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FROM THE

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editor's note

Since the publication of the last issue of Communications many readers indicated their strong support for the bulletin's present format, i.e. the inclusion of lengthier contributions. In addition, several international bibliographies are considering or have already accepted Communications for indexing (MLA International Bibliography, Germanistik, and Die internationale germanistische Bibliographie).

The present issue includes Harro Müller's essay on Brecht's Caesar novel, an attempt to re-evaluate the fragment within the context of the historical novel genre while demonstrating its power as an instrument for deconstructing historical narrative. The excerpts from radio interviews with some of West Germany's best known directors present critical but open-minded remarks on why Brecht seems to have lost his thrust on the contemporary West German stage. Reports on Brecht in South Africa, in Chile and in England continue the international series initiated in the last issue. Several theater reviews will keep readers informed about some of the more important Brecht productions during the last year in the United States. (All readers of the Bulletin are encouraged to write on unusual Brecht productions about which they feel readers should know.) Finally, the issue concludes with several announcements and the IBS officers' reports.

Members may note that this issue does not include the IBS mailing list, a feature traditionally published once a year by the Society. In an effort to reduce printing costs it was decided to forego the list. Any member who needs it should write to the editor for a copy. Also in the interest of cost reduction it was necessary to reduce the type-face size. As more members pay their dues and encourage colleagues, university departments and libraries to become members, these measures can be avoided in the future. Prompt renewals, new memberships or even generous donations would also ensure that funds will be available for Communications to make further improvements in format. Indeed, serious thought has been given this year to reducing the size and scope of the bulletin in the face of the precarious situation in the treasury. As editor, I appreciate your moral support, but at the same time I cannot stress enough the need for your financial support. In a way Brecht's comment "Erst kommt das Fressen und dann die Moral" holds true here too.

HISTORY AND LITERATURE:
BRECHT'S HISTORICAL NOVEL THE AFFAIRS OF MR. JULIUS CAESAR

Harro Müller

In the 1930s the historical novel of fascist as well as anti-fascist bent experienced its heyday. Today this genre, even though persistent in many ways, has an air of unfortunate untimeliness about it. But this hasty assessment might also be the result of prejudices as yet uncontested. In the following, I would like to examine one particularly interesting attempt to write a historical novel. Brecht's novel fragment, The Affairs of Mr. Julius Caesar, is not only at odds with other patterns of the anti-fascist historical novel (Döblin, Feuchtwanger, Kesten, Heinrich Mann, and Regler, among others), but includes as well for readers in the early nineteen eighties provocative moments worth considering further.

First I will reconstruct important relationships from Brecht's experience, decisive for his productivity while in Danish exile toward the end of the thirties, and will attempt to provide reasons which may have motivated Brecht to turn to the prose genre "historical novel" and to occupy himself at some length with the late phase of the Roman Republic precisely in the face of the rising fascist challenge. Second, I will comment on selected structural problems of the novel. Next I will confront this novel about Caesar with Benjamin's "Theses on History" and then will attempt to formulate some critical commentary deriving from a contemporary perspective.

The rise to power of German fascism in 1933 represents for Brecht --exactly as it does, for example, for Heinrich Mann--a shocking experience of discontinuity. As an exiled playwright--robbed of traditional means of production and without a public--Brecht enters into a situation of critical self-scrutiny. To be sure, Brechtian irritation is not so extreme as to overlook those massive historical moments of continuity which are connected with the fascists' assumption of power and the subsequent consolidation, for--as Brecht wrote--"no longer in its anxious form, its liberalistic form yielding to the coercions of the proletariat, but now

only in its most naked and most brutal bureaucratic form can capitalism still attempt to withstand the current stabilized crisis. Before much time passes the entire bourgeoisie will have realized that fascism is the best capitalistic form of the State in this epoch, as was liberalism the best in the epoch now past" (20,239).

The concept of fascism only hinted at in this quotation determines in a central way the Brechtian battle perspective in the confrontation with fascism and stands at the base of his theoretical and aesthetic sketches: "We draw our aesthetics, as we do our morality, from the needs of our struggle" (19,349).

Brecht states his position clearly in 1935 at the first International Writers' Conference for the Defense of Culture:

Those of our friends who are as revolted by the atrocities of fascism as we are, but who wish to maintain the conditions of private property or who act indifferently toward its perpetuation, are not able to lead the struggle with sufficient force and sufficient duration against the barbarism prevailing more and more. This they cannot do because they are not able to specify and bring about the social conditions in which barbarism would be superfluous (18,245f).

Brecht's anti-fascist adversary position manifests itself on diverse fronts during his Danish period of exile. Alongside concrete political involvement appear theoretical articulations and poetic writings. Within the framework of his actual alternatives, in all areas Brecht is searching to articulate and experiment with the possibilities of penetrating into the historical process. At the same time, the assessment of his positioning on the battlefield varies. Thus Brecht's theoretical and poetic activities intensify in 1938/39 while his concrete political involvement lessens. Similarly, within his particular literary field of praxis in the thirties, his preference for genres undergoes changes. For one, a turn to the novel is evident: Three Penny Novel (1934), Caesar Novel (1938/39), Tui Novel (1938-40). This can be explained in part by the circumstances of his productivity while in exile. Within exile literature the novel is the most expedient medium. In part Brecht resumes deliberations begun long ago; he was concerned with the technical standard of modern narrative and with the poetics of the novel.

Already in the brief essay "On the Aristotelian Novel", written in the late twenties, Brecht shows clearly how the traditional, the Aristotelian, the psychological novel, as a result of its technical invoice, must always aim at ideological responses because it necessarily personalizes historical processes:

Let us assume it [a novel] proceeds from the premise: the judicial system is unjust (1), there thus follows immediately--due to the form of the novel: a judge is unjust (2), and in a story--because of the form of the novel--what results is: a judge does something unjust (3) (18,17).

Aristotelian novels are no longer capable of bringing about behavior changes; for this reason Brecht recommends instead the "preparation of documents, monographs of important men, sketches of social structures, exact and immediately applicable information about human nature..." (18, 51). Brecht's materialistically grounded critique of the Aristotelian novel--gained through experience and self-study of "materialist dialectics, economy and history"--always proceeds from the priority of functional or systematic social relations over personal factors in the historical process. This premise determines as well Brecht's argumentative perspective in the Expressionism debate in which he emphasizes anew the anachronism of traditional "aristotelian" narrative techniques turning around pivotal individuals:

It is fundamentally wrong, that is to say it leads nowhere, which is to say that it is of no advantage to the writer, to simplify his problem to such an extent that the huge, complicated, actual process of living during the age of the bourgeoisie's final struggle with the proletariat should be "used" as a story line, as window dressing, and background for the delineation of great individuals. Individuals can be afforded no more space--and above all no different space--in books than in reality. Put pragmatically: for us, individuals take shape while giving shape to the processes of human co-existence, and in that case it can be "large" or "small." It is fundamentally wrong to say: one should take a great figure and have it react in complicated ways, make its relations to other figures as rich and deep as possible. (19, 310).

For the development of a novel technique adequate to reality, it is much more necessary to confront narrative modes of the late bourgeois avant-garde, i.e. Kafka, Döblin, Joyce, Dos Passos. Their narrative techniques--Brecht cites interior monologue, stylistic variation, disjunction, associative narrative, topical montage, alienation (19, 361)--represents a development of literary productive forces because they are "as a whole bound to the technical standard of our age, with the life styles of modern society and the modes of perception and experience of our world, our class." It is up to Marxist authors to realize the potential of these technical accomplishments. On the whole, Brecht is concerned--in particular in the face of an intensified struggle--to maintain the spirit of such attempts within Marxist literary theory and to emphasize the necessity of experimental phases.

Literature, as experimental design, represented experiments --Brecht finds this not only within the avant-garde of the late bourgeoisie, but also in the detective novel which (like film) develops "not plots from characters, but characters from plots." The detective novel, which poses an analytical task, makes possible the decoding of the causal nexus of social relations in an enjoyable manner by use of an idealized example. To be sure, the experiments are arranged in the detective novel in such a way--at least in Brecht's view--so that the problems are solvable, because "the consequences are anticipated from the outset, beginning with the catastrophe" (19, 456).

Here one perceives the specific proximity and the difference of the detective novel vis-à-vis the circumstances of everyday experience; "concerning our experiences in life":

We experience life in catastrophic form. From catastrophes we must deduce the manner in which our social co-existence functions. For the crises, depressions, revolutions and wars we must--cognitively--deduce the "inside story." Even when reading the paper (but also when reading bills, dismissal notices, induction orders etc.), we sense that someone must have done something which caused the apparent catastrophe. Who, then, did what? Behind the events communicated to us we suspect other occurrences which remain uncommunicated. These are the actual occurrences. Only if we were to know these would we understand (19, 456 f.). Brecht's thoughts on the theory of the novel are embedded in an experimental Marxism which strongly accentuates the moment of revolutionary theory and praxis. Connected with this variant of Marxist theory, aligned with Karl Korsch, is a specific conception of modernity which revolves around the development of the productive force of science and contains at the same time a possible directive for literary production. Especially in Messingkauf, Brecht developed a unique three-tiered model of history which articulates at the same time his optimism toward the future:

1. In the early stages of the modern period the developmental state of the natural sciences (Bacon, Galilei) made it possible to control nature for the benefit of man. Again and again Brecht cites Bacon's guiding premise: natura etiam nonnisi parendo vincitur. This provides the decisive point of departure for the domination of relations in nature.

2. In the nineteenth century Marx and Engels' research, which aims at defining the causal nexus of the social process in production and reproduction, joins together nature's utilitarian domination and the control of social conditions. A

common element can be projected in which the collective's potential progress no longer devolves into an advantage of the few.

3. It is then a matter of extending this step until it penetrates all dimensions of human life with the scientific spirit in order to bring forth truly human living conditions.

Brecht interjects literary production into this materialistic conception of history where scientific and idealistic elements interact in a peculiar way. From the points of view outlined here one can deduce certain requirements: literature must provide knowledge of the social causal complex as well as contain a conscious future perspective for the oppressed class. For this reason Brecht directs his primary attention to the construction of literary models in which one can recognize historical regularities. Familiarity with such models should in turn strengthen the anti-fascist position in general.

These model constructions can be projected as purely fictitious, but they can also be based on historical materials structured in accordance with the prescribed conception. Brecht's Caesar novel represents such a model construction which applies historical material and at the same time he wishes to fill a gap as yet unoccupied in the historical novel genre. For the historical novel is the medium of understanding and legitimation for exiled authors; yet Brecht generally finds articulated here--and this applies not only to Feuchtwanger's novel The False Nero but to the Henri-Quatre novels of Heinrich Mann as well--a well-intended but helpless anti-fascism which not only holds fast to a bourgeois conception of individuality, but also as a whole uses traditional narrative techniques. In the context of the Expressionism Debate Brecht criticized, in reference to his Caesar novel, not only the formalism of the Lukácsian conception of realism, but also implicitly the inventory of historical novels in the exile period:

One of the novels is a historical one, it requires diverse research concerning Roman history. It is satirical. Now, it is true that the novel has been the domain of our theoreticians. But it is not ill-will on my part when I state that for my work on this novel, The Affairs of Mr. Julius Caesar, I found nothing of any use. I have absolutely no use for jumbling together all sorts of personal conflicts set in long, expansive, detailed scenes (an effect borrowed from the bourgeois novel of the previous century, in turn derived from the drama). I use the diary form for large portions. It turned out to be necessary to change the point of view for other parts. I occupy my own position in the montage of both fictive narrative points of view... This technique nevertheless proved to be

necessary for a sound understanding of reality, I had no realistic motifs. (19, 299).

In view of the fascist challenge amid a threatening and uncertain future, Brecht--taking as a starting point a theoretically guided experience of Jetztzeit--turns his focus back to a historical period similarly running its course through a deep crises: the final phase of the Roman Republic. Brecht draws parallels between the Jetztzeit and that period on diverse planes:

1. The path from artistocratic control of the Senate through democracy and on to Caesar's dictatorship can be compared to Germany's course from the Kaiserreich through the Weimar Republic to Hitler's fascist dictatorship.
2. Like Caesar, Hitler is not the actual perpetrator but the representative, the manager, the employee of the economic power-center, i.e. the city and capital.
3. Caesar's political coup is determined basically by the structural economic crisis in which the res publica romana finds itself. The economic crisis incessantly produces unemployment. These unemployed, however, reject in principle a pact with the slaves. This is an unmistakably clear reference to the petty bourgeoisie which failed to seek solidarity with the proletariat during the world economic crisis but instead allowed itself to be integrated into fascism.
4. Like fascism, the Roman City must conduct aggressive imperialistic wars in order to stabilize its control.

The parallels cited could lead to the conclusion that Brecht simply wants to dress contemporary tendencies in historical garb. But that is not the case. Rather, Brecht joins diverse and partially self-contradictory purposes. Between the late capitalist Jetztzeit and the historical period, belonging to the socio-economic formation of antiquity's slave-based society, Brecht would like:

1. to point to parallels, analogies, identical features,
2. to determine the historical differences, and
3. to provide an analysis of the mechanisms of social reproduction in the late Roman Republic.

Thus Brecht proposes a literary project in which the historicity and contemporaneity of a selected time-frame are to be demonstrated. This project assumes at

the same time even more complicated dimensions because Brecht takes issue with the image of Caesar such as it has been formulated in historiographical and biographical discourse since the nineteenth century. In these, Caesar is always mythicized into a subject with historical force; along with Napoleon and Alexander, Caesar is the example par excellence of Treitschke's famous statement: "Men make history." This ideological constituent, resting upon a personalized historical conception, has in fact been radicalized, with severe consequences, in the fascist slogan "Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer." And it is not for nothing that Hitler as well as Mussolini insisted on a personal, typological lineage as part of the ideological arsenal for legitimizing their authority: Hitler as the reincarnation of Charlemagne and Friedrich the Great; Mussolini as the reincarnation of Caesar.

In accordance with the Brechtian notion that literature should in no way be more ignorant than the given status of scientific knowledge, Brecht reads diligently the sources of antiquity (Caesar, Cicero, Sallust, Plutarch, Sueton, Livius, Appian, Cassius Cio); he makes observations concerning the Hegelian philosophy of history when his work comes to a halt:

The Philosophy of History of this Hegel is an unnerving work. His method allows him not only to see the positive and negative of every historical phenomenon, but also to shape this polarity toward the causa of the development (AJ I, 32).

Brecht studies scientific and biographical representations (Bardt, Brandes, Carcopino, Ferrere, Frank, Kroll, E. Meyer); he occupies himself especially intensively with Mommsen's Roman history, whose Caesar-myth ("Caesar, the creative genius, Caesar the complete statesman") Brecht takes to task with calculated anger. His intensive studies disclose the fatalism of traditional historiography, direct his attention toward the not-necessary teleology of historical processes:

The historians must be appreciated with caution. They are obligated to demonstrate why everything happened as it did. The more thoroughly they gather their explications, the more at peace they must feel with themselves. But all the more terrifying becomes the fatalism which breathes from their work like an ass's foul stench (Claas 1977, 208).

