abusch had been suspended from all party positions in 1951 pending an investigation. In 1952, he became a member of the DAK *Präsidium*.
 15. BBA 1493/12.
 16. BBA 1493/12.
 17. DAK ZAA/18/34-37. I used the DAK archive to make sure it did not differ from the BBA archive. It did not.
 18. The two first, omitted sentences read as follows: "*die Geschichte wird der revolutionären Ungeduld der Sozial-*

istischen Einheits Partei Deutschlands zollen. Die grosse Aussprache mit den Massen über das Tempo des sozialistischen Aufbaus wird zu einer Sichtung und Sicherung der sozialistischen Errungenschaften führen." See Bertolt Brecht, *Werke. Grosse Kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998), no. 30, *Briefe* 3, 178 (hereafter BFA). In the last sentence, *Sichtung*, sifting, could be viewed as critical of the regime, while, of course, *Sicherung*, securing, would be viewed as supportive.

19. Mittenzwei, 512. After this meeting with Holtzhauser and Hoffmann, Brecht met with a Western journalist, Erwin Leiser, to defend his position on 17 June, and he then wrote something for the Western press, but Käthe Rüllicke-Weiler decided not to deliver it. See Werner Hecht, *Brecht Chronik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1997), 1063. He wrote a poem about this meeting which was published on 15 July.

20. BBA 1447/106.

21. BBA 1447/119.

23. BBA 1447/120. He specifically mentioned complaints about Johanna Rudolf who criticized *Urfaust* in ND 28 May 1953.

24. The SED probably thought they could influence Becher as well. Becher became President of the DAK in April 1953 and officially became Minister of Culture in January 1954.

25. See fn. 10.

26. This speech was printed along with Rudolf's criticisms on 28 May in ND.

27. One wonders whether Brecht's attackers were weakened by the 9 June *Politbüro* meeting. Whether Brecht was aware of that meeting or not, he sensed a way out. He got to determine the subject matter of the next meeting, avoiding his own material, and suggested making Girmus the new leader in a discussion of classicism. See Hans Bunge, *Debatte um Hanns Eislers "Johann Faustus," Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Basisdruck, 1991) for objective documentation of these three meetings. For a favorable view of Brecht's role, see Mittenzwei, 474-481. For a more critical view of Brecht's role, see Peter Davies and Stephen Parker, "Brecht, SED Cultural Policy and the Issue of Authority in the Arts: the Struggle for Control of the German Academy of Arts," in Steve Giles and Rodney Livingston (eds.), *Bertolt Brecht Centenary Essays* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998), 181-195.

28. At the second meeting, he deflected a suggestion that *Urfaust* be discussed, arguing he had withdrawn it and it was unfinished, Bunge, 178.

29. BFA, no. 30, *Briefe* 3, 177. It is interesting that Brecht used the word *Verbundenheit* both in this letter and the one to Ulbricht on the 17th of June.

30. Upon his return from Moscow on 2 June, Huchel had been informed of his removal in a letter dated 15 May.

31. As quoted in Hecht, 1061.

DAK 118/395 (plenary meeting 26 June 1953).

32. DAK 323/7/34 (this occurred on 2 July at a meeting of the group *Dichtkunst und Sprachpflege*).

33. *Stiftung, Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv* (hereafter SAPMO-BA), NL 182/1387 (Walter Ulbricht's files).

34. We also know that Brecht's supporters, including Minister of Education Paul Wandel, wanted to make sure that Ulbricht and Brecht did not meet. Wandel was a supporter of Brecht's and it is quite likely he thought Brecht would go too far in such a one-on-one meeting. See BBA 2164/34 (Bunge interview with Käthe Rüllicke-Weiler).

35. DAK 118/406 (plenary meeting 26 June).

36. DAK 118/425-426 (plenary meeting 30 June).

37. DAK 118/435.

38. Hoover Institution's East German Oral History Project, Interview with Wolfgang Harich, 1 December 1990. A general summary of this same conversation is also recorded in Mittenzwei, 520-523. It is especially interesting that Harich cooperated with Brecht when one remembers that Brecht was having an affair with Harich's wife, Isot Kilian. However, Harich had supported Brecht since his arrival in East Berlin, and they had similar concerns about cultural policy. It is interesting to note that in the thaw of 1956, Harich went too far for the regime and was sent to jail, where he spent the next eight years. Mittenzwei also argues that Brecht's literary taste was too radical for Harich.

39. Beria was the head of internal security in the Soviet Union and he was accused of engineering a coup after Stalin's death.

40. BBA 1282/17.

41. BBA 1282/16.

42. Both these articles were published in the *Berliner Zeitung*. This particular poem was written after the DAK meeting with Holtzhauser and Hoffmann on 22 June.

43. SAPMO-BA IV 2/2026/40 (*Büro Alfred Kurella, Kulturkommission beim Politbüro*). The reader is reminded Brecht succeeded in publishing the ten points by threatening to quit the DAK.

44. The above letter was also sent on to Paul Wandel as of 6 August.

45. BFA 30, *Briefe* 3, 188.

46. See Bertolt Brecht's *Buckower Elegien* (with comments from Jan Knopf), Frankfurt am Main: (Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), 22.

47. BBA 2164/27.

48. *Arbeitsjournal*, 520.

49. See interviews with Peter Palitzsch, Manfred Wekwerth, and Benno Besson in Joachim Lang and Jürgen Hillesheim (eds.), *Denken heißt verändern* (Augsburg: Maro Verlag, 1998). See also the Rüllicke interview with Bunge, BBA 2164/24-25.

50. However, I, as other Brecht observers before me, cannot resist some speculation about his goals based on an analysis of one poem from the *Buckower Elegien*, *Eisen*, and some eye witness statements. This poem suggests that those made out of wood will bend and remain, but those made out of iron will be destroyed by the storm:

*Im Traum heute Nacht
Sah ich einen grossen Sturm.
Ins Baugerüst griff er
Den Bauschragen riss er
Den Eisernen, abwärts.*

*Doch was da aus Holz war
Bog sich und blieb.*

To me, this is also perfect poetic description of Brecht's tactics in the summer of 1953. Jan Knopf has even argued that the storm does not refer to the 17th of June, but to a coming storm, and possibly the end of Stalin and Stalinism. Considering that one of Brecht's close co-workers, Käthe Reichel, tells us that Brecht purposely used the term *Eisen* to refer to Ulbricht (*Stahl* would be the reference to Stalin), Brecht could have been writing about the end of Ulbricht and that sort of party member after 17 June. However, it is interesting that neither this poem or *Wahrheit einigt* were in the original six published poems of the twenty-three he wrote that summer. *Buckower Elegien*, 18 and 73-75. See also *Denken heisst verändern*, 138.

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MURIETA IN MAHAGONNY: PABLO NERUDA'S BRECHTIAN DRAMA

Vera Stegmann

Pablo Neruda is not well-known as a dramatist. His writings consist almost exclusively of poetry, for which he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971. Yet, he also published several translations (among others of Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigde* from a French version, available in Latin America, into Spanish), an autobiography, and one play. *Glory and Death of Joaquin Murieta*, written in 1967, late in the poet's life, assumes a unique position within Neruda's oeuvre as his only play. *Murieta* is also striking because of its strong Brechtian characteristics, although Neruda never mentions Brecht's influence. In his author's note about *Murieta*, Neruda only admits to one source: He borrowed the idea for the final funeral cortege from a Japanese *Noh* play that he once saw in Yokohama. Beyond that, he claims, he "never grasped one iota of what was going on in the Japanese play" (Neruda x). Since poets are frequently playful and don't tell the truth -- or the complete truth -- about influences on their work, other writers and dramatic styles must have shaped *Murieta*. Most notably, Brecht's epic theatre comes to mind.

Historical contacts between Brecht and

Neruda, the common exile experience as well as several meetings in Berlin and Eastern Europe in the 1950s, have been documented elsewhere, as well as a common aesthetics of their epic poetic style (Stegmann, 141-61). Since Neruda was aware of Brecht and definitely witnessed productions of the Berliner Ensemble in Berlin in the 1950s (even in the company of Helene Weigel), he employed practices of the epic theater in *Glory and Death of Joaquin Murieta*. A study of Neruda's *Murieta* and its references to operas by Brecht and Weill, *The Threepenny Opera* and *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, can thus provide valuable insights.

Splendor and Death of Joaquin Murieta (*Fulgor y muerte de Joaquin Murieta*) is based on a historical character and set during the time of the California Gold Rush. Joaquin Murieta was a legendary Mexican-American bandit. Facts about his life are elusive, but historians believe that he was born in Sonora, Mexico, baptized there in 1830, and he emigrated with his wife to California in 1848. He tried to prosper in the Gold Rush, but Yankee miners instituted the Greaser Act in an attempt to drive Mexicans out of California. Murieta -- or several "Murietas" -- responded by leading bands of outlaws that raided the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys and robbed gold miners. The governor offered rewards for Murieta's capture, and in June 1853 Harry Love, a visiting Texas Ranger, brought the head of a Mexican preserved in a jar and claimed that it belonged to Murieta. The raids ended, but rumors also persisted that Murieta lived on, returned to Sonora and was buried there in the late 1870s.

The story of Murieta's life has been raised to mythological levels, and to this day he remains a hero of the Chicano movement and of those who criticize the aggressions of colonial powers. Many books have been published about him. Among the most important is *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta, the Celebrated California Bandit*, a novelistic history by John Rollin Ridge, a Cherokee Indian whose Indian name is Yellow Bird. As an American Indian, he identified with Murieta's struggle. Another popular interpretation of Murieta's life is Walter Noble Burns' novelistic account in *The Robin Hood of El Dorado: The Saga of Joaquin Murieta, Famous Outlaw of California's Age of Gold*, which uses Yellow Bird's book as a reference.

Other authors who published on Murieta include Irene Paz (Octavio Paz' mother), C. J. Cunningham, James Varley, and Don Gwaltney.