And in the Work Journal Brecht notes:

It is of the greatest significance for the Caesar novel to step down from the retrospective point of view. Naturally the conclusion always appears to the historian as the goal, and in the mustering of motives it happens that he involuntarily enlarges the sector of what was planned (AJ I, 58).

His research essentially serves his tendentious, reconstructive construction of history:

I only read these books because I wanted to disclose the affairs of the ruling class at the time of the first great dictatorship, in other words with angry eyes! (Claas 1977, 229).

Brecht thus tries to synthesize in literary form his theoretically guided strategic positions in confrontation with the Jetztzeit, with the selected time-frame and with historiography as manufacturer of ideology. At the same time he thematizes problems of historical narrativity within the novel itself. The novel is a report of the learning process which a young lawyer and historian--the first-person narrator of the novel--must go through. He wants to write a biography of Caesar: Brecht constructs his initial situation such that important argumentative topoi of a historicist, agent-centered, monumentalistic history come together with their identificatory mechanisms and authority-stabilizing effects:

The great Julius Caesar, concerning whose private life I had now hoped to learn details from the notations of his secretary of long standing, had been dead precisely twenty years. He had ushered in a new age. Before him, Rome had been a great city with several scattered colonies. He founded the Imperium as the first one. He codified the laws, reformed the currency, even adjusted the calendar to correspond to scientific facts. (...) Roman history had received its Alexander. It was already apparent the he would become the inimitable exemplum of all dictators. And for the lesser peoples there remained only to describe his works. This my planned biography shall accomplish (4, 1176).

In the place of the planned biography there now appears the report of the process of recognition which had hindered it. The young historian questions contemporaries of Caesar's still alive: Mummius Spicer, former bailiff and banker of Caesar's, the advocate Afranius Carbo, the poet and commander-in-chief Vastius Alder. He draws upon the diary notations of one of Caesar's slaves, Rarus, as the most important source. This diary documents an important turning-point in the avoidable rise of Mr. Julius Caesar: his behavior during the Catilinarian conspiracy and the following two years. Rarus is, to be sure no room-servant of Caesar's:

For a room-servant there are no heroes...but not because the latter is not a hero, but because the former is a room-servant (Hegel).

In addition Spicer explains to the narrator:

This Rarus had to do with the business side of the undertakings, and you know that this side interests our historians little. They have no inkling of what short sales are. They consider all of that secondary (4, 1174).

Thus the figure of Caesar himself does not appear, but is portrayed in various perspectives from the exterior.

The testimonies of the witnesses and the witnesses themselves are arranged by Brecht poly-perspectively and put together in such a way that the reader can in fact register experimentally and in a playful way the perspective being articulated at any given time, but can also immediately make retroactive this periodic identification by always considering the interested position of the speaker and by having to deduce from these indices the real historical process. Brecht does give directions for recognizing the historical process, but the actual conclusions are situated within the consciousness of the reader.

Toward this end Brecht also uses the method of re-narration, exemplary for the enclosing/disclosing narrative approach of the Caesar novel. Thus, first of all, the anecdote passed on by Plutarch, "Caesar and the Pirates," is introduced and then counterpointed by means of a corrective observation of Mummius Spicer, who has nothing to report concerning Caesar's humor, but who is familiar with the business transactions. This account is not historically documented, but an invention of Brecht's. In fact, the novel is written such that a considerable amount of reader participation is necessary, which of course can achieve considerable insight in a pleasurable way through the satirical denunciation of the apparently pivotal subject. The Caesar novel is composed in such a way "that its reader is able to put the book down now and then to consider what has been read and to compare the thoughts of the author with his own." What perceptions can the reader, now observing precisely and deciphering indices, produce? I would like to systematize here at least some important points:

1. Caesar cannot be seen as a world-historical individual, and neither is he a manager of Weltgeist. Rather, within the economic-political terrain of power as a "battle-frenzied diversity" Caesar is a political opportunist, who after much maneuvering finally watches out for the affairs of the economically dominant group of the equites, and who produces objective economic progress as the bearer of this group's function and in contrast to his subjective intentions:

C's administration of Spain was in actuality the first to procede according to reasonable, that is to say business-like points of view... The main point, that

which was actually new, was that he dealt with the Spanish business people not only as Spaniards, but also as business people. ...His success was epoch-making and contributed more than anything else toward making the new system popular (4, 1343, 1345).

To be sure, the assumed dialectic between the productive forces and the conditions of production does not involve a one-dimensional concept of progress, because concurrent with the optimization and perpetuation of economically exploitative relations there occurs an intensification of authoritative relations.

2. The primum mobile in classical slave society as class society is the sphere of material production; its causal mechanisms assert themselves through the intentions of historical agents. At the same time history is the result of collective processes, of class struggles.

3. In economic crises a political dictatorship is erected for the stabilization of economic property conditions, and imperialistic wars are waged.

4. A revolt of the repressed class--during which the plebians act together with the slaves--is indicated only a single time as a historical possibility.

5. At the same time the reader faces a problem which Brecht does not solve, but one by which the shortcomings and contradictoriness of Brecht's position can be illustrated. Within the tradition of materialism it is first of all maintained that in the final analysis it is the economic sector which asserts itself in history. On the other hand Brecht postulates an unnecessary and non-teleological direction of history, which is in principle contingent. Economic necessity and contingency are mutually exclusive.

Brecht's historical novel The Affairs of Mr. Julius Caesar remained a fragment. Fritz Sternberg and Walter Benjamin, among others, read portions of the manuscript during their Danish exile. Brecht reports in his Work Journal:

Benjamin and Sternberg, very highly qualified intellectuals, have not understood it (the second book of the Caesar novel) and have urgently suggested introducing more human interest, more of the old novel (AJ I 33).

In this reception document one can see how The Affairs of Mr. Julius Caesar shattered the current expectations even of intellectuals well-versed in theory and aesthetics and familiar with Brecht's intentions. On the glassy coolness of the Caesar novel Brecht remarks:

The entire (Caesar) conception is inhumane. On the other hand inhumanity cannot be portrayed without having a notion of what humanity is. The social system cannot be portrayed without envisioning some other one. I cannot write only from today's point of view, I must also see another way as a possibility for that time, a cold world, a cold work. And yet I see, between writings and as I write, how we, battered, are human (AJ I, 13 f.).

When Brecht read Benjamins' "Theses on History" in 1941, he noted

the small essay deals with historical research and could have been written after having read my Caesar. ...B. reacts against the notion of history running its course, of progress as a powerful enterprise of well-composed heads, of work as the source of morality, of the working-class as the protégés of technology etc. He mocks the often-heard statement that one must be astounded that anything like fascism could come about in this century (as if weren't the fruit of all centuries). In short, the small work is clear and incisive (in spite of its metaphors and Judaisms), and one shudders to think how small the number is of those who are ready at least to misunderstand something like this (AJ I, 213).

The agreement which Brecht claims with Benjamin's "Theses On History" essentially aims at rejecting a monolithic concept of progress, an excessively optimistic perspective on history. Along with Benjamin, Brecht is of a mind that the exception is the rule. Both agree in the choice of traditional historicist, in effect theory-less, positions. Recourse to periods historically removed should show fundamentally the necessity of change in the present. For Benjamin every document of culture is at the same time one of barbarism; this becomes clear when one brushes history against the grain, approaches it from the perspective of the repressed with an eye toward qualitative change. Such an attempt to brush history against the grain is precisely what Brecht undertakes in the Caesar novel.

Of course, I am not certain if Benjamin would have agreed with Brecht's strategies to assimilate him. For important arguments of the "Theses On History," such as Benjamin's theory of the moment, are excluded by Brecht, and moreover it is questionable if the Caesar novel embodies an appropriation of tradition in the way in which Benjamin had called for it. Will a reading of the text really "heighten hatred and desire for self-sacrifice so that the working class can step forth as the last avenging, as the liberating, class?" Only a book written in the spirit of a materialist hermeneutics could accomplish this, one focussing on the proletariat as the agent of knowledge and action and making it into the archimedian point of its historical construction. But even Benjamin's position presents enormous dif-

ficulties. In the final analysis this probably has to do with the fact that with Benjamin, as with Brecht, the relation between social theory and theory of action is not explained sufficiently. And that, of course, is a particular problem that today too is still unsolved.

Brecht hoped to improve his audience's range of praxis by means of the aesthetically mediated representation of social causal complexes. If his social analysis is materialistic and subject-decentered, as the Caesar novel clearly shows, then his intended reception effect is subject-centered and idealistic. It necessarily strives after effects within the subject. In order to bear this contradiction, which after all is not a dialectic one, Brecht must seek recourse to a material philosophy of history even while emphasizing the experimental moment within Marxism. In the final analysis, it is the basis of his conception and his aesthetic production. Another important point of view derives from a contemporary perspective: the complex social reality cannot be reduced to a model of causal relations, even when Brecht states at different points that one ought to proceed from statistical causality.

With these fragmentary observations I want to direct attention to Brecht's historicity. On the other hand, I consider Brecht's novel fragment not only the most significant anti-fascist historical novel next to Heinrich Mann's The Youth and Consummation of King Henri IV, but The Affairs of Mr. Julius Caesar are still today important; we still experience history in catastrophic form; the materialistic implications are still provocative, precisely in the face of today's business affairs on a world-wide level. Even if one suspects in Brecht's position an economic reductionism and favors another concept of theory or aesthetics, it still seems to me that the following experience speaks for the topicality of the Caesar novel: I, at least, discover again and again, within myself, that in the daily praxis of my life I organize events narratively, construct continuities and often hypostasize the dialogic model of interaction and understanding into a model for explaining history. The Caesar novel, with its massive disillusioning effect and its subversion of ideologies, can be a welcome aid against such ideological mechanisms.

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This text is the shortened and slightly revised version of a lecture manuscript. I last presented the lecture during the Fall Term, 1982, at Cornell University. For these reasons I restrict myself to only a few supplementary titles.

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BRECHT, FEMINISM AND FORM:
THESES TOWARD A FEMINIST REUTILIZATION OF BRECHT

Sara Lennox¹

I. Women have no personal part in the efficiency on which this civilization is based. It is man who has to go out into an unfriendly world, who has to struggle and produce. Woman is not a being in her own right, a subject. She produces nothing but looks after those who do; she is a living monument to a long-vanished era when the domestic economy was self-contained. The division of labor imposed upon her by man brought her little that was worthwhile. She became the embodiment of the biological function, the image of nature, the subjugation of which constituted that civilization's title to fame. For millennia men dreamed of acquiring absolute mastery over nature, of converting the cosmos into one immense huntingground. It was to this that the idea of man was geared in a male-dominated society. This was the significance of reason, his proudest boast.

Horkheimer/Adorno: Dialectic of Enlightenment, p. 247/8.

Recent feminist analysis attaches onto the critique of Western thought advanced by Horkheimer and Adorno in Dialectic of Enlightenment, locating the source of the oppression of women and the domination of nature in the attempt of the rational (male) subject to bring its object (or other) under an increasingly totalitarian control. Domination is structured into and sustained by the fundamental categories on which Western reason rests. To liberate women (and other oppressed peoples) it will be necessary to transform these categories of thought and action.

II. Brecht's works are contradictory, as was the reality he described. Metaphors urging the domination of nature, its mastery by human reason, pervade his work. He has been accused of acceding to the Soviet Union's productivist assertion that human liberation will be accomplished through the expansion of the forces of

¹Like Brecht's works, this set of theses is a co-production. I would like to thank my colleagues, Susan Cocalis (German), and Johnstone Campbell (Theater); my friend Nesta King, a political scientist and eco-feminist; Judith Katz, a feminist

economic production. Yet he could also accord to nature an independence from human instrumentality.

Asked about his attitude to Nature, Mr. K. said: "Now and then I like to see a few trees when coming out of the house. Particularly because they achieve such a special degree of reality by looking so different according to the time of day and season. Also, as time goes on, we city dwellers get dazed by never seeing anything but use-objects, such as houses and railways, which, if unoccupied, would be empty, if unused, meaningless. Our peculiar social order allows us to regard even human beings as such use-objects; and so trees, at any rate for me, since I am not a carpenter, have something soothingly independent about them, outside myself, and as a matter of fact I hope that for carpenters, too, they have something about them which cannot be put to use.

Brecht, Kalendergeschichten

For Brecht, other political problems of his time seemed so urgent that "a talk about trees is almost a crime." Now the concerns of the women's movement and the ecology movement and the ever more pressing threat that, through our human domination of nature we will destroy the entire world, make exactly that discussion about trees the most compelling of political issues. A feminist reutilization of Brecht appropriate to the present will elaborate those dimensions of his work which challenge and subvert dominant structures of instrumental reason. For, as feminists are beginning to realize, the feminist challenge to forms, that is, ideological structures of domination, is more critical even than the challenge to its content.

III. As Walter Benjamin argued in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," a linear, teleological conception of history which regards it as the irresistible march of human reason towards its predetermined end is a history of the victors alone. Irmtraud Morgner, a writer from the GDR, maintains that "women must step out of history in order to enter into it." The structure of Epic Theater explodes the continuum of history: history moves by ruptures and leaps; the narrative text

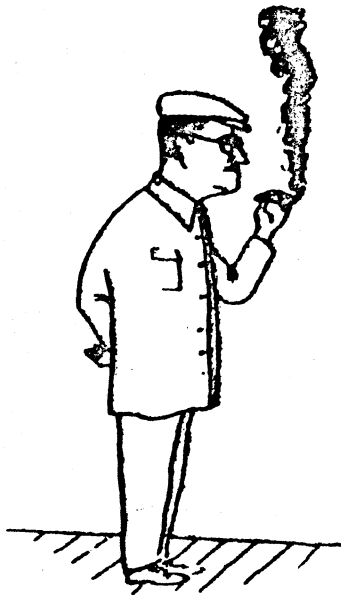
playwright; Emma Missouri, a feminist director; and Roswitha Mueller, my collaborator on the panel at the Conference of the Modern Language Association (December 1980) where I originally presented these theses.

is not of a piece, but displays its seams and knots. At every point, as the critical and astonished spectator recognizes, there is no inevitability to the course of events; even in the historical plays, the spectator, like the dramatist, "is not permitted to believe for a moment that it had to happen as it did" (Brecht, Arbeitsjournal, p. 11). At every point human subjectivity can intervene into and transform history. This is a conception of history, hence a dramatic structure, which feminism can use.

IV. Brecht's conception of the individual as "widerspruchsvoller Komplex" and "kampfdurchtobte Vielheit" (Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 20, p. 62) as well as his actors' distance from the characters they portray challenge a central presupposition of bourgeois thought, the self-identity of the individual. Yet it is not clear that Brechtian characterization plumbs the multiplicity of the individual deeply enough: the unconscious does not exist for Brecht. Attempting "to legitimize art vis-à-vis reason" (Benjamin), Brecht leaves out of his works the productions of the unconscious as they speak in language--a fertile source for other avant-garde writing contemporary to his own. But if the unconscious, which gives evidence of our own human link to nature, is the site of a desire which Western reason cannot allow to speak, the site of a different discourse which can tolerate contradictions; if even, as some feminists have argued, women are what has been repressed into the unconscious, then for feminists Brechtian dramaturgy must be supplemented to allow that which is other than reason to emerge--perhaps, as Reinhold Grimm has suggested, with Artaudian "cruelty". Since Brecht's characters are not straightjacketed by the individualized psychology of bourgeois drama, it is possible for feminist productions of his works to act his characters against the grain, supplementing them with dimensions not originally present in Brecht's own conceptions.

V. The French critic Julia Kristeva maintains that a non-dominant discourse subversive of unilinear Aristotelian logic has existed as an undercurrent throughout the history of Western thought. This discourse expressed itself in the carnival, in the spectacle, in medieval theater and prose, and in folk games, tales and fables. It insists upon "both/and" rather than the "either/or" of Western logic; it transgresses against the laws of reason without opposing reason altogether; it is rooted in dialogue rather than monologue, speaks polyphonically rather than with a single voice. Moreover, this carnivalesque discourse understands itself as social practice, existing in relationship to other texts (Kristeva's "intertextuality") and intended as communication. It is likely that Kristeva's subversive counter-discourse can be brought into connection with Negt/Kluge's "proletarian public sphere" as an alternative model for the organization of human

experience and communication. Despite their emphasis on the power of reason, Brecht's plays are also evidently polyphonic, drawing upon spectacle, carnival, folk traditions, non-Western theater, and other literary texts at odds with dominant bourgeois canon. Feminist productions of Brecht might stress and elaborate these tendencies towards a counter-discourse in his works.



BRECHT - ONLY WITH THE HATCHET?

HOW CONTEMPORARY DIRECTORS IN WEST GERMANY
VIEW BRECHT AND HIS STAGEABILITY TODAY:
INTERVIEWS

Wolfgang M. Schwiedrzik

Schwiedrzik: In 1970, Peter Stein and his company strengthened the "Schaubühne am Halleschen Ufer" with the staging of Bertolt Brecht's play "The Mother" (based on Maxim Gorky's novel). Therese Giehse played the lead.

This now famous production spread by television, a record and a book was something of a milestone in the reception of Brecht on the West German and West Berlin stages. And certainly in more than one respect.

A definite link between different generations was made. Young directors and actors--among them Bruno Ganz, Heinrich Giskes, Edith Clever and Jutta Lampe--worked together with the older, experienced Brecht-actress and anti-fascist Therese Giehse. And: it was something of an artistic and simultaneously political manifestation of the 1968 season in the theatre, a summary of the experiences of the sixties, and expression of hope and change in the social relationships, just as they were formulated in 1968 and 1969. All rested upon one of Brecht's works which shows the strengths of the Solidarity demonstrated in the "class-struggle."

Speaker: By means of simple aesthetic media, the historical proceedings were made so clear, that they could be identified with actual apparent relationships. "From this aesthetic method of quotation, the staging released a provocative energy that aimed at a political goal," wrote Volker Canaris, an attentive spectator of the production at that time. And Peter Stein stressed then, that one had to view the mother's behavior as "a behavior acceptable in its fundamental parts to non-proletarian audiences." The very least that could be achieved by a performance of the play was "to speak out against the aversion to revolutionary politics."

Schwiedrzik: Since the middle of the the seventies, a definite tendency, at least among the leading representatives of the younger generation of theatre-goers, has become apparent.

The number of performances, as statistics show, has not markedly decreased. Brecht enjoys, what is more, a growing popularity with the general public. Brecht was and still is today the most-performed German author on the West German stage. But among theatre people who consider themselves avant-garde, among the leading dramatists, directors and dramaturges, an immense "Brecht fatigue" set in.

Is Brecht really dead? What can you still make of Brecht? I posed these questions to a series of theatre people, well-known directors and dramaturges on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Brecht's death. I spoke with Jürgen Flimm in Cologne, Alfred Kirchner, Peter Stein and Dieter Sturm of the "Schaubühne" as well as George Tabori in West Berlin and Ernst Wendt in Munich.

Wendt: I think that is perhaps because Brechtian language seems much less fresh to us right now, much more overused than, let's say, a text by--I don't want to say Hölderlin but merely Schiller, I don't want to say Büchner but merely Goethe or 'merely' Lenz. I've always found in productions of Schiller's pieces (Kabale und Liebe on the one hand and Maria Stuart on the other) that this author's characters had something like a subconscious, which one could wrangle out of them. That is a very important difference in regard to Brecht: I don't find this in Brecht's characters. There are, predominantly in the later works, characters without a subconscious, in whom, therefore, nothing further is hidden than that which they say, which they say directly, and that which they want to portray--I don't want to put it so bluntly--what they have to "prove". Brecht wasn't so stupid as to think that with characters one could prove something. The sensuality of Brecht's characters also seems to have been added on by the author, rather than emerging spontaneously from the inner core of these characters. I always have the feeling when I read a piece by Brecht that I have discovered everything because I have read it. The confrontation with an actor and with what he can still find out in Brecht's works, doesn't seem necessary to me anymore. That is the central reason behind my discontent.

Stein: It is like this, there is a whole series of pieces which Brecht wrote, above all his classic pieces, which either do not allow this procedure of adaptation and instrumentalization, or it is possible only with difficulty to make them, as they say, into a production. They are too dogmatic, they are too rigid and believe too firmly that they can proclaim "eternal truths" beyond their con-

text. Galileo Galilei, for example: every line which one reads from the original "Galileo Problem" and notes is eighty times more upsetting than the way Brecht presents it. That is the problem. And that is still one of the plays which approaches reality in the toughest manner. The Caucasian Chalk Circle which, again, is based on an earlier work and has utilized it to a certain degree or taken a certain theme which is concealed in it, becomes totally bogged down in the form of a fable and the clockwork development of things. I would rather return to the prototype of The Caucasian Chalk Circle or the oriental fable upon which it is all based. And so on . . . not to mention The Good Woman of Szechuan. To simply enact the theme behind The Good Woman of Szechuan would really be like portraying the Merry Widow as she really is at her best in the theatre. I am thoroughly convinced that the Merry Widow is performable, but you naturally have to take an ax to it. And so, if one finds definite aspects, impulses, a joke or so in these pieces by Brecht, one has to tackle them with a hatchet. And then one can, perhaps, put something together.

The deciding factor in Brecht's plays--why they are so difficult for somebody who thinks in a politically serious way and is prepared to fight--is that these plays do not tell the truth. When it comes down to it, they tell half-truths. And that is deadly in theatre. Plays must have the ability to tell the truth, in every moment anew and again and again. Truths which can lead to catastrophe, into our own catastrophe that we feel and understand. Because if a playwright indicated that in a dramatic text, he won't have lost anything on stage. Only through a total involvement and confusion and constant changing of viewpoints can life exist in the theatre. I mean viewpoint in the theatrical sense. Ideological viewpoints also belong here or can also belong here, but they don't have to be ideological at all. They can also come from life, e.g. life and death have to go hand in hand together in the theatre. They must be now to the left, now to the right, now interchanged. If death is portrayed on stage it is possible that it changes five seconds later and comes to life, or that death, as such, is removed or the other way round. That's the way the structure of theatrical texts must be. I am of the firm belief that most of Brecht's pieces do not serve this crucial supposition or this crucial requisite.

Wendt: There is no doubt that Brecht as a dramatist, if you consider the works and the performances as one, is an influential model in this century. And if we don't believe that, it has to do with a point which we haven't raised yet: namely that, actually, we have political reservations. We never like to talk about that. But it is very clear that many of us, like myself, no longer believe in change, something which we still had when we read the works or saw them on stage for the first time.

Flinn: We grew up in the fifties. I was a dedicated anti-communist, was happy (I can still remember, as a grammar-school boy in the third and fourth grade), that Konrad Adenauer achieved the absolute majority. I can still remember that I found that terrific. Some teacher brought "Coals for Mike" (some kind of poem) to class. And then I thought: what does the man mean by "class-struggle"? What is that? What does that mean? And all of a sudden you were handed a key with which you could explain everything. All of a sudden everything could be explained. Fascism could be explained (at least superficially--I say that now critically); America's involvement in Vietnam could be explained. Somehow all that suddenly became clear. And the world, as it were, became cleared up for you. You had something to hold on to, like a rope in the gym on which you could climb up. I think that is a very important point. That has something to do with detachment or--as I said in the beginning--with growing up. And that was a tremendous, fantastic direction, as it were, it was a guide. And you made easier head way through the confusion of cities and of minds. We know today that we left a few things behind along the way, in that direction. We just didn't take a couple of side trips which we later realized we should have taken. But that was the historical situation which we needed, which was necessary. Otherwise we wouldn't have progressed, I believe.

You started at the "Schaubühne"--that was also important for me--with The Mother. Then there was, I think, "The Exception and the Rule." Steckel did it one more time. Since then, the author has never again been taken up at this theatre in the exemplary fashion once applied to such subjects. That isn't the mean desire of these people, they didn't suddenly become reactionary or idiots, rather, it is that they abandoned this direction and said: Well, we are here. We've reached this point with you, dear Bertolt Brecht. And now we'll have to deal with things by ourselves. That's how we simply let him go.

Sturm: Yes, but I don't believe that that is the actual root of the uneasiness. I think that apart from and accomplished by the things Peter just said regarding the generation problem, the fact of the matter is that we had certain experiences with Brecht and these experiences settled in you sometime or other and could not be repeatedly galvanized or renewed. Independent of the ones who ran so truly to Brecht (and that was something to do with the lifesaving manias of youth), there evolved a massive shift in our mentality, a shift through experience, through monstrous upheavals, which have in actual fact occurred in the last 40 years and which hermeneutically means that we don't live in a world where you could actually get by with a puristic and dialectical thought model. In other words, we no longer live in the simple relationship of contradictions, oppositions, which can be used

for certain syntheses, where there is a main and a subordinate contradiction and so on. But we move much more in ambiguities, in ambivalences, in polyvalences. And the extraordinary deficiency which Brecht has opposed to these experiences is the movement which will, sure enough, cause us to find a physical barrier to the texts, to deny Brecht.

Stein: I would be interested, for example, in doing a play like The Measure Taken, a fairly complicated and controversial work, politically controversial and formally controversial. But that would be one of Brecht's plays which I would do immediately because it would give me the possibility of speaking in a radical way about fundamental political questions, e.g. the value of human life in the assessment of the political whole. And then of course altogether different texts would come into debate. And of course, that would have to be reworked and, as mentioned, become a production which is for us today relevant and important and bears in mind all aspects of today's thought processes. That will, however, not be allowed by the copyright holders, in this case Frau Berg.

It is like this in The Measure Taken. The viewpoints in it present themselves, they become questionable in themselves; certainly not in a pointless questionability, but on stage they can be transformed to the opposite and are therein dangerous like every form of formulated truth, which is the basis for every sort of fun.

Tabori: This style for me--that he takes a Japanese piece, that he talks about a trip across the mountains (and he probably means a trip across the mountains in the direction of socialism or communism, and the whole moral problem of understanding a subject and what you would do for it, even die for the belief)--those weren't melodramatic or exotic border-line situations but rather those were the tough thirties. How to transcribe that for today, is a big problem. To do it exactly as in the thirties certainly works, but the attempt (and it is an attempt, therefore the search, in the content as well as in form) is to displace it somehow. What happened with the experiences which I and others had in the thirties, this ethos, this revolutionary and illegal ethos; how it was abused. When one thinks of the show-trials, especially in Hungary, and how Radek was forced to say yes to the lie that he was an American spy in order to save the Party, that is the dramatic crux for me in this work. Why do people talk in circles? Or, as Koestler called it, Aesopic speech? Trip across the mountains: in other words trip towards revolution or to the Soviet Union or whatever. That is not untruthful rhetoric but it also isn't a direct proclamation which he had to teach. It is a little more concrete in The Measure Taken; it is also the best, perhaps the most beautiful play he wrote.

As you know, he withdrew it. I think the Party functionaries couldn't bear his radicalism or portrayal of the problem.

But there is something horribly true in the context of historical, concrete reality which he shows in The Measure Taken. I mean, it has happened so often that someone was killed for the best reasons because he did something wrong. Just as in Jasager: it is actually the same theme. And then there are other levels which one has to consider seriously in Brecht. I don't want to psychologize now, because I know it isn't very popular among theatre people. I don't fully understand this, especially when human beings are concerned. I don't know how you can get away from the psychology without brutalizing it. But then there is something clinical in Brecht which is not uninteresting. He wrote more than anyone else about the Mother-Child relationship. He never directly said what his relationship to his mother was as a child. But the "bad mother" or the "good mother" (however it be in Szechuan, Chalk Circle, Mother Courage, Coriolan and in the Threepenny Opera), is a matter of mother and child. And as always with Brecht, the children are the victims. Brecht declined, for psychological or ideological reasons, to directly present himself. He is not, as it were, an autobiographical poet. But the autobiography is always there, indirectly. It is always the hidden side, the dark side of things in this enlightened play, which, without my wanting it, seems to stand out. On the one hand it is an exercise, a thought model for me, but on the other hand, a nightmare. I mean, the child is killed. You have to ask yourself then, why always the fear which is manifested by him. Is he the child? Does he see himself as a child, as a victim? It becomes pretty clear in some of the poems, the coldness of the world, being thrust out of the warmth of the mother's womb. That which is central in Beckett is indirect in Brecht. Is it really the "secret play"? Or how do we get there? I would find the pathology and try to make it concrete and central, be that Courage or Galilei (there are terrific pathological strains there). Whether or not that is legitimate--or as they say in America, "is it Brecht"--I don't know.

Kirchner: It has been said that the oldest Brecht works and the didactic works are dead, that they are antiquated. We wanted to argue very decidedly against this notion. We picked St. Joan of the Stockyards because it deals with the question of capitalism. In other words, the spectator is forced to discussion when confronted with this work. And we played Mother Courage purely for contextual reasons, not formal ones (whether that is now considered an old or new work by Brecht); contextual reasons because war, rearmament and weapon sales are very under-talked about right now, because we wanted to show what this play, which is an anti-war play, had to say in today's society. And we'll probably do a didactic play next year to prove that Brecht is still alive. There is so much boring material played in the

theatre that there can be no discussion about whether Brecht is a dead or living author; he is an author with whom people must come to terms. That is what we have set as our goal, which we have partially reached, thereby appealing to the people.

Schwiedrzik: Sure enough, the productions are always forthcoming. One can't deny that. It is a predominantly youthful public which flocks to productions in Bochum (and other cities).