There are also poems on Murieta, such as "I Am Joaquín", a 1968 text by the Chicano writer Rudolfo "Corky" Gonzales. And many Hollywood movies were made on the subject. Joaquín Murieta's life, in various modified versions, inspired all the Zorro films. The most famous of these is Douglas Fairbanks' rendering in *The Mark of Zorro* (1920), which was just recently remade or followed up by *The Mask of Zorro*, a 1998 film with Antonio Banderas in the title role. Much like Murieta, Zorro -- the Spanish word for fox -- is a Mexican-American Robin Hood: Besides seducing women, he is a courageous, romantic, and noble personality who represents the underdog, who protects the poor from cruel tyrants, and who pursues justice yet acts outside of the law.

Neruda's drama is thus one work in a long line of histories, novels, poems, and films on this legendary figure. In a patriotic twist, Neruda made Murieta a Chilean, and his version of the dramatic plot reads as follows: Murieta sails from Valparaíso to California around 1850 to strike it rich in the goldmines. He is joined by his friend Jack Three-Fingers and the office clerk Reyes. On the ship, Murieta marries Teresa, a country girl whom he just met. On their arrival in San Francisco, they are received by a huge *fandango*, a big fiesta. At this *fandango* the newly arrived group celebrates with other Chileans and Mexicans, but they also encounter a mysterious Gentleman Swindler followed by raging and violent Hooded Figures, Klansmen, first omens of future dangers to the Chileans. These "bloodhounds" -- and it soon becomes clear that the Gentleman Swindler belongs to the group -- search for Murieta, and since they cannot grasp him, they rape and kill his wife Teresa. Joaquín and his men vow revenge, and they are joined by the Indian Rosendo Juarez, a historical figure fighting for justice. Murieta's men manage to capture and kill the Gentleman Swindler; but he is resurrected and informs the Klansmen. They swear to get Murieta who is soon beheaded, and the Gentleman Swindler, now in the role of a barker, shows Murieta's head, larger than life and in a cage, to the crowd as a proof. But in the end, in a possible allusion to Shakespeare's

Hamlet, Murieta's voice starts to speak in a moonlit cemetery. He can whisper the truth and passes the word on to the poet, Pablo Neruda, to tell his tale.

What are the Brechtian traits of Neruda's play? Already the title reminds us of another work by Brecht: *Splendor and Death of Joaquin Murieta* sounds like an echo of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. Both plays are set in a mythological America, Neruda's play in Gold Rush California, Brecht/Weill's 1930 opera in Mahagonny, a fictive city in Florida, product of the Weimar imagination. Neruda's men are poor miners arriving in the USA from Chile, Brecht's workers arrive in America from Alaska, where they were equally lured by gold and worked for seven years as woodcutters in icy waters. Having earned their money, they now hope to live the golden life in Mahagonny. Although Neruda's play, unlike Brecht's, is based on historical events that the author alters with poetic license, both plays treat America as an imaginary dream space, a land of illusions that are shattered upon the characters' arrival: While Neruda's Murieta becomes the victim of racism, Paul Ackermann, the main character in *Mahagonny*, painfully learns the lessons of capitalism that everything may be permissible as long as you can pay. He tasted the freedoms, pleasures, and sins of the New World -- eating, loving, drinking, boxing. There are hardly any punishments; even indirect responsibility for his friend Alaskawolfjoe's death in the boxing ring only earns him two days in prison. But he receives the death penalty for not paying for three bottles of whisky. Poverty is the ultimate crime.

Mahagonny represents a transitional work with regard to Brecht's view of America (Seliger 152). In his early works in the 1920s, America -- with its romantic gangster stories, its natural disasters, its sexual liberties -- fascinated Brecht and held an enormous exotic appeal. He saw Charlie Chaplin's film *Gold Rush* in 1926 and was profoundly impressed. Traces of this infatuation with America are visible in *Mahagonny's* hurricane scene, for example. But *Mahagonny* which, after all, also symbolizes the brownshirts and the Nazis, marks a turning point for Brecht: His colorful make-belief America takes on negative connotations, as it later comes to represent cold-blooded capitalism. Just like *Mahagonny* evokes brownshirts, Neruda's

Murieta incorporates hooded figures and Klansmen. Neruda builds on the mystique of the Wild West only in order to destroy it. This process itself is an act of alienation.

There are also differences in the way both authors portray their main characters: *Murieta*, who never acts on stage, is an ideal hero and fails only because of the evil society surrounding him. Brecht, on the other hand, paints Paul Ackermann less black-and-white. Paul is more human, with apparent weaknesses, a victim of society yet participating in it and guilty as well. But the grand musical and epic form in which both authors show the deaths of their heroes, *Murieta* and Ackermann, is remarkably similar. The term "Marxist tragedy" can equally apply to *Murieta* and to *Mahagonny* (Manuel and Gloria Durán, 14).

Both Brecht and Neruda integrate English language poems or phrases in *Mahagonny* and *Murieta*. This use of Pidgin English within a text that is largely German or Spanish contributes to the open form of both dramas. Brecht's English texts in *Mahagonny* consist largely of two songs, the "Alabama-Song" and the "Benares-Song". Neruda, in *Murieta*, includes a melancholic Negro spiritual in English by a black singer and a more seductive but distanced and cool song by a blond striptease artist, as well as numerous English phrases throughout the drama. Curiously, one image occurs in both dramas as an American icon: the characters' fascination with whisky. The first strophe of Brecht's "Alabama-Song" goes:

Oh, show us the way
To the next whisky-bar.
Oh, don't ask why!
For we must find the next whisky-bar.
For if we don't find the next whisky-bar
I tell you we must die!
(*Werke* 2: 337)

The image returns in the "Mahagonny-Song":
Auf nach Mahagonny!
Die Luft ist kühl und frisch.
Dort gibt es Pferd- und Weiberfleisch
Whisky und Pokertisch.
(*Werke* 2: 339-40)

Toward the end, Mrs. Leokadja Begbick suggests to put on the play about God in Mahagonny:

An einem grauen Vormittag
Mitten im Whisky
Kam Gott nach Mahagonny
Mitten im Whisky
Bemerkten wir Gott in Mahagonny.
(*Werke* 2: 384)

The list of Brecht's allusions to whisky in the opera *Mahagonny* could be extended at length. In Neruda's drama, the reference to whisky is a brief one: During the *fandango*, the Chileans ask for "chicha," a Latin American fermented beverage made from maize or pineapple. But the Rangers respond, in English within the Spanish language text: "No chicha here! Whisky! Whisky! Whisky!" (*Murieta* 64), and the Chileans have to order whisky at gunpoint. While both Brecht and Neruda build on a common myth, Brecht humorously plays with romantic images of the American Wild West prevalent in Germany in the twenties, whereas Neruda seems closer to Cold War realities of the fifties and sixties.

Besides the *Mahagonny* reference, *Murieta* shares characteristics with a leading figure in another Brecht/Weill collaboration, Macheath in *The Threepenny Opera*. Neruda introduces *Murieta* as an "honorable bandit," a man whom destiny turned into a gangster and who robs the rich to help his people, the poor. Macheath lacks this social mission, but he is equally the product of Weimar Germany's fascination with American gangster myths. Brecht defined Macheath as a person who combines the characteristics of a bourgeois and a robber. Both the "noble bandit" *Murieta* and the "bourgeois bandit" Macheath can be traced to American cowboys-and-Indians myths or gangster legends. Suggesting even further the parallels between *Murieta* and Macheath, they both have a companion with a remarkably similar name: *Murieta*'s closest friend is called "Jack Three-Fingers" (Juan Tresdedos) -- apparently a historical figure --, while a member of Mackie's gang is named "Hakenfinger-Jakob" ("Hook-finger Jacob" in Desmond Vesey's translation, "Crook-fingered Jake" in Ralph Manheim's and John Willett's rendition).

But the most important Brechtian aspects of Neruda's *Murieta* are of a formal nature. The play is not divided into three or five acts, but rather consists of one prolog and six scenes or episodes (1 Port of Valparaiso: Departure, 2 Passage and Wedding, 3

Fandango, 4 The Bloodhounds and the Death of Teresa, 5 The Splendor of Joaquín, 6 Death of Murieta). This loose structure is close to the open form that Brecht introduced in his epic theatre. Furthermore, the action is often not directly presented on stage, but rather narrated by a multitude of voices. The list of narrators who tell the story from varying perspectives and thus alienate the action is a long one: The Voice of the Poet speaks the prolog, and like the “Moritat von Mackie Messer” in the *Threepenny Opera*, the poet symbolically summarizes events to come. He assumes the role of a commentator and of Murieta’s mouthpiece on various occasions, as in scene 4, scene 5, or at the very end. He also personifies the poet Neruda who appears in at least two further incarnations within the play: One is the office clerk Reyes. Although the character Reyes forms part of the Zorro legends, the word “reyes” means “kings” in Spanish, and it is Neruda’s birth name before he gave himself the pseudonym “Neruda” in his teenage years. In *Murieta*, Reyes is the close friend and alter-ego of Jack Three-Fingers. Their relationship resembles that of Macheath and the policeman Brown in the *Threepenny Opera*. Reyes, a small bureaucrat who held a boring job in a customshouse, decides to follow the adventurous Three-Fingers to California. A bit cowardly and concerned about security, he wants to return on several occasions, but in the end stays loyal to the cause of his Indian friends. He personifies the meticulous desk clerk poet, as opposed to the romantic dreamer, the Voice of the Poet. As a last possible impersonation of the poet Neruda, the bird vendor comes to mind. He is a poetic creature who appears only once at the end of scene 4. After witnessing Teresa’s rape and death, he lets his little pigeons out of their cage and fly off to search for Murieta (114-19).

The many possible narrators also include Murieta himself. Murieta never appears on stage while he is alive. He is the protagonist, yet an invisible character, and all we know about him are the tales of others. After his death, his head is shown on stage in a cage. Like a shadow, this head, severed from its body -- another form of alienation -- begins to speak.

Musical performers assume narrator functions. In his author’s foreword Neruda calls *Murieta* “an insurrectionary cantata” (viii), or within the drama,

as the Voice of the Poet, he refers to it as a “Bandit’s Cantata” (145). We may recall the important role that the cantata played in the musical works of Brecht and Eisler. A “cantata” (derived from Italian *cantare* = to sing) is a musical composition for voices and instrumental accompaniment. The earliest cantatas, operalike settings of religious or secular poems or stories, appeared after 1600 in Italy. In Germany, around 1700, Lutheran composers began to develop a distinctive form of church cantata. The greatest examples of this style were composed by Johann Sebastian Bach, although he also wrote some secular cantatas (“Coffee Cantata”). But the frequent religious character of this form accounts for the didactic connotations associated with the cantata. When twentieth century avantgarde composers like Eisler (or Milhaud, Henze, Boulez) resurrected the form of the cantata, they were particularly attracted to the form for this didactic potential that they used to transmit humanitarian, political, or philosophical values. Neruda’s creation of a “bandit’s cantata” is thus playfully ironic, exposing society’s hypocrisies: His drama teaches a lesson to the viewer, but the person teaching humanity is an outlaw, a criminal.

In addition to a cantata, *Splendor and Death of Joaquín Murieta* is a hybrid of many genres. Neruda describes it later as “a tragic work; but it is also, in part, a *jeu d’esprit*: by which I mean it is intended as a melodrama, an opera, and a pantomime” (*Murieta* ix). Likewise, Brecht characterized the *Threepenny Opera* as an original piece precisely because it contained elements of opera and of drama (*Werke* 24: 57). In 1928, the *Threepenny Opera* revolutionized musical theatre by integrating popular, often American, modern dance forms like foxtrot, shimmy, ragtime, or tango. Neruda integrated Latin American dances into *Murieta* -- primarily the *cueca* --, and a whole episode is devoted to the *fandango*, a musical fiesta. The play overflows with musical players or singers: a male and a female chorus, a quartet, a trio of female soloists, barcarole music, a funeral chorus. These musical performers often turn directly to the audience; and they narrate a spectacle that is at once epic in a Brechtian sense and extremely poetic.

More than the *Threepenny Opera*, Kurt Weill wrote, the opera *Mahagonny* allowed for an “organization according to purely musical precepts” (qtd. in Kowalke 514). The music for

Murieta was composed by Sergio Ortega, a Chilean composer who spent exile years in the GDR in the 1970s. In *Murieta*, music and dancing also account for much of the play's lyricism and its emotional quality. But Neruda's *epic opera* is more *costumbrista* and passionately ethical than the *epic operas* by Brecht and Weill that rather appeal to the intellect.

According to statistics of the *Deutscher Bühnenverein*, *Murieta* has only rarely been performed on German stages since the 1980s. Several reasons might explain this: Despite his genius, his lyrical prose and his colorful staging devices, Neruda remains a novice at playwrighting and in essence a poet. Also, the ideology of the play is more narrowly a part of the Cold War imagination than that of many plays by Brecht. But in the 1970s, maybe thanks to a number of Chilean exiles living in the GDR after the Pinochet coup, *Murieta* was frequently produced, especially on GDR stages. Among others, there were performances at the Volkstheater in Rostock (1974), at Deutsches Theater in Berlin (1974), at the Staatstheater in Dresden, at the Deutsch-Sorbisches Volkstheater in Bautzen (dir. Heinz-Uwe Haus), and at the Neue Stadthalle in Chemnitz, then Karl-Marx-Stadt (Beckett 155-70). It is possible that *Splendor and Death of Joaquín Murieta*, Neruda's epic and poetic play, in turn also shaped writing and performing in the GDR.

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Erich Bentley's book *30 Years of Treason* has been out of print for the past twenty years. It will be re-issued by *Nation Books*, New York, in January 2002. Its importance for Brechtians is that it contains Brecht's testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee along with the two statements Brecht wrote on that subject; the testimony of all three Eislers (Hanns, Gerhart, and Ruth); and the Committee's own translation of *Die Maßnahme*. Brecht thereby lost his U.S. copyright on this last item: issued by the U.S. printing office, it is ipso facto in the public domain.

THE BRECHT EFFECT

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TIVE

“...To make theatre against the wall means to make theatre against a **life** that is unrelenting and dominating, against a **culture** that is foregrounded and fashionable, against a **theatre** that is shaped by them, and, of course, against the **spectator** who stands only as spectator both in the play and in life. . . To make theatre or to try to make theatre against the wall means to try to organize an oppositional cultural movement, to try for **life**.” (From the theatre program for Harold Pinter’s *One For the Road*)

First, there was Nemesis. In 1992 we had begun to perform under the name of “Ege Űniversitesi Műh. Fak. Ŧiir Topluluđu” (The Poetry Society of the Aegean University Engineering Faculty). After performances of this dramatized poem during two seasons, we founded the “Ege [Aegean] Ensemble.” We were now the “Műh. Fak. Tiyatro Topluluđu” (Theatre Society of The Engineering Faculty). In 1995 we began to study acting education; the play that year was “Dýřarda Kapýnýn Őnűde” (*Draußen vor der Tűr / The Man Outside*) by Wolfgang Borchert. The Dirty War between the Turkish army and PKK guerrillas between 1984-1999 was absolutely frightening, and we reacted very strongly against it. That’s why we chose Borchert’s anti-militarist play. We narrated the story of “Mehmetler” (the nickname for Turkish soldiers) by using his protagonist, the Beckmann figure. We always said “No War” to our spectators. At the same time the first seeds of our theatre approach began to germinate. The most decisive ideas included working against the stage-frame, rewriting the text in the light of our own commentary, acting with intense motion on stage, and refusing both catharsis and identification.

In late 1996 we left the university; in fact, we had to leave because the university administration was providing no space for our work. But, in another sense this became a constructive process for

us, for we were confronted even more directly face-to-face with the wall and founded “Duvara KarŦý Tiyatro Topluluđu” (Theatre Collective against the Wall, DKTT). In that early period our works were mostly about “actor” intensity. We put the actor at the center of our work in light of the principle: “A theatre needs only an empty stage, an actor, and a spectator.” We worked on the very idea of theatre by using the actor’s body, the actor’s image, and the idea of the actor as spectator of the actor as well. The most important results of our work at this time were in the area of acting, this being - beyond the actor - the least developed of the stage components. We staged plays in which the spectator too became an actor in light of the idea: “A spectator is always less than a human being.” Moreover, we were interested in the function of theatre (today) and the place of theatre as an “oppositional cultural movement.”

The most important insight we gained from the work was that the activity of theatre itself was dying away. The spectator was coming to the theatre with the masks and defense mechanisms of daily life, thus closing him/herself off to external effects and resisting the confrontation with the play. As a result, there could not be a reciprocal influence and dispute between spectator and play, and one of the critical veins of the theatre was cut off. The spectators, dressed in beautiful clothes, go to the theatre with the righteous pride and excitement of pursuing an “artistic”(!) activity while following the social and ethical messages. Convinced that all their social and ethical values are right, they return home to sleep after applauding like crazies. Theatre was becoming a terrible ceremony where beginning and ending are known from the outset. Of course, spectator and play negotiate this mortality together. Awful plays are prepared for the terrible ceremony, or plays are adapted to the ceremony by manipulating their issues. And the repertoire itself is chosen for the urbane, elite spectators who are at the center of the ceremony both as producers and consumers. However, theatre “. . . was created for the people and by the people” (Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*), and it “. . . has evolutionary properties like folk songs, folk plays, weddings, festivals and a necessity which proceeds shoulder-to-shoulder with

the people” (founding declaration of the Cansenligi Actors). Theatre must argue and invite people to argue; it must criticize life and change life together with the spectator; it must be an activity in a reciprocal relationship with the world in which it participates. In other words, the theatre must **live**.

We staged “Bir Tek Daha” (*One For the Road* by Harold Pinter) after the period of these works and arguments. Turkey was in the first row of the European Human Rights Court in those days, and there was as well a democracy make-over under way so that Turkey can become a member of European Community. We wanted to scratch that make-over. We didn’t like the concept of “spectator” and we were inviting everyone to our play with the statement in the press release prepared for “Bir Tek Daha” “. . .not to stand by simply as spectator of these attempts to swindle democracy and not to be simply a spectator . . . like everybody else of culture and life.” In the program prepared for that play we also defined theatre against the wall as theatre against those people who are spectators in the play and in life. Hence, we staged the play by refusing and by forcing the separation between spectator and actor and by trying to integrate the spectator into the play wherever we could. We refused the stage entirely, acting in front, at the back, and among the spectators. We were one among others. We tried to act as partners of the spectators by getting in touch with them. We waited for them to become active during the play and to develop an attitude toward the play. There were some results: we had been influenced by Artaud and Grotowsky during the staging; it was an interesting process for us, and we were successful in making our name heard, although only to a narrow circle; spectators were really in contact with us during the play, although mostly that contact was only reactive and could not be raised to the point of having an attitude, which had been our goal. The most surprising attitude we faced was that the spectators frequently did not want to leave the space.

The next two years passed with problems of workshop space and the collective’s stability. Another growing problem was the difficulty of finding a suitable text for our collective that could express our own positions. But our demand and need to interrupt the agenda was the ongoing concern. First, we thought of preparing a play about the struggle of the

Bergama farmers against Eurogold Co. that wanted to mine gold by using cyanide in Bergama (near İzmir). After working for a long time, however, we were unable to complete a street play, so we adapted something from the novel “Dikenli Tel” (*Barbed Wire* by Manuel Skorza). The next project arose when Abdullah Öcalan had fled to Rome. “Saygılı Yosma” (*The Respectful Prostitute*) by Jean-Paul Sartre) raised our voice against the waves of fascism and chauvinism. But again we could not stage it because of our problems with maintaining a stable collective. Our space problems continued too.