Stein: I know one thing for sure: this so-called youthful public is becoming more important for the theatre, because the parents stay at home in front of their TV sets. The youthful public promises itself something, now as before, from Brecht. When you include a play by Brecht, there is always a full house. Young people come. In other words, there is a strong hope on the part of young people, now as before, that Brecht is saying something which will correlate somehow to their thought processes. That, I think, is a great myth. On the one hand, you are far more susceptible in the younger years to the "terribles simplificateurs"; you have more fun and can come to terms more easily. you are a farreaching "carte blanche" with a decided, or apparently decided, biased attitude and idea of the world. A single color suffices to clarify happily, enlighteningly, one's own philosophy of the world.

Schwiedrzik: And so we observe--how often in art--there is a clear contradiction between the promoted position of lesser artists and intellectuals, who by criticizing the old tread on new ground, and the majority of the public who, without reservation, accept Brecht. So has Brecht indeed reached the "durchschlagende Wirkungslosigkeit" of a classic"? In a certain way. He has made it 25 years after his death, a familiar author to the public at large, even a school book author. (What has not been mentioned is that the Bavarian Minister of Education eradicated him from a book on local history.)

So let's put away the hatchet! Certainly not. Brecht would be the last one, in the long run, to be satisfied with the "smashing lack of impact" of time. If it had not been said by Heiner Müller it could just as well have come from Brecht himself: "To make use of Brecht without criticizing him is betrayal!"

Translated by Ingmar Stomberg

(This is the shortened, revised version of a radio broadcast prepared in 1981 for Deutschlandfunk in Cologne. The editor of Communications thanks Herr Schwiedrzik for his kind permission to print these otherwise unavailable interviews.)

BERTOLT BRECHT IN CHILE

Carlos Maldonado

Brecht plays staged in Chile, though not numerous, have been interesting. Most of the plays were staged by the Instituto del Teatro de la Universidad de Chile, now called Teatro Nacional de Comedias, following the reform of the country's principal university in 1974. Under the name Teatro Experimental the group was originally founded in 1941 by some actors and professional technicians as well as university students (mainly from the Pedagogical Institute and the Law School). Many of these self-taught individuals completed their training by obtaining scholarships to study abroad. Upon their return, towards the end of the forties, the Teatro Experimental members became the faculty of the Escuela de Teatro at the University. Within a few years after its inception, the Teatro Experimental de la Universidad de Chile became the most important and prestigious theater group in Chile. It was a non-profit group, and its aim was to acquaint the Chilean public with foreign and domestic playwrights. Its productions were excellent and well performed.

The first Brecht play staged by this group was Mother Courage in 1953. It was directed by the head of the Deutsche Kammerspiele of Santiago, Reinhold Olszewski. He tried to be as faithful as possible to the text, and thus refused to shorten any scenes. As a result, the play in its initial performances lasted four hours. Despite excellent acting by Carmen Bunster (as Mother Courage) and by the young actress Claudia Paz (as Katrin), some of the audience left the theater in the middle of the performance, and the reviews were discouraging. Later the play was cut to a little over two hours and ran for two months.

The second Brecht play, produced by them seven years later in 1959, was The Threepenny Opera, staged by the new director Eugenio Guzmán. It was a light and colorful version with special emphasis on the music and well interpreted by Marsés González (Jenny), Pepe Duvauchelle (Mackey) and Roberto Parada (Tiger Brown). It ran for months and was a financial success at the theater "Antonio Varas" in Santiago. Afterwards it toured in suburbs and other cities around the country. This production was acclaimed critically and considered a definite improvement on the earlier Mother Courage.

The third Brecht play, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, was staged in 1963, directed by Atahualpa del Cioppo from Uruguay. According to both critics and to the actors who performed in the play, this was the best production yet of a Brecht play in Chile. Actor Roberto Parada, National Arts Award recipient and one of the founders of the University Theater stated: "With the staging of The Caucasian Chalk Circle by Atahualpa del Cioppo, I believe that Brecht became truly known in Chile, in his aesthetic as well as in his deep social dimension." Aquiles Sepúlveda, one of the assistant directors, explained the detailed intellectual work undertaken by the Uruguayan director with the actors, stage designers, musicians and technical personnel: "Mr. del Cioppo would first analyze each scene in depth, its images and meaning. Everyone would discuss it, first in general terms and then step by step, allowing the flow of ideas as well as the confrontation of opinions. He would not impose; rather, he would convince..." The actors were Mareca Gonzalez (Gouche), Tennyson Ferrada (Simon) and Roberto Parada (Judge Azdick), who received enthusiastic applause from the critics. Teatro Nacional had achieved a high level of excellence and the production ran for six months with full houses before it was closed.

The fourth Chilean production of a Brecht play in 1970 was Puntilla, directed by Hanner Fischer of the Dresden Theater. Despite Fischer's prestige from having worked directly with Brecht, his staging of the play was disappointing. Aquiles Sepúlveda commented: "There was little imagination or interpretive rigor shown." The play did not appeal to the public and went practically unnoticed by newspapers in Santiago. Subsequently the same director took his production to northern Chile, to the Teatro Universitario of Antofagasta, where Pedro de la Barra, Director of the school, National Arts Award recipient and a pioneer in Chilean theater, made some striking changes.

An adaptation of a Brecht play called The Beggar and the Emperor was staged by a group of the Escuela de Teatro de la Universidad de Chile. The version was a worthy effort but did not compare to previous stagings either professionally or technically. It was shown at labor unions and schools.

In 1971, Brecht's The Mother was staged with Carmen Bunster in an outstanding performance of the lead role. It was directed by Pedro Orthous, who had studied directing at the Teatro de Ensayo of the Universidad Católica. This theater group was founded several years after the Teatro Experimental. The production was well received by the critics and its box office success was adequate. Outside of the Teatro Universitario productions, a very few Brecht plays have been staged in Chile. Among them was Mahagonny, produced by the Goethe Institut of Santiago. Its

staging was not deficient, but the group lacked the prestige and quality of acting attained by the university group, and therefore the production achieved little acclaim.

During the last ten years (1973-1983), as a consequence of the unfavorable political situation in the country, the quality and quantity of theatrical productions have decreased, and many of the best actors have left the country. Other factors have been the reorganization of university theaters and political censorship of cultural activities. In spite of all this, Brecht's plays have not been totally absent from the national scene. In 1973 The Threepenny Opera was restaged, directed by Tomás Vidiella and Eugenio Guzmán (director of the first production). The shortened version of the play tried to emphasize the entertainment value over content, thus transforming it into a pseudo-musical comedy.

Staging Brecht is always a difficult cultural challenge. This is not particularly due to a lack of material resources but rather to a commitment to respect the complexity in his plays. Chilean theater audiences, shaped between 1940 and 1970, the period of major theatrical activity in the country when as many as 600 amateur groups were performing, demand a level of performance that is very difficult to achieve under the so-called "cultural blackout" dominating artistic activities in Chile.

Fernando Gallardo, an excellent actor, author and director, who--until three years ago--was involved in the "cultural resistance" of the country's avant-garde theater groups, said: "Although Brecht has been absent from our theaters, his presence has been with us, helping us with the great legacy of his work, with his sense of creativity, with his involvement in life and truth. In each of the productions that we have been able to stage, collectively or individually, under difficult working conditions, we tried to rescue the best cultural values. In our endeavor Brecht was always close to us, encouraging us to be broadminded and at the same time more direct and daring."

Translated by Nora Eidelberg

BRECHT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Arnold Blumer *

Theatre in South Africa is no different than anywhere else in the world. Like everywhere else it caters to only a small minority of the population, but--and this is the difference--this minority until very recently was restricted by law even further to whites only. I am referring here to the theatre subsidized by the State through the four provincial arts boards. (Subsidy for 1981=8.9 million Rand, including opera, ballet and concerts.) Between 1958 and 1983 only four Brecht plays have been produced by these theatres. There is another kind of theatre, though, going out from the drama schools attached to the universities and thus only indirectly subsidized by the State. It is in these drama school productions that Brecht's plays have been and still are performed. Puntila, for example, is having a two-week run in Cape Town's Little Theatre while I am here. But the earliest Brecht production took place at the University of Cape Town in 1958 when The Good Woman of Szechuan was performed. And in the same year a production of Mother Courage took place at my own university in Stellenbosch. The critics, by the way, described the former play as a proletarian propaganda piece with occasional lapses into the stickiest sort of Teutonic sentimentality. Since then some of the late and one of the early plays have been performed: good, solid, civilized productions pleasing the aesthetic senses of mum and dad who come to watch their drama school kid doing his stunt, but nothing really to write home about. After all, while studying drama one should get to know something about this guy called Brecht, but he's not really so important because--ten to one--working as a professional actor or actress for one of the performing arts boards one will never be required to act in a Brecht play again for the rest of one's life. Needless to say, none of the Lehrstücke has ever been performed by a drama school theatre.

About ten years ago a third kind of theatre came into being, a so-called independent fringe theatre, especially in Cape Town and Johannesburg. It is on these stages that the real South African theatre comes to life, that stimulating, exciting, provocative plays are being performed, that real communication takes place between audience and players. But not even they have ever tackled a Lehrstück.

*This is the shortened version of a paper presented at the IBS Symposium in Portland, Oregon, in May 1982. The author wishes to thank the HSRC for financial assistance.

Theatre is essentially concerned with finding images for reality, but these images which stand for reality also demand that this reality be known. This is only possible in a society which encourages its members from childhood to take cognizance of their reality, a society which, for want of a better word, I would like to call democratic. In an authoritarian society the ruling class will try everything in its power to hide reality from the views not only of the subjected classes, but also from the inquisitive glances of its own members because the realization of reality poses a very concrete threat to its own authority. Without a concept of reality no man can live, and thus the ruling class in such a society is forced to create a faked reality and pretend that it is the real thing. If this pretense is kept up long enough, the initiator of the whole process, the ruling class, will itself start believing firmly that the fake is the real thing and thus lose all ability to see and all desire to recognize the true reality. In some countries such faked realities are called "socialism", "dictatorship of the proletariat"; in others they are known as "national socialism", "nationalism", "separate development".

Art is one of the most subtle instruments used by authority in such societies to legitimize its power and thus to manipulate reality. It can do this because, as the ruling class, it is in possession of the material power, and as such it is also the ruling intellectual force. Its ideology is the prevailing ideology, its moral laws are obligatory for all. And so the ruling class uses art to manipulate reality because it is afraid of losing its authority, its privileged position.

There are various ways of achieving this end. The first and most important is a strict separation between art and real life. The further removed an artistic product is from real life, the more artificial it is, the more it will be socially acceptable, the more success it will have. This is also true of the performing arts and becomes apparent in the outer form in which these arts are presented. We build colossal monuments to public vanity (e.g. the State Theatre in Pretoria for R 55 million), special sanctuaries for our holy cows, and visits to these shrines are proclaimed as grand occasions at which we are expected to exhibit our new tailored suits imported from Switzerland. All this to stress the fact that what is about to happen is far removed from our ordinary everyday life, is something outside our reality. Inside these shrines we are then presented with an ersatz-reality, a glamorous world of make-believe to provide us with a substitute for that which we cannot find in our frustrated real lives. Our daily trot has (on purpose) been made so dull and monotonous that we believe only too eagerly that we are

experiencing part of what is missing outside while we "live" through films such Jaws, Inferno or King Kong. This accounts for the immense "successes" of these culture industry products.

But what about so-called experimental art? Are there not enough plays being staged and films being screened which probe into the depths of human reality? Yes, as long as they depict a reality which remains abstract and idealistic, they serve as a vindication of our liberal views: "Look here, we are not as authoritarian as we are made out to be." But our liberalism has very strict limits: as soon as an artist or piece of art leaves the ivory tower to which the ruling class has confined it, as soon as the boundaries around the territory of art are trespassed, it poses a threat. And then we do not hesitate to sacrifice even for our liberalism an alibi like Breyten Breytenbach or Athol Fugard. Some time ago Fugard was imagined to be a real danger and had his passport taken away, but since then it was realized that by integrating him his sting could be drawn. Thus he was gobbled up, digested, ruminated (it is his People are Living There which has been rehashed again and again, not his Island or Sizwe Bansi is Dead), and eventually excreted into the world. In the last two years he was our best known cultural export to Germany, making audiences believe that in a country in which such humane views are allowed expression, everything cannot be that bad.

It is a so-called independent theatre, The People's Space, which started this process of integrating Fugard. Its independence, however, is an illusion. It is not being subsidized by the State but depends so much the more on its audiences' and donors' support, which it will receive only if it produces what they like: that which does not threaten any of their cherished positions. And student theatre? It is even less independent than "fringe" theatre. Most student productions are done in close cooperation with drama schools which themselves form microcosmic replicas of our social structure: hierarchical authoritarianism. Thus the drama student's success (i.e. getting the degree or diploma) depends on the benevolence of his or her teachers on the one hand, and his or her ability to adapt on the other. What one therefore learns before anything else in this training for a professional career is opportunism. The product of this educational conditioning is the actor who does not dare to think for himself. Drama school lecturers, who in the school constitute the authority, decide on the plays to be performed, on who is to take part, on who gets the best parts. So by the time one starts a professional career, the student will have learned to equate the producer of a play with authority, an authority which demands and gets unquestioning obedience.

"They just carry out my orders like robots, never once questioning the reasons for my decisions." No wonder too that in the acting profession there seems to be an absolute horror of theory. In these circles it is believed that it is praxis which counts, not theory, and it is never realized that only a praxis which forms a dialectical unity with theory is a worthwhile praxis.

From the above the reasons become clear for the sluggish attitude of so many actors in our theatre, and why it is a fallacy to speak of an independent "fringe" and student theatre. So it would seem that it is the subsidized theatre after all which could possibly guarantee the greatest measure of independence. But that is not so. The Administrator of the Cape is reported to have said some time ago that he would have to cut the subsidies paid to the Cape Performing Arts Board if it went on producing box office failures and plays such as Dracula. And this is only the tip of the iceberg constituted by the rather stringent censorship measures which lead undoubtedly to a decline in the artistic standards. But this decline has a positive side to it. It rips the aesthetic veil off the face of most of our goods. This is what most art, not only theatre, is degraded to in a society like ours: things manufactured for sale. The extent to which this is so can be illustrated by the answer I received from a Cape Town theatre critic on inquiring about the function of newspaper criticism on theatre productions. He was convinced that his function was to recommend, or not, a certain production to potential audiences; in other words, to act as a salesman. Coming from a member of the public-opinion-forming-brigade, who is simultaneously an executive member of the authority, this answer is typical--the value of art is determined by its salability. As long as this remains so, there are no resources open to any subsidized theatre except by stepping up its sales promotion, and any discernable artistic policy will necessarily have to serve this goal. Authority has successfully endowed art with a mercantile character, thus effectively destroying its ability to uncover the real, but hidden, reality and thereby safeguarding in yet another way our authoritarian blindness.