We were under pressure owing to our lack of productions, and that drove us to seek new approaches to our working method. Once again we began to argue about creating our own plays instead of using already existing ones. We thought of improvising plays. We would extemporize about themes for which an action-plan was pre-defined and then we would prepare a text from the fixed point we reached at the end of the extemporizations. “Bir Zamanlar Aşâdıya” (*Once Upon a Time, Below*) was produced in this way. We planned the play around the earthquake of 17 August 1999 and approached it through *Epic Theatre* by creating an episodic structure and by using *alienation* effects. We brought together two concepts for the argument: state organization, based on pressure and force, and goodness, which did not affect the foundations of the existing order. With “Bir Zamanlar Aşâdıya” we took the first steps of reaching out to a spectator group we had never before approached by insinuating ourselves into the suburbs. We had rented a workshop space, which influenced the collective quite affirmatively, and this in turn led to tidier works and better organization.

Following “Bir Zamanlar Aşâdıya,” “Umut Kimde?” (*Who Is Our Hope?*) was created as three short plays in the character of a street play. We prepared it in support of a hunger strike and to encourage 118 İZSU workers who had been dismissed because of contract and privatization politics. We staged it for the workers on day 22 of the hunger strike. Thus, we continued in the steps we had begun with “Bir Zamanlar Aşâdıya” to engage other spectators (mostly oppressed people). Then came May Day. We had constituted our group for “Living Theatre,” for the people, because theatre is created

by the people and for an alternative culture. Thus, we acted a play with other groups during the march.

Theatre's "driving cultural function" has gained importance in our theatre idea. We decided to re-evaluate the whole history of our theatre in light of this concept: "All art tends to develop from a form of thought, consequently, from a worldview and a human type." After this re-evaluation process we decided to shape a form of thought and a human type, both of which we want to create. At present we continue our work in this way. In re-evaluating the history of our collective, we recognized that we could not be as productive as we needed and hoped to be.

Our workshop now has a quite an impact on us. Our collective work has improved and all members have a clearer idea of our theatre philosophy. Beyond that, we have been unable to solve our staffing problems and the need for continuity. Our actors, except for the university students, must work at other jobs because of financial problems. We are experimenting with a membership system in order to supply a continuous income for the individuals in the collective. According to the system those people who approve the collective's position and work pay a monthly contribution as members. Members determine themselves the amount of the contribution. In fact, there is no benefit we can offer to members. We provide them a subscription to our bulletin and free entrance to our plays. While the membership system is not yet well enough established, we do have a workshop where we can continue our work, and now we are opening a new front against the wall with a bulletin: for spreading and generalizing our experiences.

[This text, from the first issue of "Bulletin against the Wall" (October 2000), was translated into English and sent to *Communications* by Zafer Sokol on behalf of the Theatre against the Wall Collective. Marc Silberman edited it in English for this publication.

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NOTE ABOUT THE PLAY *DOORS IN THE HOUSE BURNED DOWN* (AFTER *DIE MASSNAHME*)

Fred Hayden

Doors in the House Burned Down was an accident waiting to happen. A chain of events led to the production of a play that could be looked on as a hostile criticism of Bertolt Brecht. And in this age of old fashioned American vilification (elaborated below), it is possible that the piece could be used to flesh out the fortunes of those hiring on to perform such activities (e.g., J. Fuegi's *Brecht and Company*). This note is written in order to exclude that possibility.

Background: In 1984, the director Jay Cooper asked me to assist him in staging Bert Brecht's play *Die Massnahme (The Measures Taken)*. This suicidal parable about comrades on assignment who execute a fellow comrade has always seemed to me to be a boatload of hanging albatrosses, a momentary fall in 1930 of "poor bb," arguably the Shakespeare of the twentieth century, as he faced an appalling world-choice of Hitler or Stalin.

In 1984, however, I remained angry at the U.S. Invasion of Grenada in October, 1983 -- undertaken to erase the memory of the New Jewel Movement after a faction within it (lead by the Stalinist Bernard Coard) had destroyed the New Jewel's popular leadership as a fact. I was angered not least by the way the media had distorted and then buried the invasion. Dan Rather had described President Reagan's justification speech as one of the greatest speeches he'd ever heard. The actor President speechified that the U.S. had invaded Grenada to save medical students on the island etc. and "we got there...just in time." The actor Clint Eastwood's *Heartbreak Ridge* depicted Grenada's island nature right, most everything else was ignored or wrong. "America is back" was the political catchphrase of the invasion, "forgotten" (by the media) after a few weeks, so people didn't really have time to ponder: "Back from where?"

So I told Jay Cooper that the only way I'd assist in his *Die Massnahme* project, and assist eagerly, was if this play for the 1930's (1930 written) was turned upside down and transmuted into its opposite, if it was set in one of the smallest countries

on earth, Grenada (tinier even than Berkinia Faso whose revolution several weeks prior to the Grenada invasion was enraging the Reaganauts), rather than China (Mukden), and was cast in a different color (black not gold). Depicting the low-profile catastrophe of the beheading of the popular Maurice Bishop leadership by Coard's faction in Grenada's New Jewel Movement would flesh out a parable of the historical phenomena of Stalinism (its intrigues, its fear of people, its fear of its own ideas, its reliance on sacred -- that is, Stalin's -- "texts" for indoctrination etc.). The disaster (Reagan's invasion) had profited from that catastrophe.

Note that Grenada's map area is about the size and shape of Lake Tahoe, and that the mountain range island has a population about that of the city of Berkeley, California (110,000). And that Reagan's Secretary of State Schultz, when he landed (was it in 1984?) at Grenada's controversial New International airport, pronounced Grenada a "beautiful piece of real estate."

Fidel Castro likened Coard's destructive faction to Cambodia's "Pol Pot... hyenas spouting revolutionary phrases." In the U.S. a literary celebration of the invasion was provided in an article "Caliban's Children" (briefing at Reagan's Anniversary October, 1984 White House Outreach Group on Central America) by the outreaching Stephen Schwartz. SS's argument (his sociophobic reading of Shakespeare's *Tempest*): all Granada's leaders are/were emulators of the "monster" Caliban.

The Grenada catastrophe was one of a number of similar interventions in the New World by Stalinism (such as occurred in El Salvador in 1933 -- recounted by Marmol to Roque Dalton- and Venezuela in 1967). Hence an accident waiting to happen, happened.

Hitler, Stalin and Fuegi: This background note was prompted by events that occurred after *Doors* was staged, in 1988. In brief, the Cubans and allies -- against the advice of the former "Soviet" (sic.) Union -- crushed South Africa's (nuclear armed) military at the battle of Quito Carnevale (1988, which changed the political landscape of the southern horn), the "Soviet" Union collapsed (1989-91), and the "US Decade" (the 1990's) came upon us.

During the 1990's there were efforts at select

literary vilifications of many individuals, including Brecht. J. Fuegi's smear of Brecht is the best known (*The Life and Lies of Bertolt Brecht* -- original title in England, toned down for the U.S. as *Brecht and Company*). Fuegi's spicy thesis is that Brecht rode and whipped on various sexual dependents who were the true authors of his great plays ("as much as 80 percent"). Brecht whipped on more than one mare and stallion in tandem in literary productions that the whole world recognizes as Brechtian! (E.g. Havana's Brecht Theater production of *The Good Woman of Sechuan* -- reported in the literary magazine *Gaceta* -- Cuba, May 2000). Fuegi -- partial to the whip motif -- says that Brecht created a spiritual concentration camp, very similar to those more material versions created by Hitler and Stalin. Among many followers sniffing the financial winds in the US decade is the lawyer German Tim Burkert (of Frankfurt), looking for copyright change from the Brecht plays; and the copycat Russian, Yuri Oklyansky, whose book, *The Harem of Bertolt Brecht*, shows, says a *Moscow News* reviewer (Dec 11-17, 1997), that the result of Brecht's harem's efforts are flat, monotonous plays not worthy of the Russian soul.

The English Brecht scholar, Willett, and others, have compiled long lists of Fuegi's errors in Fuegi's *Brecht and Company*, in a 1995 publication (*Brecht Yearbook* 20) of the International Brecht Society. Evaluating this book as an example of the U.S. decade, something can be learned of Fuegi's technique in smearing Brecht. The smear is produced by means of three levels of slander, which are (to use the meat industry analogy): 1) high grade (New Yorker style -- ex. of his "pornographic sonnets ... 'she hoped to enter paradise with the cocks of twenty sailors in her hands'"); 2) medium grade (ex. Brecht's alleged "emptying his gonads in various paid and unpaid ways," etc.) and; 3) low grade (*National Inquirer* style distortions -- "from the time (Brecht) pressed (Helene Weigel) into service to try to bring (the mother of his first child) to Berlin, (Weigel) had basically agreed to mother him and his other women and to pimp for him.").

I was glad to address in the 1980s the Brecht play for the 1930s, in the Brechtian spirit of utilitarian theater. However, Fuegi may not want to understand the kind of theater Brecht wanted to create and

influence. To take one example of Brecht's influence, for years the San Francisco Mime Troupe emphasized the collective character of its productions and did not often assign playwrights on its playbills, even though writers worked in the group, came up with core ideas, then fleshed them out in actor improvisations.

Another example of this kind of influence, is Brecht's collaboration with Lion Feuchtwanger on the latter's play *Warren Hastings*. This play is one of two (the other is *Oil Islands*) that Feuchtwanger published in his book *Two Anglo-Saxon Plays*, (1928) under his own name as author. But in the book he states that the play *Warren Hastings*, the better of the two plays in my opinion, was written "in collaboration with Bertolt Brecht." Or witness Brecht's journal notes about Shakespeare while Brecht was in Hollywood (*Journals* 1941-47):

... "the elizabethan theatre was a similar set-up to hollywood in many respects. collective writing, rapid writing on commission, repeated re-use of the same subjects, no control for writers over their own products, fame only among other writers, then the passion-filled action, the plots, the new settings, the political interests, etc. support by the aristocracy is over and the box-office becomes decisive; class differences become more acute, the public is made up of irreconcilable classes, the highest and the lowest (the middle group is tied up in business between 2 and 5 in the afternoon). even shakespeare's curious retirement to run a public house resembles the escape to the ranch that everybody here is planning."

In *Die Massnahme* "poor b.b." eyeballed the debasing tides of capitalism at their extreme (the great 1929 crash, the final frenzied - but "legal"! - assault by Hitler's Nazis, the "genius" of Stalin who depicted all parties on the left except Stalinist formations as "social fascism", not antipodes to nazism but twins). The religious "abnegation" noted in play and audience by W. Rasch (IBS conference, UC San Diego, May 98) was a reversal of the critical audience sought by Brecht and was the shape behind the veils of what was happening in that horrifying age, before "Third Period Stalinism" got its name. Fuegi's fear of Brecht's whip is well captured in Brecht's metaphor on defeated WWII German bourgeoisie's "denazification" (*Journals*, 1. Jan 48) "even if a dachshund which has once tasted pigeon

blood can be got back on dog biscuits by means of thorough beatings..."

Brecht's ubiquitous presence is suggested by E. P. Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), "We should look at the evidence, ...with an eye for Brechtian values -- the fatalism, the irony in the face of Establishment homilies, the tenacity of self-preservation." Thus "Poor b.b." couldn't retire as Shakespeare did. Thus, while founding the Berliner Ensemble, in one of his last poems, the trowel from the "Buckow elegies," where he dreamed (from his hard work?) that he was a bricklayer:

But when I bent down/ for mortar, a shot rang
out
that tore half the iron/ from my trowel."

From a 1997 publication *Doors*. (Revised).

bertolt
martin jankowski

I

jeder liebt bertolt. bertolt trägt eine schwarze leder-
jacke. bertolt trägt eine brille mit dickem schwar-
zem rand. er trägt eine schiebermütze gegen den
wind. und bertolt raucht zigarren, wenn der abend
kommt. er trinkt whiskey und liebt die frauen. und
die frauen lieben ihn. jeder liebt bertolt.

wenn bertolt guter laune ist, aber das ist nicht im-
mer, wenn
bertolt guter laune ist, greift er zur gitarre. er singt:
(gesungen) Hörst Du die Wölfe heulen? / Sie heulen
abends um acht. / Sie tragen ihren glänzenden Pelz /
Aus Wohlwollen und Kompetenz. / Sagen wir mal,
sagen wir mal, / Unkraut vergeht nicht so schnell... /
*Nun sing nicht schon wieder von Freiheit! / Ich könn-
te die Nerven verlieren. / Denn denen ich's singe,
die wissen es schon, / Und die es nicht wissen, die
wolln es nicht hörn. // Siehst Du die Schafe wei-
den? / So fett und so gesund. / Das Heulen der
Wölfe erschreckt sie nicht / So lange das Gras ihnen
schmeckt. / Sagen wir mal, sagen wir mal, /*

Sehnsucht vergeht nicht so schnell... / *Nun sing nicht schon wieder von Liebe!* / *Ich könnte die Nerven verlieren.* / *Denn denen ich's singe, die wissen es schon.* / *Und die es nicht wissen, die wolln es nicht hörn.* //

am ende legt bertolt die gitarre weg. alle schweigen. sie schweigen, weil sie wissen, dass bertolt nicht mag, wenn man klatscht. besser ist es, nachzudenken. sie denken nach. nicht introvertiert, nicht sentimental. mit kühlen, freundlichen gesichtern denken sie nach, reden, nippen am wein. bertolt singt seine eigenen lieder.

II

bertolt war schon als kind ein mann. es fiel niemandem auf, alle nahmen es hin. auf den fotos sieht man sein ernstes gesicht und die glänzenden schwarzen punkte der augen. er steht immer, auf allen fotos steht er, ruhig und schmal, ein kindlicher mann mit schwächtigem körper. jeder liebte ihn, als er ein kind war. er sprach wenig, und wenn, dann erschien es einfach und treffend. wenn er lachte, dann lachte er plötzlich und laut. er lachte viel. er war schon als kind ein mann. es hat sich so ergeben und es war kein problem. deswegen muß bertolt nie über seine kindheit nachdenken.

die fotos liegen im regal und unterscheiden sich nicht von den papierstapeln, den büchern und manuskripten und den kleinen buddhastatuen. alles gehört zusammen, alles hat seinen platz. wenn bertolt schreibt, ist er allein und schaut aus dem fenster. er fühlt sich nicht einsam, wenn er allein ist. er kann sich nicht vorstellen, wie das wäre.

III

einmal ist bertolt nach amerika gefahren. er lief in den straßenschluchten von new york umher und fühlte sich. er spürte, daß etwas im gange war. etwas das man nicht sehen oder anfassen konnte, das aber dennoch da war. es war sehr rhythmisch und sehr urban. man hätte einen rap daraus machen können. aber weiße männer können nicht rappen, ohne das es

gymnasiastenhaft wirkt. bertolt wußte das. weiße männer besitzen eine form von härte, die anders ist. deshalb blieb bertolt lakonisch. er rappte niemals. er schrieb kurze, harte sätze nach den regeln von sparta. seine taktart war nicht der rap. seine taktart ist der heilige schuß. der immer wiederkehrende, heilige schuß, der das leben verteidigt.

IV

bertolt liest viel. nicht weil er lesen muß, sondern weil er etwas sucht. er sieht sich alles an, zeitung, die leute auf der straße, ausstellungen, theaterstücke, filme. es ist seine geistige nahrung. aus den fragen ergeben sich seine gedanken. wenn er mit seinen freunden zusammen sitzt, spricht er sie aus. seine freunde warten darauf, daß er sie ausspricht. bertolt hat viele freunde. es ergibt sich von selbst, daß er sie trifft. ihm selbst ist das nie aufgefallen.

im sommer geht bertolt baden. er fährt an den see und badet nackt. erst legt er das jacked ab, dann die hose und die strümpfe, dann das weiße hemd und die weiße unterhose. dann geht er mit seinem weißen nackten körper hinunter zum wasser. er wadet hinein und legt sich auf den rücken. er läßt sich in die mitte des sees treiben und schaut in den himmel. wenn er zurück kommt, trocknet er sich ab und zieht sich wieder an. abends schreibt er gedichte.

was bertolt schreibt, hat nichts mit kunst zu tun. mit schönheit wohl, aber nicht mit kunst. es sind erkenntnisse, praktisch verwertbare erkenntnisse. ergebnisse eines aufmerksamen blicks auf die welt, auf vorgänge, deren konsequenzen den wenigsten klar sind. sie müssen so ausgedrückt werden, daß sie ihrem zweck gerecht werden. fakten müssen schön und gefühle müssen klar sein. denn empfindung und verstand sind nur aspekte ein und desselben und gehören zusammen. je mehr bertolt schreibt, desto dichter werden seine gedanken. er verabscheut im-

pressionen, er sucht consequenzen. er sucht erkenntnisse, die er vorher nicht hatte. er will für alle das angenehmste herausholen. er weiß, daß für alle viel mehr herauszuholen ist, wenn man den gewohnheiten des denkens mißtraut. je mehr ruhe bertolt hat, desto mehr erkenntnisse hat er. deshalb reagiert er empfindlich, wenn man ihn stört. das liegt auf der hand und gehört dazu.

V

bertolts geliebte sind studentinnen oder künstlerinnen. er verläßt sie nie, aber manchmal vergißt er sie. ihre namen vergißt er nie. er ärgert sich, daß sie sich nichts aus geld machen, er findet, man muß auf das geld achten wie auf die liebe, sonst wird es gefährlich. seine geliebten sind schlank und unternehmungslustig und bleiben einen sommer oder winter. wenn bertolt ihnen ein buch gewidmet hat, verschwinden sie in kleinen portionen und sind eines tages zerfallen ohne eine spur zu hinterlassen außer den gefühlen, aus denen bertolt sätze macht, kurz und heiß. er wundert sich, daß es nicht ewig so weitergeht. aber er unternimmt nichts dagegen, denn er fühlt sich nie einsam, wenn er allein ist. manchmal kommen sie wieder und es geht weiter. bertolt ist zärtlich und eigensinnig. aber er ist es eigentlich immer. es ist sein prinzip. die bücher stehen in seinen regalen.

wo bertolt auftaucht, sprechen die leute ihn an. sie sehen ihn und wissen bescheid, auch wenn sie ihn gar nicht kennen. sie sehen sein gesicht, seine schwarze brille und seine sanften hände und sprechen ihn an. sie reden mit ihm über politik und was man machen könnte, über theaterstücke oder seltene versmaße oder die abgestumpftheit der leute. oder über schlechte bücher die sie gerade verärgert gelesen haben. sie sind angenehm berührt von den einwänden, die bertolt nach einer kleinen pause macht, wenn sie zuende geredet haben. seine einwände erscheinen ihnen unerwartet und dennoch vertraut. sie können etwas anfangen mit seinen einwänden. sie hatten damit gerechnet. sie hatten darauf gewartet. Deshalb sprechen sie ihn oft an.

VI

wenn bertolt traurig ist, wird er nicht traurig sondern zornig. ein stummer, bohrender zorn, der seine sätze ätzend macht und seine bewegungen eckig. wenn er traurig wird, findet er rasch den grund dafür und geht ihm entgegen. es gibt immer einen grund. bertolt ist oft so zornig, auf intensive weise, aber er schimpft nicht, er wird nicht laut, er denkt, denkt in klaren sätzen und spricht sie aus. bertolts stimme hat einen warmen, fremdartigen akzent, die einen auch dann für ihn einnimmt, wenn er zornig ist. sie klingt nach den geborgenen winkeln einer bergigen gegend aus der er hierher geflohen sein muß. er ist oft zornig weil er zu vielem lust hat. er hat eigentlich immer lust. was dem entgegensteht, macht ihn traurig. er kommt nicht daran vorbei. in solchen situationen muß er aufhören zu lesen oder zu schreiben, zu kochen oder spazierenzugehen. er muß denken und muß sagen was er denkt. Er gibt darauf acht, daß er nicht mehr sagt, als nötig ist.

manchmal ißt bertolt in der mensa. abends kocht man meistens gemeinsam in seiner küche ausgefallene gerichte mit mehreren gängen. aber mittags ißt er oft in der mensa. die studenten freuen sich, wenn er kommt. bertolt, rufen sie, und winken ihn an ihren tisch. bertolt setzt sich zu ihnen und sie diskutieren. bertolt mag ihre leuchtenden gesichter und die kleinen gesten der jungen frauen. manchmal werden filme über ihn gemacht.