This is also the reason why the suggestion to replace the bureaucrats who at present manage the subsidized theatres by artists is futile. In an authoritarian system real artists--not the ones who serve as system-stabilizers--are regarded as an irresponsible, immoral and unethical species and would seriously endanger the function allotted to art, namely to hide reality, if we let them run our theatres. Real artists might, out of sheer irresponsibility, discover the real function of art, which is to criticize the iniquity of present day conditions and to plead for a future in which a decent human existence is no longer the exception.

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Is there then no hope of resuscitating our dead theatre? Yes, there is, but I'm afraid a very remote one: it can only happen when we, the rulers, lose the fear of coming face to face with reality. Only then will all the members of our society, spectators, actors, producers and playwrights, be able to meet on an equal footing and become partners in discovering our common reality, of which art/theatre will form an integral living part.

This background has to be kept in mind by anyone who considers performing Brecht's Lehrstücke in South Africa. In the Brecht-Jahrbuch 1977 Jost Hermand said that one could still perform, for example, Die Ausnahme und die Regel in South Africa in the way Brecht wrote the play, but not in Germany, as there the methods of exploitation have taken on much subtler forms.¹ With that I do agree, but I would like to differ with the first part of the sentence which suggests that there is little or no difference between Germany at the beginning of the thirties and South Africa at the end of the seventies. This indeed would be an a-historical way of thinking. A direct transference of any Lehrstück onto a South African stage today would cause the same reaction as the one I have actually come across on the occasion of an Arturo Ui performance some time ago, namely: "These Germans must have been real bastards."² I suggested, when I wrote about that performance, that this play should be adapted to the local circumstances. I don't agree with that anymore. Even an adaptation would amount to presenting not much more than the same content in a different wrapping paper. What I would like to plead for today instead is to apply Dietrich Krusche's category of foreignness, which means not to integrate the foreign text into one's own culture but to let it remain initially in its foreignness and thus regard it as a challenge to the concept one has of one's own culture.³

¹J. Hermand: "Brecht-Winter in West-Berlin", in Brecht-Jahrbuch 1977, p. 168.

²A. Blumer: "Die große historische Gangstershow in Kapstadt," in Brecht-Jahrbuch 1980, p. 185-188.

³D. Krusche: "Die Kategorie der Fremde," Fremdsprache Deutsch 1, ed. by A. Wierlacher (Munich: Fink, 1980), p. 46-56.

But keeping in mind the rather regimented and bureaucratic theatre set-up even in the fringe theatre, I doubt whether this concept will be operational. There is, however, another kind of theatre tradition in South Africa which I have not mentioned yet. And that is the theatre of the black people. The black consciousness movement made these people become aware again of their cultural traditions, which led among other things to the establishment of a number of theatre groups and workshops. Based on the African tradition of oral literature, they perform on streetcorners, in market squares, in community centres, and the work of art thus created--consisting of a combination of music, dance, mime and acting--can be best described as a kind of Gesamtkunstwerk. Often members of the audience spontaneously take part in what is presented. And one great advantage is that the censor board cannot forbid these performances because, before it has realized what is going on, the group has moved on and appears somewhere else. And there is no script to be banned because it does not exist.

These are the groups which could fruitfully work on the Lehrstücke, using them, as Steinweg has described it, as a means of learning the dialectical method of thinking which consists of showing where and how the subject can take part in the development. But even they cannot just adapt a Lehrstück without first exposing themselves to its foreignness, i.e. getting thoroughly acquainted with the "Werk-Welt", or the circumstances and social surroundings in which Brecht's text originated and to which it is a reaction. This also means taking into consideration that these blacks are not the working class which Brecht had envisaged as his audience. And this in turn is the prerequisite for defining their own real position in the social, political, economic and historical framework in which they live and work. This is the function which Krusche allots to the category of foreignness: by contrasting the "Werk-Welt" with the "Rezipienten-Welt", i.e. the world in which the text-meaning is realized, we arrive at what he called Selbstverständigung (getting to know oneself, understanding).

What I have said till now sounds like working practically on the Lehrstücke is a prerogative of the black population group of my country. This is not intended. Yet the white people have so many more handicaps to overcome with regard to the Lehrstücke. One of them, for example, is the cultural tradition in which theatre functions and its method of working. A relatively small group of active people come together on a special location called stage and do things and talk before a much bigger group of people who are geographically separated from them in a place called auditorium, where they sit passively and do not talk, but listen and see. This physical set-up alone already goes against the grain of the work method which

Brecht envisaged for his Lehrstücke, namely that they would not need an audience in the traditional sense of the word, that actors and spectators are one and the same group of people. To achieve this, the whole theatre structure as the white people know it will have to be greatly changed, including the architecture.

This kind of adaptation need not be done by the black people. The separation between actor and spectator is traditionally not known to them. Whoever has seen them doing one of their ritual dance, mime and music performances will know what I mean: all of a sudden someone in the ring of spectators will jump up and take over from one of the dancers, who in turn will sit down and watch. This goes on till everyone has had a chance to dance and to watch although watching is not the right word. Those who watch are not actually looking on from a distance, they merely exchange one rhythm of activity for another, slower one, but all the time they remain part of the whole homogeneous group. Another much more difficult handicap for the white people to overcome is the fact that by the color of their skin they belong to the ruling class, whether they like it or not. So the danger is always there of producing the Lehrstücke as something which does not really pertain to them, as something which portrays an exotic tribe called worker which you go and watch like tourists will watch tribal dances put on especially for them.

The black people, on the other hand, mostly belong to the working class. After all, South African society suffers not so much from the racial issue; this is merely a relatively convenient cover to veil the rather brutal exploitation mechanisms which are prevalent. And it is this veil which could be uncovered by performing, for example, Die Ausnahme und die Regel. And if then these black groups are able to show to white people the process by which they are discovering their reality, the whites might possibly start losing their fear of this/their reality. This is easier said than done. For those people in South Africa who have the greatest fear are the white workers. They retain their jobs only because of the whiteness of their skin. And they do not go to the theatre. Those white people who would go to the performance of a Lehrstück and take part in it are, like in many other countries, the already half-converted. This is a problem, though, to which I have no immediate solution.

One thing becomes clear, however, and that is that any work on a text by Brecht in the South African situation will show the potential he has as mediator between different cultures.

Addendum

The first Brecht play produced in South Africa was The Good Woman of Szechuan. It was a drama school production of the Drama Department of the University of Cape Town in March 1958, under the direction of the then head of the Department, Rosalie van der Gucht. The critics at that time called the play a "proletarian-propagandistic drama" with "muddy symbolism, frequent and quaint humor and occasional lapses into the stickiest sort of Teutonic sentimentality". The play was again produced in 1965 by the East Rand Theatre Club, then again in 1976 in an Afrikaans translation by the Drama Department of the University of Stellenbosch. Shortly after the first Brecht production, Eric Bentley's translation of Mother Courage was staged by the same Drama Department in Stellenbosch in June 1958. There were three more productions of this play: in 1971 by the Drama Department of the University of Pretoria, in 1973 by the Cape Performing Arts Board in Cape Town, and in the late seventies by The Company in the Market Theatre in Johannesburg.

The Threepenny Opera was produced three times: the first time in October 1958 in the Library Theatre in Johannesburg, then in 1973 by the Drama Department of the University of Cape Town, and again in 1980 by the Pioneer Theatre 1937 in Johannesburg under the title Beggars Consolidated, Ltd. The Caucasian Chalk Circle is the play with the most productions, namely six. The first one took place in 1959, done by the Drama Department of the University of Cape Town. There it was done again twenty years later, in September 1979. An Afrikaans version of the play was staged by the Drama Department of the University of Stellenbosch in 1973. In 1965 the Provincial Arts Council of Transvaal put on the play; in 1981 it was done by the Drama Department of the Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg; and at an unknown date during the seventies the play was produced by the Drama Department of Rhodes University in Grahamstown. The Arturo Ui play was staged twice, once by the Performing Arts council of Transvaal in 1973 under the direction of the German dramaturge Peter Kleinschmidt who is now head of the Falkenberg drama school in Munich, and once it was produced by English director Peter Stevenson in the Space Theatre in Cape Town in 1979. Puntila was also produced twice, once by the Cape Performing Arts Board in 1973 in Cape Town in an Afrikaans translation under the direction of Volker Geißler, and once again by the Drama Department of the University of Cape Town in 1982 under the direction of Mavis Taylor. The same Drama Department produced Drums in the Night in 1971, St. Joan of the Stockyards in 1979 and George Tabori's Brecht on Brecht in 1970.

I know of only one Lehrstück which was performed in South Africa, namely The Exception and the Rule, both times by black actors, once in Soweto and once just recently in July 1983 at the Grahamstown Arts Festival by students of the Drama Department of the University of Zululand. I do not think that my list, the greatest part of which was supplied to me by the Centre for South African Theatre Research at the Human Sciences Research Council, is complete. There might have been some Brecht production before 1958 of which, however, nothing seems to be known. There might also have been some productions in the black "townships" which have not received "official recognition." One thing becomes clear, though: of the 26 Brecht productions listed above, fifteen were done by drama schools and only four by the "official" state subsidized theatres. The remaining seven productions were put on by commercial or fringe theaters. It does seem therefore that Brecht's plays are more regarded as a means of teaching young people to act than as a means of teaching new (political) attitudes to audiences.

Another thing can be read out of this list, although this may be of only local interest: of the fifteen drama school productions, eight were done by the Drama Department of the University of Cape Town. This department seems to hold a kind of monopoly on Brecht productions, and no wonder too, because it was the present head, Professor Robert Mohr, who introduced Brecht to South Africa in 1958 after he had visited the Berlin Ensemble. A third deduction may be made: it is Brecht the great dramatic artist in the bourgeois sense of the word who has been presented to the audiences, rather than Brecht the political playwright. But this is rather obvious, in a society which regards politics and art as mutually exclusive. And fourthly, this list indicates how many Brecht plays have not yet been performed in South Africa, how many of them still remain to be discovered by directors, actors and audiences, and thus still could contribute to the spreading of the infectious and so badly needed disease of dialectical thinking.

BRECHT IN ENGLAND:
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS

John Willett

I've just been listening to the last of the BBC's Marx centenary programmes, in which Asa (Prof., Lord) Briggs argued that Marxism as a theory and an analytical tool is far more alive today in Western societies than in the 'Socialist camp'. Whether or not this is so--and I think it may well be--a similar case could certainly be made about Brecht. Germany apart (where there has been overkill on both sides of the wire), there is no reason to think that B's work is not still stimulating and relevant in the West, thanks to capitalism, and specifically to Reagan and Thatcher, who have managed to rejuvenate both B and Marx. Practitioners of our trade can be grateful.

Take some of the BB phenomena in the UK since the end of the 70s. I'll make an annotated list of the most important. For instance:

* * *

At the National Theatre, Galileo, directed by John Dexter, with Michael Gambon as Galileo, ran over a year: from 13 August, 1980, to 3 October, 1981. Lavish production with Eisler's music. Play won through, as this one usually does; fine performance by Gambon; workable translation by Howard Brenton; final frontier scene was included.

Followed by Schweik in the Second World War from 16 September '82 to March '83, directed by Richard Eyre, again with Eisler's music. On a similar scale, with Bill Paterson in a highly-praised, very skilled and amusing performance of the title part. Unfortunately utterly against the grain of Hasek's character, who emerged as a bouncy, light-hearted joker fooling the clumsy Nazis.

Baal at the RSC's Warehouse (small space theatre) back in 1980 I didn't see, but David Jones's production was well thought of by those who did. Ben (Ghandi) Kingsley in the title part.

A very good Edward II by the travelling company Foco Novo under Roland Rees's direction, which came to the Round House in 1982. Barely noticed by the critics, who preferred this year's Puntila by the same company at the smaller Tricycle Theatre. Like Schweik this was too jokey, and the stout but lightweight Puntila wasn't nearly nasty enough.

Puntila also ran for two weeks at the Glasgow Citizens' in January. I didn't see it, but understand that it introduced elements of BB's own Finnish sojourn. The Citizens' is a quite outstanding company, somewhat neglected by the London critics.

I'm told the Ui production by the Theatre Royal, Bristol was also important; it opened there on 18 November 81 and went on tour. Bristol has an outstanding university Drama department and is an active centre for the arts.

Fears and Miseries of the Third Reich, in a clear, unfussy production with five committed actors, played two weeks at the small Croydon Warehouse from 7 June '82. Translation by me, directed by Ian Giles. One performance was interrupted by the local National Front: a tribute to the play's persistent effectiveness as an unspectacular (and thereby all the more convincing) analysis of Fascism at ground level. This followed an earlier program of BB songs and poetry arranged by the theatre's director Sue Pomeroy.

An arrangement of Conversations in Exile made by Howard Brenton on the basis of Dollemayer's translation toured in winter 82/83, and finished at the Royal Court Upstairs; I didn't see it.

The BBC T.V. Baal with David Bowie was shown on 2 March '82. This is the production described in my piece for Vol. XI of the Year-book. I strongly recommend the 45 rpm RCA single of the five songs, which is a remarkable achievement by Dominic Muldowney, the arranger/conductor, Tony Visconti the producer and Bowie himself.

The 33 rpm record Robyn Archer Sings Brecht was issued by EMI in Australia, then in UK the same spring and by Angel Records in the US. Muldowney and I were much involved with this, and proud to have been so. Now a 50-minute T.V. program is to be made for Channel Four in UK by the same three people, with Mary McMurray as director. A companion program from the same producers (Telekation International) will feature Ekkehard Schall. A second Brecht record from Robyn Archer is planned to come out before Christmas.

Muldowney, whose first Piano Concerto is to be played at the BBC Promenade Concerts on 27 July '83, has himself composed three cycles of Brecht songs: Five Theatre

Songs, In Dark Times, The Duration of Exile. This last was written for Cathy Berberian, but will now be given its premiere in London by Linda Hirst.

The Seven Deadly Sins is to have two productions, one for commercial TV and the other for the English National Opera. The RSC is planning a Mother Courage for Spring 1984.

The Methuen Brecht edition continues with the Stories, to be published during Summer 1983 in UK and US (where the New York Times Book Club has chosen them) followed, we hope, before the end of the year by Fear and Misery of the Third Reich. The introduction to the latter argues that it should not be identified with The Private Life of the Master Race, which was a wartime adaptation of restricted validity.

The above is not a substitute for a regular listing, which would need also to cover provincial and college productions (of which there still seem to be plenty). But I hope it will show that there is no 'durchschlagende Wirkungslosigkeit' in this country, where Brecht still fascinates the most gifted (and sometimes the most famous) theatre people, and where now at least he has begun to appeal to audiences to an extent that justifies production in the subsidized theatres. This is because he now means a lot more to us, thanks partly to more intelligent (straightforward, un-gimmicky) production, partly perhaps to the schools (who have The Caucasian Chalk Circle on their drama syllabus for the next two years), and partly to the dominant conservative ideologists who give us so much to kick against. One of the most interesting points here is the awareness of BB which now exists in the pop/punk stratum of our confused society; despite his middle-class fans (like me) he still isn't seen as one of the Establishment but as a powerful and well-organized rebel who stood up obstinately for what he saw as politically and artistically right.