VII

bertolt heißt eigentlich christian. aber das spielt keine rolle mehr. bertolt fühlt sich hier richtig, und alle freuen sich, daß es ihn gibt. denn er ist hier richtig. sie mögen seine gedichte und sie mögen seine lieder und sie mögen seine kurzen stücke, die selten gespielt werden und wenn, dann in gemütlichen kleinen off-theatern mit schlechter belüftung und der kassierer ist der beleuchter und der kartenabreißer und der regisseur und es riecht warm nach staub, pomade und leidenschaft. bertolt haßt handybesitzer und liebt katzen. Und jeder liebt bertolt.

bertolt wohnt in der oranienburger straße, gleich um

die ecke vom dorotheenstädischen, unweit der alten
synagoge. bertolt liebt diese gegend, denn hier kann
man einiges vom geist
früherer tage wiederfinden, wenn man aufmerksam
bleibt. hier gibt es oasen der ruhe, stätten der ein-
fachheit, die von heiterem leben erfüllt sind. doch
es gibt auch das rauhe, die großstadt, den verkehr,
das geld und die nutzen. und es gibt bertolt. er ist
für diese gegend wie der kleine schwarze punkt am
ende eines satzes.

*BISHER UNVERÖFFENTLICHT. ALLE RECHTE BEIM
AUTOR.*

Über den Autor: Martin Janowski ist freier Schrift-
steller in Berlin. In den letzten 15 Jahren hat er vor
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System Himmel -- Gespenster der Zukunft Montage von Knut Gerwers

Konzept — Hintergrund

System Himmel — gespenster der zukunft entstand aus der Idee für eine Produktion mit Schauspielstudenten des Viartisti Teatro in Turin. Ausgehend von den Erfahrungen des Live-Video-Theater Projekts *Der Großinquisitor* (mit Hermann Treusch) soll auch in diesem Stück der Einsatz des Mediums Video sowie computergestützter Projektionsformen eine wichtige Rolle spielen. Die Aufführung des Stücks ist für den Winter 1001 am Teatro Pererempruner (Turin) geplant.

Regie: Pietra Selva Nicolichia.

Text und Projektionen: Knut Gerwers.

Mensch — Theater — Maschine

Das Stück ist weder an einen bestimmten Ort noch an eine fixierbare Zeit gebunden. Aufgeteilt in 15 gleich endende Segmente, läuft es nach einem rituell/maschinenhaften Programm ab -- unterbrochen von noch "systemimmanenten," musikalisch / performancehaften "Stör"-Elementen. Unterstreichend den Wandel vom Prozeß zum Prozessor -- gerade in Bezug auf den wichtigsten Aspekt des Stückes: der Zukunft des Menschen, im Zeichen der Arbeit an der Mensch-Maschine.

Sprachprozesse -- DeMontage

Der Stücktext ist eine komplexe Montage, die Heiner Müllers Stück *Mauser*, sowie Lyrik- und Interview Fragmente von Müller, einige Zeilen Brecht (aus *Die Maßnahme* und *Fatzer*) sowie (hauptsächlich) eigene Texte verarbeitet. "System Himmel" ist (auch) eine theatralische Schlachtfeldforschung zum Erscheinungs- und Sprachbild der Neuen Revolution, deren Techno/Ideologien jetzt entwickelt werden. Das klassische Revolutionsvokabular ist längst von der Werbung, der Ökonomie und Technologie vereinnahmt worden. Und nicht zu unrecht, werden doch zumindest in den letzten beiden Bereichen die Mittel zu den größten gesellschaftlichen Umwälzungen entwickelt.

Die Alte Frage — Der Neue Mensch

(Systemabgleich und Revolutions-Update)

Gefragt wird, vor dem Hintergrund des *Mauser* Textes (einer "klassischen" Revolutions-Exekutions-Situation) nach dem Wesen der NEUEN, der ultimativen Revolution, nach ihren Werten und Opfern. Die Konfrontation von "alten" Texten mit neuem Material generiert dabei einen Update des Begriffs "Revolution" an sich, sowie der sich in ihr verändernden (Sprach)-Prozesse und Systeme. Erhalten bleibt der "Glutkern," die Grundfrage aus *Mauser – Maßnahme*: Wieviele Menschenleben ist eine Revolution wert, welche Opfer werden gefordert? Wie jede Revolution zuvor strebt auch die "Neue Revolution" nach dem "Neuen Menschen." Doch stehen der Neuen Revolution, deren stärkste Motoren die "New Economy" sowie die (Informations und Bio-)Technologien sind, jetzt ganz andere Mittel des Zugriffs auf den Menschen zur Verfügung. Dieser Zugriff wird hier verhandelt, die Arbeit an der Verwirklichung des ganz REALEN Neuen Menschen, so wie ihn die Motoren / Systeme der "Revolution" in der Zukunft brauchen.

Die anstehende Grenzüberschreitung, diese neue Revolution findet IM Menschen selbst statt. Es geht nicht mehr nur um die Umwertung aller Werte, sondern um die totale Umwandlung des Menschen-(Inneren) selbst. Deshalb steht er hier ganz explizit als eine menschliche (austauschbare) Einheit -- in kollektiver Spielform -- im Ver-Handlungszentrum dieses Prozesses.

Im Zuge dieser totalen Umwertung, einer quasi-Vergöttlichung neuer Technologien, konnte man von einer "Fleischwerdung der Metaphysik" sprechen. Z. B. in der Erscheinungsform heraufkommender Mensch-Maschinen. In diesem Sinne ist auch einer der Brecht-Sätze zu lesen -- und als Assoziation im Titel und Text aufgenommen: "Wie früher Geister kamen aus Vergangenheit, so jetzt aus Zukunft ebenso."

Unsichtbarkeiten — Antagonisten

Thema ist auch eine zunehmende Verflüchtigung, ein Unsichtbarwerden dieser Prozesse und aller ihrer eventuell anhaftenden "Gegner" in ihrer eigenen Wirkungsmacht, ihrer eigenen "Folgerichtigkeit." Wo bleiben die klassischen

Feindbilder aus Fleisch und Blut, wenn sie mitsamt ihren Ideologien von den sogenannten deregulierten und sich emanzipierenden, systemischen Prozessen aufgesaugt und automatisiert werden? Ein Prozeß der Verflüchtigung in dem logischerweise auch die Dichter ihrer "Feindbilder" -- und im schlimmeren Fall -- ihrer Stoffe verlustig gehen.

Heiner Müller — Selbstkritik

Ein weiterer Aspekt des Stücks: Das Zerfallen der Kategorien und Utopien der Künstler -- in diesem Stück repräsentiert von einer "Schreiber"-Figur - deutlich versehen mit den Zügen (Texten) von Heiner Müller. Sie agiert im fließenden Wechsel zwischen den Rollen des Rezitators und Kommentators, des Unterbrechenden oder die Handlungstränge assoziativ Verbindenden. Den Aspekt der "Selbstkritik" des Künstlers / Intellektuellen vermißte Müller immer bei den Inszenierungen seiner Arbeiten -- hier ist er integraler Bestandteil des Stücks. "System Himmel," welches Brechts Ideen zum Lehrstück aufgreift und bis an ihr Zerbrechen hinaustreibt, stellt auch einen Versuch dar, die nach wie vor vitalen Elemente dieser Form und ihrer Möglichkeiten in einem aktuellen / futuristischen Rahmen anzuwenden. Davon ab: Es ist höchste Zeit, daß Müllers Stücke wieder in die Theater-Produktion kommen. Die gefühlige Leichenstarre des 19. Jahrhundert, die einen anweht von den Bühnen deutscher Theater (verkleistert allenfalls durch die Spezialeffekte des 21ten) wird enden. So oder so.

Akteure — Bühne — Projektionen

(ein mögliches Grundmodell)

Akteure

Der Schreiber: Sein Terrain ist (zumeist) der Elfenbeinwachturm; sein eigener Grenzposten. Sitzend, mit zoologischem Blick, über / zwischen allen Systemen -- auch im Theater.

Die Chöre (2 Gruppen: 0-Chor und 1-Chor, ihre Anzahl ist variabel): Der 0-Chor steht für die "traditionelle," der 1-Chor für die neue Revolution. Sie tragen einheitliche weiße Kleidung und Turnschuhe; erscheinen wie eine Mischung aus Sportlern und modebewußter Ordensgemeinschaft. Sie stehen

zunächst aufgereiht in 2 Gruppen unter den seitlichen Leinwänden.

"0,5": Der / Die rotierende Protagonist[in] -- gespeist aus den Chormitgliedern. Steht auf dem zentralen "Vernehmungs"-Platz, Rücken zum Publikum, Gesicht zur / in der zentralen Projektion.

#B : Der / Die Vorgänger[in] / Alter Ego der "0,5"-- Figur, der / die von ihm exekutiert wird. Nur in der Projektion auftretend.

Bühne

Der Bühnenraum ist möglichst hell / weiß ausgeschlagen, sodaß Projektionen überall eingesetzt sind. In der Bühnenmitte hängt eine runde Projektionsleinwand. Ein Elfenbein / Wachturm, der WohnSitzArbeitsPlatz des Schreibers. Möglichst im / nahe am Zuschauerraum. Bewehrt mit Sonnenschirm, Computer, Fernseher, Whisky, Zigarren etc. In der Bühnenmitte, einige Meter vor der zentralen Projektionsleinwand, ein Stehplatz -- Anklage / Zeugenstand für die "0,5"-Figur. Halbschräg zur Bühnenmitte hin ausgerichtet, zwei weitere Leinwände. Darunter stehen, in zwei Gruppen geteilt, die Chöre. Vor / um die Chöre ist ein Metallgestänge angebracht -- es hält Gadgets, dient zu Übungen etc.

Abläufe

Das Stück besteht aus 15 gleich endenden Teilen. Die Grundstruktur ist die eines rituell / maschinenhaften Programms. Jeder Teil endet mit dem Ton eines Schusses bzw. dem symbolischen (akustischen) Tod des jeweiligen "0,5"-Spielers sowie dem Wechsel eines neuen Chorspielers in dessen Rolle. Der vorherige Spieler der "0,5"-Figur tritt zurück in die Chöre. Zwischen den einzelnen Teilen setzt mit dem Schuß ein Musikstück ein, zu dem die Chöre ein kurzes, stummes Zwischenspiel geben, zu dem sie ihren üblichen Standort verlassen. Mit Ende jedes Zwischenspiels nehmen die Chöre und die nächste "0,5"-Figur ihre Plätze ein und erscheint auf der zentralen Projektion der Titel des nächsten Teils.

Projektionen

Die zentrale Projektion zeigt als Grundbild das Gesicht der "0,5" Figur. Die seitlichen Großprojek-

tionen über den Chören zeigen als Grundbild den jeweils gegenüberstehenden Chor. Alle Projektionen können durch Bildbearbeitungsprogramme live bearbeitet werden. Die Gesichter der Darsteller z.B. eingefroren, gemorpht, einem künstlichen Alterungsprozeß usw. unterzogen werden. Jede Projektion steht für zusätzliche Bildquellen (Livebilder oder vorproduzierte Sequenzen) zur Verfügung. Per Bildmischer können sämtliche Bildquellen miteinander collagiert werden -- elektronische Improvisationen ermöglichend.

Knut Gerwers (born 1969) is a video artist living in Berlin. At the Brecht-Tage 2001, held at the "Literaturforum im Brechtthaus, Berlin," he won a prize for his submission "System Himmel — Gespenster der Zukunft" in a competition for young writers. The montage consists of textual material by the author as well as from Brecht's *Die Maßnahme* (*The Decision*) and Heiner Müller's *Mauser* accompanied by projected computer and video images adapted from advertisements of the marketing, software, and genetic technology industries. Concepts of the "old" revolution confront the "new" technological revolution that works at abolishing humankind. The new ideal is symbiosis with the machine, the new god is the internet. This text is a concept paper which introduces the project that is to be produced in Turin in Winter 2002. Marianne Streisand, who moderated the presentation at the Brecht-Tage, made this text available; Marc Silberman edited it slightly for publication.

For further information:
www.thing.de/projekte/future/heaven

Last Minute Announcement

IBS members Patrick Primavesi and Hans-Thies Lehmann (Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main) are editing a *Heiner Müller Handbuch* that will appear in 2002 in Metzler Verlag (Stuttgart). Modelled on the Goethe and Brecht handbooks, it will include several overview articles and separate entries on each of Müller's plays by various specialists in the fields of literary and theater historical scholarship. Of special interest to IBS members will be the article on Müller and Brecht as well as entries on Müller's Brecht adaptations such as *Der Lohndrucker* (based on Brecht's *Büsching* project), *Horatier* (based on Brecht's Lehrstück *Die Horatier und die Kuratier*), *Mauser* (an 'extension' of Brecht's *Massnahme*), and Müller's various versions of Brecht's unfinished *Fatzer* material.

Die Bahn



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BRECHT'S GRANDMOTHER

English words by Eric Bentley

ON NE VOIT PAS LE TEMPS PASSER
PAR JEAN FERRAT

Du Film LA VIEILLE DAME INDIGNE

*Fault - il**What does one feel?*

pleurer, feel:

faut - il en ri - re -
en - vy or pi - ty?

Fait - elle en - vie ou bien pi -
Does she make you laugh or

Bb D7 Gm

- tie
Je n'ai pas le cœur à le di - re -
I do not have the heart to an - swer

Ou ne voit pas le temps pas -
One does not see the time pass

Fb Dm Cm F7

1.2. 3.

- ser. 2. Une o - deur de ca - fé qui - ser.
- ser. 3. Et le n'a vu dans les Di - by.

Bb Bb rit.

PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENTS

Yang, Peter. *Theater is Theater. Ein Vergleich der Kreidekreisstücke Bertolt Brechts und Li Xingdaos.* New York: Peter Lang, 1998. 158 pp.

As the author states in his introduction, Brecht's *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* is generally considered one of the playwright's "Meisterstücke" (1) that has attracted major attention on the part of critics. While most of the considerable number of studies devoted to the play in question tend to concentrate on the thematic similarities between the Chinese antecedent and Brecht's drama, Peter Yang discerns a lacuna "hinsichtlich der formal-ästhetischen Untersuchung" (1) on a comparative basis. Consequently, he sets out to rectify this perceived flaw via a detailed analysis that concentrates on the various perspectives used in the respective plays as well as their lyrical-musical elements.

Without doubt, particularly in his elucidation of the formal aspects of the Chinese play, Yang, who inexplicably omits Antony Tatlow's important *The Mask of Evil* (1977), goes beyond most critics and provides useful and valuable insights. He proceeds from the distinction between the drama, epic, and lyric as genres and the dramatic, epic, and lyric as means of representation ("Darstellungsmittel"; "Gestaltungsmittel"). Furthermore, he distinguishes between the genuinely dramatic on the one hand and the nondramatic on the other; the latter includes all those "theatrical" elements that are employed "um das Gegenteil eines illusionären dramatischen Effekts zu erzielen" (3). Since both Li Xingdao and Brecht's plays pertain to the anti-illusionist tradition, Yang implies the dependency of the latter on the former and establishes "die traditionelle europäische Dramatik" (3)--a term that occurs with distressing frequency--as the model of an aesthetics opposed to both the Brechtian and Chinese dramas in question. To be sure, Brecht himself engaged in setting up such antithetical pattern--notably in his "Anmerkungen zur Oper Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny" (1930), an essay that has been frequently misunderstood as a rigid, schematic listing of elements pertaining exclusively to either the dramatic (Aristotelian) or epic form of theater. Yang

appears to steer clear of a nondialectical approach concerning the origins and sources of Brecht's theater in general and *Kreidekreis* in particular by analyzing the commingling of dramatic and nondramatic elements in epic theater; at the same time, he uses the term "die traditionelle europäische Dramatik" in a rather undifferentiated sense in that he identifies it exclusively with the so-called Aristotelian drama and entirely ignores a different European theater tradition.

Volker Klotz in his *Offene und geschlossene Form im Drama* (1960) has drawn attention to the prevalence of the latter form that both coexisted and competed with "Aristotelian" theater; in Germany it is represented by, for example, J. M. R. Lenz, Georg Büchner, and, of course, Brecht himself. Ultimately, then, Yang seems to have opted for a reductionist pattern that tends to obscure the extraordinary richness and complexity of sources, influences, and stimuli that contributed to the origin of *Kreidekreis*. Although Yang's basic premise that Brecht derived "seine schöpferischen Ideen" from the Chinese (1) remains, in general, valid, there is an occasional lack of specificity that results in somewhat bland statements (here "hinsichtlich des theatralischen Erzählers und der theatralischen Perspektive") about extant "Ähnlichkeiten als auch Unterschiede" (64) of the two plays. Such statements reaffirm Brecht's implied, sole dependency on the Chinese model.

As the textual basis for his analysis of Brecht's play, Yang uses the 1954 version of *Kreidekreis* that is included along with the 1949 version in volume eight of Brecht's *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe (GBA)*. Since questions related to the evolution of the text do not concern him, Yang's unexplained choice is unobjectionable; but, regrettably, he approaches the text in rather cavalier fashion. Apart from misleading page references for some of the passages quoted and inaccurately rendered lines, the incorrect attribution of quotes to specific characters undermines the validity of Yang's argument. For example, in commenting on the "Parteilichkeit" of the Singer (47), he has the Singer rather than Azdak refer to the "Großfürst" as "Sau" (47; GBA 8: 151) as well as "Großdieb und Großwürger" (GBA 8: 153). Similarly, the Singer

and musicians' lines, "Vor dem Schloßtor stand ein Schlächter / Am Altar ein Gottverächter" (47; GBA 8: 162), do not characterize Azdak. The wording of the entire passage as well as the concluding line, "Und es saß im Rock des Richters der Azdak," indicate clearly that the Singer provides a description of the state of disorder, the "Bürgerkrieg" that prevails after the death of the "Gouverneur" and the flight of the "Großfürst." Needless to say, it is precisely this state of "disorder" that creates the conditions that allow Azdak to become a judge—as Yang points out (45).

There are other instances of readings with which one may take issue. Yang argues that with the beginning of the "Hauptspiel" the Singer assumes a new task: "Er spielt die Rolle des Vortragenden oder des Erzählers der Kreidekreisgeschichte und seine Rolle des Spielleiters oder des Regisseurs ist durch die Rolle des Erzählers ersetzt worden" (50). Yet it is difficult not to conceive of the Singer in his function as "Spielleiter" in some of the passages Yang himself cites. The Singer's command to the arrested "Gouverneur" who is being led to his execution, "Sieh dich noch einmal um, Blinder!" (50; GBA 8: 106), is not issued by a "dramatisch mitwirkende Gestalt" that is engaged in a genuine dramatic dialogue and exchange. Rather, the "Gouverneur" as well as the fleeing Grusche, who is pursued by the "Panzerreiter" (51; GBA 8: 126), respond silently to the Singer's directives—as indicated by the subsequent stage directions—and thereby confirm his position as the "Spielleiter" who is in complete control of the narrative they enact. In fact, Yang's misreading of a stage direction as an utterance of the Singer offers another demonstration of the Singer's dominant position with regard to the action on stage: "Selbst der mächtige Fürst Kazbeki / Erwieh ihm [dem Gouverneur] vor der Kirchentür seine Reverenz. / Ein fetter Fürst tritt hinzu und begrüßt die Familie" (96; GBA 8: 102).