I wish I could say that this had spread to our black communities, and from them back to Africa and the West Indies, but I don't think it has. India is a different matter; Rhadakrishnan are now publishing the Methuen edition there, and I have met theatre people and artists who are getting something out of his work. As for Australia, where I have had some direct experience, Robyn Archer told me that when she sang Brecht songs at the Labour Party Conference two or three years ago the then party leader told her it was the first time he had realized there was any connection between politics and art. I think myself that it is our half-conscious awareness of all these possibilities relating to Brecht that make him still a very exciting writer for us, and that this excitement affects the way in which our best

interpreters (like Archer, insofar as we now share her with the other side of the world) perform his work. It is in Germany, not England, that I now hear Brecht being performed as if he didn't mean much. I hope this is only a phase.



teatro experimental de Cali (Columbia)

TWO BRECHT PRODUCTIONS IN THE BAY AREA

R. G. Davis

In the San Francisco Bay Area there seemed to be a spate of bad plays by great authors. A local group did Winter's Tale with a venue change to Texas and Philadelphia--which didn't save the production or the play. The Berkeley Repertory's offering was Happy End, Brecht's least good play. The production was renovated by Michael Fiengold with glitzy direction by Michael Leibert, the artistic Director and mentor of the now twelve year old Resident Theatre (second string to American Conservatory Theatre of San Francisco).

Happy End is a light piece of work and none too informative, although two of the songs, "Bilbao-Song" and "Surabaya-Johnny", save the play from total insignificance. Why the play? Well...it's Brecht and Weill (or WEILL and brecht), and if you're looking for something that doesn't hurt and doesn't do anything, this is a fine piece of work to use. One can wait for the entertaining line: "when the thieves and the poor get together and take over the banks..." At least that is what I heard from the Fiengold transliteration.

But what was this particular production about? What was its point of view, its dramaturgical incision? I kept asking my first row companions on opening night. I couldn't figure out the meaning of this fancy costumed song and dance musical, nor could the President of the Board of Directors, one of my companions. Musicians on stage above the action, the corner stage set with areas indicated by a half door, or a half window, and obligatory projections (BB without projections?). The last tune, the "Bilbao-Song", was projected so that the audience could sing along. At last Brecht with audience participation!

When I pressed for further explanation of the production, the President's wife clarified: "After all, can't we do fluff too?" Of course, why not? I remarked. Who is responsible for any cultural work in the USA, not the Resident Theatres! By and large our colleges and universities have demented theatre departments, so why should the Resident Theatres assume any responsibility for enriching cultural life? The Berkeley Rep's choice to do this particular Brecht suddenly made sense: They offer ineffectual Brecht to fulfill an ineffectual sense of cultural service.

Despite all the folderol, the songs were sung well by a few actors; however, the director decided to perk them up with dance routines... Tap, jazz-like, canes and

hats, a little ballet step or two, show-girl stuff...chic and clever, the costumes were flashy and "authentic film movie styles of the twenties". The terrible part of the evening was that the clever dance routines interfered with the power of the music and lyrics. Few run-of-the-mill commercial or resident theatre actors in the US are allowed to stand still long enough for the audience to hear the text and the songs. Afraid that they will be "boring", actors are directed or direct themselves to move around and become "exciting" in a reduction to jittery physicalizations. Opera singers know their voices are to be heard, and that movement causes difficulties; they tend to stand still. The director's addition of dance routines--something rarely used by Brecht (anyone have a paper on "Brecht and Dance?")--had the result that the up-tempoed production glitized the insufficient text into another film-package look-alike. (November 1982)

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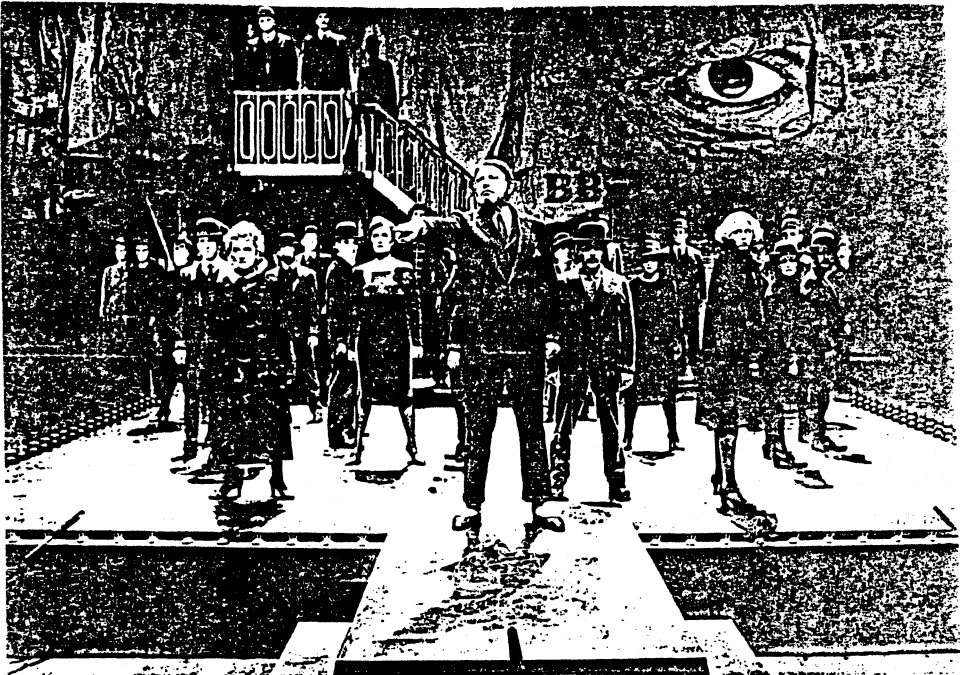
With an employees' strike on at Stanford University, the production of Turandot or The Congress of Whitewashers had to be dropped, and a rush job of The Good Soul of Sechzuan was substituted. Perhaps as a result of the rush, the text became clear. The presentation through simplifications achieved a high level of understanding and actual pleasure. Staged in a small theatre with actors using the side and rear doors for some entrances and exits, with nothing enormously clever nor provocative in the costumes, set, or direction, the main focus on the text kept the story alive. The student actors contributed to the intelligence, with one magnificent Barber played by Fritz Brun, who established the gestus of the character and clarified with makeup and attitude a humorous, complex entrepreneur. The ability of this one actor to capture the turns in the character and yet play the play was rare and fascinating.

Some of the student actors were still bound to naturalism's sincerity or subtext revelations, so they played at their roles intimating and straining. A student who played the role of the Cop revealed that he could not figure out what to do with his character. I asked him if he had deciphered the role of policeman in society. No, he was working on his character in the play. He had done nothing with his character; it was flat and out of tune with others. I said if he understood that most often the job of a policeman is to protect private property, he would be able to find the gestus from this understanding. He would be obsequious to his employers (landowners) and bossy to the peasants (propertyless). No actor who thinks of the characters from the societal (Marxist, socialist) standpoint should have a problem in setting the minimal descriptive elements of the character on stage. The Barber got all that and more.

The play, directed by Geoffrey Reeves, instructor at Stanford (Reeves from London and elsewhere), made BB accessible and broke through illusionary theatre. Unresolved solutions in the masks and costumes--neither all Chinese nor all "now"--tended to confuse, but some conclusions were pure gems of comedy. The gods' bowler hats with Chinese lanterns wobbling on top caught both characters and their cultural economic conditions nicely. The play seemed lighter than I had thought, in that the arguments became clear, easy to understand and to discuss.

As show business invades the theatre and productions that look like operas are called legitimate plays (*Amadeus*), spreading the elite notion of "cultural event" to Broadway and the touring companies, these little productions of ye old Brecht done without much pizzazz or cleverness actually make sense. A low budget requires that the entire production team spend more time on the text, understanding the play and the story, rather than searching for sequins to sprinkle on the costumes.

When actors understand what the play is about and what they are saying, it's amazing how easy it is to listen and to understand a thoughtful work. (November 9-13, 1982)



THE THREEPENNY OPERA AT THE GUTHRIE THEATER
Minneapolis (1983)

Linda Schulte-Sasse

This June (1983) the Guthrie Theater opened its third season since Liviu Ciulei took over as artistic director with a 44-performance run of Brecht/Weill's Threepenny Opera. For the first time the Guthrie is presenting two musicals--the second being a more traditional example of the genre, Frank Loesser's Guys and Dolls. Up until now the theater under Ciulei's direction has taken a less conventional approach: both in repertoire, with works by playwrights less known in America such as Thomas Bernhard, and in style, with unusual interpretations of Shakespeare, Molière, and Beaumarchais. This season's musicals are touted in a glossy brochure featuring a chorus line of legs exotic enough to qualify as documents of Kracauer's Mass Ornament. This, plus the serious deficit the Guthrie faced last year, leads one to suspect the decision to stage Brecht's most popular (and misconstrued) work along with Guys and Dolls may have been an attempt to attract a broader audience. (In fact The Threepenny Opera played to an average of slightly over half of the theater's capacity). Yet from the start Ciulei has defined as one of his goals for the Guthrie the exploration of a uniquely American theatrical style.

Perhaps for this reason he departed from more customary Threepenny stagings and reinterpreted Brecht's material for a more contemporary social order. The production may be rich in "Ausstattung" and "Überladenheit"--to borrow the terms Ihering used in deriding Pabst's Threepenny film--yet it is precisely his lavish visual technique that permits Ciulei to enhance Brecht's indictment of the capitalist system in which people are commodities to be judged solely by their exchange value. He moved the play's setting from Victorian England to the twenties, allowing himself to incorporate visual and acoustic imagery connoting an era of advanced technology and monopolistic corporations in which everything is dispensable.

The very first scene suggests this, as characters poke and slit their way through brown wrapping paper covering the stage, only to discard it in the pit. The brown

Opposite: Photo from The Threepenny Opera at the Guthrie Theater

paper appears as the mantle of respectability (and ideology) that will be removed for a glimpse of the social mechanisms beneath. The background for most of the play was another expanse of brown paper, covered only by some graffiti and Brecht's initials, with a huge eye peering through a tear in the paper. In its simplicity the collage served as a constant reminder of the theater as a vehicle for demonstration. Particularly the eye suggested the dialectical theatrical concept of the Kleine Pädagogik: the audience should feel as much under scrutiny as the characters on stage. Moreover, the collage bore a stylistic resemblance to the work of such modern American artists as Charles Rauschenberg and Larry Rivers, as well as to Hanna Höch's work of the twenties. By means of this visual allusion the production synthesized Brecht's era with the contemporary American context.

In conjunction with the theme of built-in obsolescence, the collage is destroyed to be replaced by a red Baroque theater curtain in the Third Finale as the Mounted Messenger appears. With its bombastic kitsch the set provided an ideal mise-en-scène for Brecht's designation of the happy end as a "conditio sine qua non for a literature whose conditio sine qua non is lack of consequences." At the end the red curtain, too, falls. Other elements of the set, consisting mainly of a bare metal staircase, a catwalk, and a turntable backed by the sound of factory whistles and clanging metal doors, evoked the feeling of a depersonalized society. The cold-blooded nature of that society was further suggested by a target on the center of the stage floor from which most songs were sung.

Brecht's parallel between the beggar-tycoon Peachum, who exploits real poverty to increase his own profits, and corporate-style business is enhanced by Ciulei's staging. The turntable, for example, introduces a long chain of typing secretaries in Peachum's firm wishing the boss a good morning and lends The Beggar's Friend the character of a highly equipped, hierarchical, monopolistic enterprise. This impression is born out when metal racks overflowing with the shabby clothes, artificial limbs and crutches that constitute Peachum's fake costumes drop from the ceiling.

The turntable is again significant in the brothel scene where it revolves to expose nude department-store mannequins barely distinguishable from the prostitutes. The image deviates from Brecht's specific directions that the prostitutes appear ironing and washing so as to represent "ein bürgerliches Idyll." Yet thematically the scene is faithful to the text: with their stylized behavior and exotic flapper-style clothes, the women appear more as props decorating the stage than as living individuals, strengthening the sense of the human being as commodity.

Local critics don't appear to have grasped Ciulei's approach as a method of reinterpreting Brecht. All commented upon the intense visuality of the production, but interpreted it as a sign that Ciulei had chosen to stress theatrical style and entertainment over content, thus taking the bite out of Brecht. Some expressed gratitude for being spared the "sledgehammer" of Brecht's "bare-bulb, savage, and totally cerebral style." More, however, bewailed Ciulei's betrayal of the "true Brecht," wielding headlines like "Going Soft on Brecht" or "Cornmeal Mush on a Silver Platter." They accused Ciulei of "reveling in self-referential schticks and cutesy technological gambits," of "going for the glitz and the gloss," of being "so fascinated by style that the play's substance is all but lost"--to cite a few characteristic examples.

In their defense of Brecht, however, these critics presumed a very "unbrechtian" juxtaposition between theatrics and content, between entertaining and learning: "Two Bertolt Brechts exist side by side: Brecht the moralizing educator and Brecht the entertainer--and not even Brecht himself was always able to bring these polarities together." In fact Brecht considered this juxtaposition itself to be a "purely bourgeois" degradation of both learning and entertainment. In his Anmerkungen zur Mutter, among other places, he defined the function of learning in bourgeois society as the "purchase" of knowledge useful for material gain as a prerequisite for entering professional life.

One gets from the reviews the sense that every prop, set, and costume in the production existed for its own sake, for "visual showmanship." Both positively and negatively disposed critics failed to recognize that it was precisely through his theatrical style that Ciulei mediated social content--albeit with a certain license and a departure from the Brecht of the Berliner Ensemble. This inability on the part of critics to "read" Ciulei's interpretation may be symptomatic of a society in which overwhelming visual images bombard viewers, while these images themselves are seldom analyzed for their contribution to textual interpretation or for their ideological manipulation. It may also have resulted in part from the critics' fixed ideas of how Brecht should be performed, determined by a knowledge (however scanty) of the later Brecht with his more defined sense of epic theater and more detailed Verfremdungseffekte.

A few problems in the production itself may have contributed to the image of an "unbrechtian" production. First, the titles preceding each scene were neither projected nor read. The Guthrie's thrust stage makes it difficult to project texts that will be legible from all seats--a problem Ciulei solved ingeniously with Peachum's Bible quotes, which are presented in the form of revolving neon lights.

Nevertheless, totally dropping the titles encouraged a sense of continuity and potential emotional involvement. Second, the portrayal of Mackie's relationship with his "employees" may have insufficiently highlighted his exploitation of them. The "gang" had a slapstick style (likened by the press to everything from the Bowery Boys to The Three Stooges), which in itself was not contradictory to Brecht but was likely to set American audiences in a burlesque mood. Cuts from the text, such as Mackie's derision of Jakob for eating fish with a knife, or his comparison of himself with the Oxford Professor who takes credit for his assistants' ideas, did not help intensify the "Bürger-Gangster" parallel, nor did Theodore Bikel's much maligned "soft" interpretation of Macheath.