In short, while the attempt to engage in a thorough "formal-ästhetischen" comparison of the two plays is entirely meritorious, the considerable number of errors of all kinds (including those in the German) diminish the value of the present study. A careful and thorough editorial reworking prior to publication would have gone a long way to make Yang's findings more persuasive and convincing.

Siegfried Mews

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Tom Kuhn and John Willett, eds. *Brecht Collected Plays 4*. London: Methuen Publishing, 2001.

This new volume in the Methuen Brecht edition contains the text of a major Brecht play which has not, until now, been available in English. Brecht's *Round Heads and Pointed Heads: A Tale of Horror* was written in 1932 in response to the growing threat of political melt-down in Germany. And yet it is a farce, a fast-moving political parable, a grim musical comedy. The sleazy songs and political ballads by Hanns Eisler ('Nana's Song,' 'Ballad of the Waterwheel') are already familiar. It features as the first play in this volume, in a new translation by one of the editors, Tom Kuhn. In the play the responsibility for the government of a distant land called 'Yahoo' is entrusted to a populist demagogue, whose plan it is to divide the population into two races, the Zaks and the Ziks, Round Heads and Pointed Heads. His strategy is shockingly successful. In the ensuing chaos the entrenched interests of the landed gentry are pitted against the grievance of a peasantry whose political awakening is just beginning. We track the turbulent changes of fortune of one Farmer Callas and his daughter, as they struggle for their rights and for existence worthy of human life.

The play in fact started as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and, although it has come a very long way, the bare bones of that plot are still discernible. It has often been dismissed as botched allegory of Nazism, but in fact the specific echoes of Nazi politics are few (not surprisingly given that a version was completed in 1932—though Brecht went on working on it in subsequent years). To a modern audience the resonances are shockingly contemporary. As villagers turn on one another and gangs of thugs terrorize the towns, we recall much more recent events in Rwanda, the Balkans, and Indonesia. In 1998 in the Berliner Ensemble stage a chilling production, to widespread acclaim.

Round Heads and Pointed Heads is also an interesting play because it is the only one of Brecht's large-scale works to be performed in a major professional theatre between 1933 and 1941 (when *Mother Courage* was premiered in Zürich). As a result, it played a prominent part in Brecht's theoretical and practical deliberations on the nature of *Verfremdung* and the epic theatre. A selection of his notes and essays is included in the Notes to this volume.

The volume also contains the 1940 radio play-script *The Trial of Lucullus*, which has likewise not been available in this form in English before, as well as Brecht's more familiar products of the 1930s: *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* and *Señor Carrar's Rifles*. The volume is edited and furnished with notes by Tom Kuhn and John Willett.

Enquiries to: International Sales, Methuen Publishing, 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ. Tel. +44 20 7798 1600; Fax. +44 20 7828 2098. www.methuen.co.uk

Tom Kuhn

Erster Band des neuen Brecht-Handbuchs Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag 2001

Im Juni 2001 erschien im renommierten Stuttgarter Verlag J.B. Metzler der erste Band des neuen *Brecht-Handbuchs*, der auf knapp 700 Seiten alle Stücke, Lehrstücke, Bearbeitungen sowie ausgewählte Stückfragmente Brechts nach neuesten Erkenntnissen diskutiert. Überblicksartikel zu den Stücken, den Bearbeitungen sowie zur praktischen Theaterarbeit führen in die komplexen Zusammenhänge ein. Der Herausgeber Jan Knopf ersetzt mit diesem auf fünf Bände angelegten Großprojekt der Brecht-Forschung sein altes zweibändiges und ebenfalls im Metzler-Verlag erschienenes *Brecht-Handbuch* aus den achtziger Jahren. Hatte es Knopf damals noch als Alleinautor geschrieben, so beteiligen sich nun mit 55 Artikeln insgesamt 24 Brecht-Spezialistinnen und –Spezialisten aus Europa und den USA an diesem Nachschlagewerk. Vom Text- und Wissensstand fußt das benutzerfreundliche

Handbuch auf der vorliegenden *Großen Kommentierten Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* der Werke Brechts in 33 Teilbänden (GBA). Der neueste Forschungsstand der Brecht-Forschung ist eingearbeitet, Fehler und Irrtümer der GBA sind korrigiert, alte ideologische Debatten um Leben und Werk Brechts werden nicht mehr fortgeführt, und vor allem: der Stücktext ist im Zusammenspiel mit den anderen Künsten analysiert und beschrieben. So können dem Text durch die Vermeidung literaturwissenschaftlich zentrierter Positionen neue Lesarten entnommen werden. Mit der Darstellung des Wechselspiels kollektiver Künste, der Einbeziehung der für das Verständnis des Stücks und seines Textes so wichtigen Musik (die in allen Stücken Brechts eine zentrale Rolle spielt), der kollektiven Arbeitsweise Brechts, der Darstellung der Modernität in seinen Texten (auch im Kontext des entstehenden Medienzeitalters und seiner Ästhetik), und insbesondere: der Haltbarkeit von Brechts (Stück-Texten, die ihn bis heute weltweit zu dem meist gespielten Autor nach Shakespeare auf dem Theater machen – all das wird in der Gesamtschau seines theatralischen Werks im Brecht-Handbuch aufgezeigt und diskutiert.

Dieser und die nachfolgenden vier Bände (*Gedichte - Prosa, Filme, Drehbücher - Schriften, Journale, Briefe - Register, Chronik, Materialien*) werden in Zusammenarbeit mit Joachim Lucchesi redaktionell betreut. Das Projekt entsteht an der Arbeitsstelle Bertolt Brecht (ABB) der Universität Karlsruhe und wird voraussichtlich im Februar 2003 abgeschlossen sein. Gegenwärtig wird der zweite Band *Gedichte* erarbeitet, der November 2001 im Druck vorliegen soll.

Da für den dritten und vierten Band noch einige Artikel zu vergeben sind, möchten wir potentielle Interessenten auffordern, Kontakt mit uns aufzunehmen. Gleichzeitig bitten wir Autorinnen und Autoren, die zum Thema Brecht weltweit publiziert haben, uns ihre Artikel und Bücher zur Verfügung zu stellen, damit diese für die Forschung, speziell auch für die Arbeit am *Brecht-Handbuch* genutzt werden können.

Joachim Lucchesi
Informationen und Kontakte über:
Arbeitsstelle Bertolt Brecht (ABB)

The contents of *The Brecht Yearbook 26, New Essays on Brecht / Neue Versuche über Brecht*, have now been finalized.

Memoirs/Biography are respresented by Jürgen Hillesheim und Erdmut Wizisla's, "'Was macht Deine Dichteritis?' Bertolt Brecht im Bregenzer Land. Bertolt Brecht, Karten an Max Hohenester, 7. und 26. August 1915." In "Geniales Kind im Mörderhaus," Stephan Suschke celebrates Ekkehard Schall's seventieth birthday, and in "In Praise of Learning" Irma Commanday and Mordecai Bauman talk of their encounters through the years with Hanns Eisler.

There are multi-faceted looks at performance. Alexander Stephan writes on the fascinating "update" of *Die Maßnahme* in "Zurück in die Zukunft des politischen Theaters. Soeren Voima schreiben mit *Das Kontingent Brechts Maßnahme* weiter," and conducts an in-depth interview with "Soeren Voima about their *Das Kontingent*. In "Der Fall G/B," B.K. Tragelehn discusses his production of *Galileo*, and his work with Josef Bierbichler. Hector Mclean in "*Gestus* in Performance: Brecht and Heiner Müller" takes further the discussion on *Gestus* raised by Patrice Pavis in volume 24. Ulrike Garde, in "Never in body and seldom in spirit," examines Australian productions of Brecht's plays and their reviews from 1945 to 1998, and in another Australian perspective Denise Varney in "Performing Sexual Difference: a Feminist Appropriation of Brecht" gives an account of a Melbourne production of the Santa Monica version of *The Good Person of Szechwan*. Meg Mumford, examines Brecht's use of masks in "Gestic Masks in Brecht's Theatre: A Testimony to the Contradictions and Parameters of a Realist Aesthetic."

James K. Lyon writes on Brecht's "Sources for *Furcht und Elend des III. Reiches*: Heinrich Mann, Personal Friends Newspaper Accounts."

Theory and Method are represented by Robert Kaufman in Brecht's "Autonomous Art, or, More Late Modernism!" which looks at Brecht's poetry, especially in relation to Shelley. Daniel Müller Nielaba also examines the poetry in "Wie Dichten Lesen schreibt. Zur Poetologie der Intertextualität beim jungen Brecht, am Beispiel der Ballade 'Das Schiff.'" Bettina Englmann writes on the *Lukullus*

material in "'Es gibt eine Überlieferung, die Katastrophe ist.' Erinnerungskultur versus 'Kult der Erinnerung'" in Bertolt Brecht's *Lukullus*-Texten (1939). Max Statkiewicz's essay on "Brecht's (non-) Philosophical Theater" looks at the relationship between philosophy and theater, and Astrid Oesmann in "From Chaos to Transformation: Brechtian Histories *Im Dickicht der Städte*," shows how Brecht's view of history falls somewhere between the views of Foucault and Benjamin. Dorothee Ostmeier, brings us right up to date with her paper, "Bertolt Brecht and the Internet."

The Forum section contains a letter from Barbara Brecht-Schall, and a combative look at the edition of Brecht's letters in Hans-Albert Walter's "Hier wird Brecht gespuckt oder 'Kim: konnte nicht ermittelt werden.' Die skandalöse Kommentierung von Brechts Briefen."

The publication of volume 26 has been unavoidably delayed because of illness and a change in editorship. The Editor, Maarten van Dijk, extends his apologies and hopes to have the volume ready as soon as possible.

Maarten van Dijk, University of Waterloo



**Neu in der Bibliothek
des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs**
(Auswahl)

Zeitraum: April 2000-April 2001
Zusammenstellung für Communications
Helgrid Streidt

“Abschied - Brechts letzter Sommer”. Ein Interview mit Regisseur Jan Schütte.” *Dreigroschenheft* 4 (2000), 33-35.

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