Another potential misunderstanding derives from the production's conclusion, which uses a strophe Brecht intended for the Street Singer to sing at the conclusion of his script for the Dreigroschenfilm. Here the words are sung by Jenny, who is alone on stage after the Third Finale. Ascending a stark metal staircase into the dark, she sings: "So divide up those in darkness/From the ones who walk in light./ And you see those in the light/But those in darkness drop from sight." The scene is extremely effective theatrically but leaves itself open to an ambivalent interpretation. On the one hand Jenny may be seen here as a representative of the profession Brecht so often used as the ultimate symbol of the human being as commodity, thus standing for the oppressed classes in general. Yet it seems all too likely that it will be regarded as a final note reminding us of the abused woman: older, lacking social standing, thus entangling the viewer in a decidedly unbrechtian emotional identification. A final problem stems from Mark Blitzstein's adaptation of the play which in many cases softens Brecht's language and social indictment. A significant but typical example is Mack's final speech before his near-execution which both underlines the connection Brecht established between crime and the capitalist system and suggests that the future belongs to legalized, corporate-style crime:

Sie sehen den untergehenden Vertreter eines untergehenden Standes. Wir kleinen bürgerlichen Handwerker, die wir mit dem biedereren Brecheisen an den Nickelkassen der kleinen Ladenbesitzer arbeiten, werden von den Großunternehmern verschlungen, hinter denen die Banken stehen. Was ist ein Dietrich gegen eine Aktie? Was ist ein Einbruch in eine Bank gegen die Gründung einer Bank? Was ist die Ermordung eines Mannes gegen die Anstellung eines Mannes?

Blitzstein's adaptation omits "backed by banks" in the second sentence and translates the final line "What is a man on his back compared to a man on his knees?" rather than the more literal "What is the murder of a man to the employment of a

rather than the more literal "What is the murder of a man to the employment of a man?" as translated by Eric Bentley. Blitzstein thus not only destroys Brecht's alienation effect (the inversion of the positive association of hiring), but also relegates the statement to the sphere of the Allgemeinmenschliche, of which Brecht was so fond!

In this instance the Guthrie cannot be faulted, however, since copyright laws prohibit American theaters from performing any other translation. In fact the Guthrie went to considerable effort to obtain permission from Blitzstein's heirs to make changes in the translation, to bring it closer to the original. Blitzstein wrote three different versions that deviated increasingly from the German; one wonders whether he was suiting the work to the American context or to the political affiliations of Broadway producers.

Despite these criticisms of the production itself and despite the problems of reception inherent in any performance of Brecht in the U.S., Ciulei's production stands out. Its visual interpretation alluding to and directed at today's culture represents a notable contribution to the history of Threepenny Opera productions. If it didn't succeed in making Brecht's ideas generally accessible in the sense of the Kleine Pädagogik, some of the blame may lie in the play. Brecht himself, of course, subsequently declared that the work had not sufficiently exposed social contradictions, but remained "a symptomatology of the surface."

SIMON MACHARD IN LA JOLLA

James K. Lyon

At first glance, the ingredients did not seem promising. To inaugurate its revival after a 19-year dormancy, the once prestigious La Jolla Playhouse chose to stage Brecht's Visions of Simone Machard which scarcely ranks among his major works (one critic called it a "flawed work of genius"). In it the director cast a mature (40-year-old) woman in a role written for a young teenage girl, and a physically large black actor in the role of the angel representing her brother Andre, a decision that ran risks too obvious to mention. Handing over a new, \$6 million state-of-the-art theater to director Peter Sellars--who was fresh from a nationally publicized battle with the Broadway establishment over his erstwhile role in what became My One and Only as well as a more recent success with a stunning version of Gilbert and Sullivan's Mikado for the Chicago Lyric Opera--involved the risk that this 25-year-old Wunderkind or (depending on one's perspective), enfant terrible of American theater might use it to show off his own dazzling imagination and ignore the work itself.

Through its 30-year-old Artistic Director, Des McAnuff, the Playhouse had announced that it would be taking some risks. By engaging Sellars to do Simone for the opening, they kept that promise on a grand scale, and it paid off with what Dan Sullivan, the non-too-gentle critic of the Los Angeles Times, called "big and alive, daring and theatrical, to a fault. . . as bold and accomplished an example of post-modern theater, its thinking and its practices, as one could find even on the over-subsidized stage of Germany . . . it is state-of-the-art theater." Most of the credit for a production that ranks with the best theater I have witnessed in this country or Europe goes to Sellars, who attracted a cast of nationally-known players, who in turn delivered first-rate performances and tackled Brecht with unusual insight and intelligence.

Widely read, highly articulate, at home with theater practice and tradition East and West, and with credits for over 100 productions under his belt, Sellars also has imagination and knows what makes good theater when performing Brecht. Early

this spring in Cambridge, Mass., he staged Kleiner Mahagonny, and he is well acquainted with Brecht's other works. In approaching Simone, he immersed himself in the secondary literature and history of the period and arrived at the view that this play, written at a particularly dark period both in world history and in Brecht's life, represents a kind of personal consolation. Hence he calls it "Brecht's most personal play," which may not be altogether wide of the mark when one recalls Brecht's weakness for goodness generally and specifically for the Joan of Arc character.

If, however, Sellars were altogether right, I would have expected some faint element of hope in the redeeming or at least mitigating power of Simone's goodness. Yet I found little in the text, and even less in the production, which came closer to outright tragedy than any work by Brecht I have seen performed. This almost frightening effect probably came from another of Sellars' ideas. After hearing him assert that in Simone, "Brecht has written a play about the martyrdom of a saint," and after observing a superb actress (Priscilla Smith) play the lead in such a way that the next night she could have stepped into the role of Shen Te in The Good Person of Szechuan or Grusche in The Caucasian Chalk Circle without a change of costume, expression, or acting style, I became increasingly aware of several things: of affinities connecting these three parabolic personifications of goodness; of the reason why Simone's age made no difference; and of the validity of the near-tragic interpretation. In this production it was the same innate goodness shared by Grusche and Shen Te and manifested as innocence, naiveté, or limited mental capacity that caused others in the play to treat her as if she were a child unfit for the calculating adult world. When they addressed her as "child" (as called for in the text), the audience had no difficulty accepting this characterization of her naive actions, nor did a local critic who saw her as "ageless," "more symbol than person."

Besides making her into a parabolic figure like Shen Te or Grusche, this production (and, I think, the text) went well beyond the durative ending of Szechuan, or the happy resolution of Chalk Circle. Simone, of course, is betrayed and dragged forcibly off the stage for commitment to a mental institution where she faces almost certain spiritual and perhaps physical destruction. Though this figurative (and perhaps literal) death does not take place on stage, neither does any significant event in the play--the flight of the refugees who clog the streets, the arrival of Nazi tanks, the blowing up of the school by the refugees, etc. Yet her fate is as absolute as any other action in the play, and it left me with a stronger sense of the tragic than I ever experienced in Brecht. Simone's goodness, thinly disguised as love for her country, is destroyed, and the evil that prevails is not that of

the invading Nazis, who play only a peripheral role, but social evil in a society whose rules of survival do not allow unmitigated goodness.

Critics gave Sellars high marks for his effective use of Brechtian stage techniques and the obligatory "alienation effects" he produced, but my sense is (and Sellars confirmed it in an interview) that he would have used many of them out of pure theatrical instinct and his knowledge of theater history. It is true that some of them duplicate Brechtian techniques, e.g. the slide projections portraying the invasion of France that precede each scene, the naked stage lights, etc. But others, such as bright lights in the eyes of the audience and sound levels at the edge of pain are current cliches of the avant-garde theater, while yet others sprang from Sellars' vivid imagination, e.g. one of Simone's dreams that is played completely over the heads of the audience on the heavy wire grip designed to protect the ceiling lighting in this unique theater, or the stunning musical accompaniments to the dream scenes, which ranged from modern jazz to Stravinsky, or the opening of the upstage door separating the scene shop from the rest of the stage, which suddenly gave the stage a dizzying depth while reminding us that the line separating theatrical and viewer reality is no clearer than that between Simone's dreams and her daily-life reality. One reviewer called the staging "clever" and "dazzling," while another called it "brilliant." What they probably did not know was that Sellars claimed he based his visual details, proportions, and structures on 15th century French illuminated manuscripts, miniatures, and Book of the Hours illustrations he studied for this production. "My shows are more traditional than most," he claims, which is another way of saying that he (like Brecht) often employs devices that strike audiences as non-traditional, primarily because the audience is ignorant of older theatrical tradition. In relation to the text of Simone, Sellars, who enjoys a reputation for radical text surgery, also showed intelligence as a theater man. Despite his opening announcement to the cast that he intended to cut what he thought was a cumbersome text, he found that as he proceeded with rehearsals the play's structure was so intricately woven that he was unable to remove or change a single line in Ralph Manheim's translation, which he consequently left intact. But one slight liberty reveals both his respect for the text and how attentively he orchestrated details that went beyond it. Sellars chose to have an announcer's voice speak the stage direction that introduces Simone as she enters: "her skirt is too long and her shoes are too big." On the stage walks a "plain-as-a-potato" Simone in a skirt too long, but without shoes, an omission that jolts the audience even more when she refers (in the first dream sequence) to the fact that "my shoes are full of holes, and I won't get new ones until Easter." Just what is dream, and what reality? Sometimes this seems like mischief, since so much of it is going on at once. More often, I think, what

appears to be cleverness is really great intelligence about the whole problem of dream and reality in this work.

Sellars' approach to the angel was straightforward and unabashedly literal--literal in the sense that he used a physically large black actor, Ben Halley, Jr., who did not appear (as called for in the stage directions) on top of the garage, but who moved freely about the entire physical environment, including high above the stage on the wire grid, in front of and below the apron, and at the rear of the auditorium, even at times when he had no lines to speak. But his ubiquitous presence, that reminded us of Simone's recurrent, dream-like obsession with her brother, did not strike me as a supernatural presence. Through his constant "shadowing" of her, Sellars gave the angel distinctly Freudian overtones which he illustrated with a somewhat erotic dance Halley did with her to the tune of Sidney Bechet's "Blues in the Air" when he first appeared. Such a "black angel" could also be open to other interpretations. Dan Sullivan of the Los Angeles Times, for example, thought the angel's stylized declamation sounded like Dr. Martin Luther King talking, an analogy that is not far-fetched.

Sellars showed a deft hand in giving at least some life to the two-dimensional characters Brecht often creates to represent stereotypical capitalists, politicians, or Fascists. I did not find Soupeau to be nearly as hateful as Brecht's text makes him. Through a certain cheerfulness, optimism, and near antic invention, he occasionally managed to make himself almost likeable, if not humorous, in his weakness and ineptitude. Occasionally Dan Florek came close to overstepping the bounds between acting and cuteness, but generally he made the role convincing and half-way human by avoiding the numbing stereotype one has come to expect of such characters in Brecht. Sellars himself introduced an air of near vaudevillian, i.e. farcical humor to a number of scenes--I think, for example, of Soupeau's trying to save his china, silverware, and wines--which for me were more effective than if they had been played seriously. Reviewers caught what seemed like a number of anachronisms--Soupeau's hostelry had a TV antenna on the roof, and in the final drama scene, when he appears as one of the judges who condemns Simon, he is wearing a barbecue apron and grilling a steak over an open grill. As I write this, it sounds like smart-aleckry, but in the context of the production it was not. Clearly such anachronisms were used to detach the action from its concrete, limited historical context in France of 1940. In this sense Soupeau, who was portrayed as an American businessman type in a three-piece suit (very little French atmosphere was attempted), did not bother my sense of historical accuracy. Like several other characters, he represented a type that is timeless and present in every culture.

Rosalind Cash plays Ms. Soupeau with the subtle but fearsome charm of a black widow (for which she was appropriately dressed), while Werner Klemperer as Captain Fetain made the role of the richest and emptiest person in the village meaningful by its very superfluosness. And in a superb performance, Bill Raymond as the spineless, sniveling mayor (and King Charles) again raised the problem of characters in Brecht who stand for everything we should oppose, but who, for their human frailties, still claim some degree of our sympathy.

Those who wish to make a political tract of every play Brecht wrote may fault this production for not emphasizing ideology more heavily. Yet, for me, it carried an ideological message as strong as any production of The Good Person of Szechuan I have seen, including one in East Berlin. Clearly the anti-war message lurked in the background as slide projections portraying the fall of France bombarded the audience. The text itself condemns modern capitalists, politicians, and Fascists so unmistakably that there was no sense in pommeling the audience further on these points. Instead, Sellars wisely chose to cast this as a parable, albeit one of Brecht's darkest ones. Its political and revolutionary message lies in an ending that sees no hope for the simple goodness and faith in humankind which characterize Simone unless there is a total and radical change in the society that destroys these virtues. In that sense, it strikes me as being the most ideologically powerful of his parable plays.

At the last meeting of the International Brecht Society in Portland (May, 1982), we discussed ways to establish closer working relationships between theater artists and Brechtian scholars and critics. Sellars is not only the kind of director who has learned from Brechtian scholarship and translated this learning into theater Praxis--he did this in a very personal way for me. Before seeing the production, I learned from him (I had never met him before interviewing him) that he had read my book on Brecht in America, and that the circumstances of Brecht's life and the origins of this work he discovered there determined the "mind set" that made him view this as one of Brecht's most personal plays. Naturally I was interested to see how this view, which I did not necessarily share, would translate on the stage. While I was not disappointed, I can take neither credit nor blame for the production's flaws or strengths. But the program notes by Robert Blacker, the associate director and dramaturge of the La Jolla Playhouse, also quoted extensively from my book, and for the first time in my academic career, I had the impression that my scholarly work on Brecht might have made a difference, however slight, to at least one or two practitioners of the theater. In that sense, this superb production by intelligent theater artists represented a partial fulfillment of one of the goals which the IBS and many of its members have been trying for years to achieve.

recent productions

Leonard J. Lehmann reports the premiere on May 6, 1983, of a production of Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder at the Stadttheater Bremerhaven.

Director.....Rudolf Zollner
 Sets.....Wolfgang Cäsar
 Costumes.....Roswitha Schreiber
 Musical Director....Leonard J. Lehmann
 Mother Courage.....Illa Hedergott
 Eilif.....Karl Heinz Glaser
 Schweizerkas.....Wolfgang Linnenbrügger
 Katrin.....Vera Pototschnig
 Cook.....Ernst von Kraus
 Captain.....Klaus Richter
 Preacher.....Dietrich Strass

* * *

The Stockyard Co-operative and the University of Sydney Theatre Workshop (Australia) staged St. Joan of the Stockyards this past summer.

Director.....Beverly Blankenship
 Artistic Director...Mary-Ann Eckstein
 Sets.....Jenny Dunlop
 Costumes.....Wendy Clark
 Musical Director....Janice Slater
 Original Music.....Ian Fredericks
 Joan Dark.....Glenda Linscott
 Pierpoint Mauler....Geoff Cartwright

Translator's and Adaptor's Note
 (from the program)

The version of Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe presented by the Stockyard Co-operative is not just a translation (whatever "just a translation" might be). It

is also an adaptation. The German original was written in 1931 and set in Chicago - in Brecht's stylized Amerika. Without being specific about the location, our version is plainly set in Australia, in the present. Brecht took the opportunity in the play to parody some 'classics' of German literature, Goethe, Schiller, the Lutheran Bible and so on, using passages his audience would recognize, but using them for the expression of less than heroic actions and hard economic fact. It was Brecht's contention that much 'literature' avoided discussing the real world and therefore the political and economic forces which affect us all. However, these literary jokes of the original are not really translatable; hence we've shortened many such passages and tried to make the same point in English with echoes and references to Shakespeare, the King James Bible and evangelical hymns. And since this is Australia there's even a sort of Henry Lawson bit toward the end. This production uses Australian place names as well as Australian speech rhythms and idiom, but we've also tried to reflect something more about contemporary reality. Several of our workers are migrants (as is the case in most industrial situations), the broker Slift is a woman, the career woman who maintains her power by being ever more ruthless than her male competitors. Brecht sets the action in the meat industry: the metaphor is apt. But he asks us to contemplate a paradigm, an example, then by implication to imagine what we see repeated in the steel industry, in oil, coal, automobiles - in every large and crucial industry - until the result is the dramatic crash of '29 or the softened, rationalized long recession of the present. We couldn't ask Bert Brecht what he'd do about a production of his play in Australia in 1983. But he was a man of the theatre as well as a very political animal. We hope and trust he'd approve.

Michael Brindley

notate

notate, the information and news bulletin of the Brecht-Zentrum in Berlin, appears six times a year in the German Democratic Republic. Communications presents a summary of the most recent issues on a regular basis, provided by notate editor Karl-Claus Hahn.

No. 1/1983 Topic: 5 Years Brecht-Zentrum

On the occasion of the 85th anniversary of Bert Brecht's birthday and the 5th anniversary of the Brecht-Zentrum, notate raised the important question: "Do we still need Bert Brecht today?" Many Brecht scholars, artists such as dramatist Heiner Müller and theater people from around the world (e.g. Harry Kuper, the artistic director of the Berlin Komische Oper), responded and answered the question more or less affirmatively.

notate No. 1 also reports on the development of the Brecht-Zentrum from 1978-1983 and on the Brecht-Studien, a series of dissertations published by the Brecht-Zentrum. In surveying the first ten volumes of the Brecht-Studien, Dr. Silvia Schlenstedt, literary historian in Berlin, observes: "In the sixties Brecht scholars in the GDR classified Brecht's work as 'Socialist Realism'. They focussed mainly on the Marxist-Leninist ideals, goals and ideas in Brecht's works. This tendency remains unchanged to the present day... It seems to me that one risks the flaws of levelling and lack of clarity if one uses this approach exclusively. To avoid these pitfalls one has to analyze and interpret Brecht's unique way of reasoning, his original use of dramatic methods in the specific context of each of his works."

notate reports on the meeting of the "Arbeitskreis Brecht-Forschung", including the full version of Dr. Thomas Marxhausen's paper on Brecht's study of Marx's Capital and excerpts from the controversial discussion which followed. Two interviews allow glimpses on the theater scene of the GDR. Opera singer Theo Adam comments on his portrayal of Baal, the title role in an opera composed by Friedrich Cerhas. The famous Hungarian director and actor János Majos discusses Brecht reception in Hungary.

No. 2/1983

This issue reports extensively on the Brecht Tage 1983 which focussed on "Brecht's Relationship to Marxism". Scholars from all parts of the world discussed the

topics "Progress as Process/The Development of Brecht's Marx Reception" on the first day; on the second day they dealt with questions such as "Dialectics in Brecht's Thought/Considerations on the Theories of Realism"; on the third day their discussions centered on the topics "'Eingreifendes Denken' and 'Große Pädagogik'/Politics and Aesthetics". The issue lists all conference participants as well as their papers.

The issue publishes further responses to the question "Do we still need Bert Brecht today?" Film directors Peter Scherhauser (Czechoslovakia) and Dr. Bernhard Scheller and scholars Dr. Käthe Rülicke-Weiler, Dr. Lutz Kirchenwitz and Dr. Helmut Pollow comment on this question. Dr. Pollow expresses a widely held view: "Today Brecht's political and aesthetic methods are expressed mainly in the attitudes of the directors and actors who stage and perform Brecht's plays in the GDR... In the area around Berlin the productive thrust with regard to Brecht's work is still absent."

"notate-Study" No. 7 presents an essay by Dr. Silvia Schlenstedt in which she examines the topic "Georgi Dimitroff and the Reichstag Fire in Poetry: On the Literary Representation of a Contemporary Event 50 Years Ago." Dr. Schebera reviews James K. Lyon's book Bertolt Brecht in America. He evaluates the publication favorably as a "brilliant book...an important work as far as Brecht literature is concerned." Dr. Roman Szydowski reports on current stage productions of Brecht's work in Poland, and he concludes: "Young Poles are struggling with Brecht, and Brecht is fighting on their side."

No. 3/1983

Since this issue appeared concurrently with the XX World Congress of the iTi, notate published two essays for the occasion. The critic and theater scholar Dr. Ernst Schumacher discusses "Bertolt Brecht's Personal Involvement in the Struggle for Peace", while Dr. Ulrich Kaufmann (GDR) writes about Bertolt Brecht and his poem "The Book Burning". This issue publishes the final comments on the question: "Do we still need Brecht today?" Responses come from such well-known directors, critics, scholars and composers as Heinz-Uwe Haus, Christoph Funke, Dr. Gottfried Fischborn, Dr. Werner Heinitz, Dr. Kurt Schwaen, Dr. Matthias Frede and Hans-Rainer John. They all affirm Brecht and his methods but voice critical opinions about current practices of staging Brecht in the GDR. Hans-Rainer John, chief editor of the journal Theater der Zeit remarks: "It cannot be denied that we do not generate the new ideas and creative interpretations which the world expects from us with

regard to Brecht's work...There is no doubt in my mind that we need Brecht today. But I wonder if the present theater scene has enough vitality, imagination, self-confidence and responsibility to deal with Brecht's works in a creative and productive manner."

The issue reports further on several Brecht productions in various parts of the world, namely Arturo Ui, Fear and Misery of the Third Reich, The Good Woman of Szechuan in West Berlin, a Puntilla production in Algeria and a staging of Galileo in Beijing. Rudolf Vapenik (Prague) discusses, on the occasion of Jaroslav Hasek's 100th birthday, various theater adaptations of Schweik, among them Brecht's somewhat controversial version.

Nr. 4/1983 Topic: Poetry

The issue publishes Elifius Paffrath's feuilleton on the Brecht-Weigel house in Buckow, an essay by Dr. Christel Hartinger exploring the societal context of the Buckow Elegies and Dr. Gerhard Seidel's study "Verdict or Vindication - A Poem by Bertolt Brecht about a Poem by Karl Kraus". All the essays focus on Brecht's lyric poetry. Further in keeping with the issue's main theme are Silvia Schlenstedt's review of the supplementary volume Gedichte aus dem Nachlaß (Suhrkamp) and a commentary on Brecht's "Alfabet - Verse für das Haus Kortner". Klaus Klingbeil surveys programs presenting Brecht songs and poetry. He is able to prove convincingly that a new generation of Brecht performers is now following in the footsteps of the first garde such as Gisela May and Ekkehard Schall.

Other reports cover the opening of the Brecht-Zentrum exhibit "Change the World - It Needs It!" in Austria and Great Britain, Brecht activities in Great Britain (by John Willet) and the controversy surrounding the premiere of Brecht/Dessau's Herrenburger Bericht in West Germany.

Preview: No. 5 (September) contains essays and interviews focussing on the theme "Brecht and Contemporary Theater". No. 6 examines Brecht's impact on the lives of workers and students in the GDR who attend schools or work in workers' brigades named after Bertolt Brecht.

Translated by Christina Alcantara

recent publications

Rainer Friedrich: "Drama and Ritual", in Themes in Drama, Vol. V, ed. by James Redmond (Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 159-233. (Last part on Brecht)

Rekha Kamath: "Brecht and Didactic Theatre", Journal of Arts and Ideas (India) (January-March 1983), pp. 23-30.

Rekha Kamath: Brechts Lehrstück-Modell als Bruch mit den bürgerlichen Theatertraditionen. Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 1, Bd. 605 (Frankfurt/Bern: Peter Lang, 1982).

Herbert Knust: Bertolt Brecht: "Leben des Galilei" (Frankfurt/Berlin/München: Diesterweg, 1982).

Wolfgang Siegert: Die Furcht vor der Kommune. Untersuchungen zur Entstehung und Bedeutung von Bertolt Brechts 'Die Tage der Commune'. Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 1, Bd. 590 (Frankfurt/Bern: Peter Lang, 1983).

Wolfgang Siegert: Brechts "Tage der Commune". Suhrkamps Materialien Bd. 2031 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983).

Annette Treibel: "Strukturen öffentlicher Rezeption von Bertolt Brechts Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder". M.A. Thesis, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 1983.

* * *

Dr. S. Pichaichannarong reports that there is a new journal available without charge. Performing Arts Newsletter in Asia and the Pacific is published bi-annually with assistance from UNESCO. For more information and a copy, contact Fine Arts Department, Na-Phrathat Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand.

beyond brecht

Über Brecht hinaus

The Brecht Yearbook,

Volume 11, 1982

edited by John Fuegi,

Gisela Bahr, and John Willett

associate editor: Uwe Hartung

forthcoming publications

Chaos, According to Plan

by John Fuegi

"Brecht," writes Peter Brook, "is the key figure of our time, and all theater work today at some point starts and returns to his statements and achievement." And though some of Brecht's impact is certainly traceable to his work as a brilliant playwright and kaleidoscopic theorist, his major breakthrough to world fame in the mid-fifties was certainly traceable in large measure to his richly nuanced work as a stage director. Yet, for all of the exhaustive work we have on Brecht's theatrical theory and on the genesis of his play texts, there is comparatively little work available on his day to day work as perhaps the single most influential director in the modern theater. But it was in the theater that he tested all his work for, as he said, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating."

Commissioned by the Cambridge University Press to do a Brecht volume for the series "Directors in Perspective," I have now been at work for several years on a manuscript that will be published this coming year under the title of either Brecht: A Theatre of Contradictions or Brecht: Chaos, According to Plan. The work draws on my notes made at Berliner Ensemble rehearsals in the period 1965-67; on archival materials found in Berlin, Moscow, Los Angeles, Cambridge, and New York; theatrical memoirs written in several languages; interviews with among others: Weigel, Wekwerth, Besson, Hauptmann, Bentley, Langhoff, Hambelton, Feuchtwanger (Marta), Bunge, Fleisser, and Hurwicz; on archival materials made available by the Berliner Ensemble; and on recordings and transcripts of recordings of Brecht's actual rehearsals with the Berliner Ensemble.

Beginning with Brecht's work on the Leipzig premiere of Baal and continuing through his Eduard II production in Munich in 1924, through the major productions of both the pre-exile period and the exile period itself, and then back to Europe for the Swiss and Berlin productions, I have tried to show in day by day detail how Brecht actually prepared productions of his plays. The book literally goes behind the scenes to show negotiations for contracts, the actual selection of actors, and how Brecht would insist on his own view of a production. The book shows how Brecht negotiated contracts highly beneficial to himself but vastly less so for collabora-

tors such as Weill, Steffin, Berlau, and Hauptmann. Where appropriate, the book deals frankly with Brecht's use of the casting couch. The book talks both of Brecht's "Chinese politeness" in dealing with co-workers and his (carefully planned?) hysterical outbursts in which he denounced co-workers as incompetents and old Nazis. In detailed analysis of the rehearsals, the book shows how a production took shape and what role (if any) was played by theory in these productions. Of particular note here is the way in which Brecht carefully and consciously prepared highly emotional scenes with actors such as Busch, Hurwicz, and Weigel.

As is appropriate for a work of stage history, the text of the book will be illustrated by more than a hundred photographs of key productions and major figures in Brecht's theater. Hopefully, all this careful emphasis on Brecht's actual practice will provide readers with an opportunity to measure how much contemporary Brecht scholarship is actual Lehrtheorie and how much comes perilously close to being Leertheorie, i.e. theoretical pronouncements that never passed the test of praxis, puddings that Brecht himself proved to be indigestible in the eating.

* * *

Michael Gilbert: Brecht and Music. A Comprehensive Study. Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison (expected completion date December 1983).

* * *

Bertolt Brecht: The Horatians and the Curatians. Translated by Anthony Vivas (Winner of second prize in the British Comparative Literature translation competition). Appearing in Comparative Criticism (England), early 1984.

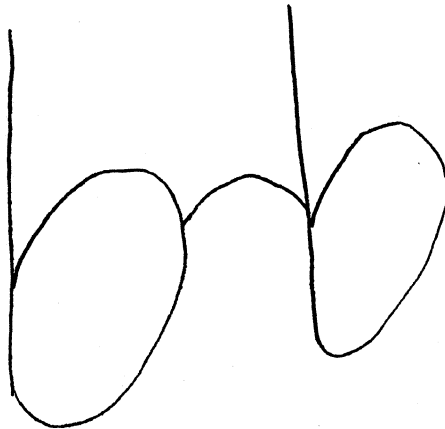
* * *

Concordance to Brecht's Poetry

Working closely with Dr. Gerhard Seidel and the Bertolt Brecht Archives, Professors James K. Lyon (University of California, San Diego) and Steven Sondrup (Brigham Young University) are preapring a computer-generated concordance to the lyric poetry of Bertolt Brecht. Drawing on experience producing concordances (Lyon published one of Gottfreid Benn's lyrics; Sondrup published concordances to the poetry of Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer), they are using as their Textgrundlage both the four volume Suhrkamp edition Bertolt Brecht. Gesammelte Gedichte, which incorporates all the poems and songs from plays found in

the 20 volume Werkausgabe, and the recently published supplementary edition of poetry entitled Gedichte aus dem Nachlaß. Those poems not by Brecht which inadvertently found their way into these two editions will be deleted.

Given the immediate accessibility of these volumes to a wide scholarly audience, and the fact that they make available at least one published version (and sometimes more) of every known poem or lyric fragment Brecht wrote, it was deemed useful to prepare a concordance now that could be used as a tool for the existing corpus rather than to wait an undetermined number of decades until an historical-critical edition appears. Dr. Seidel, who endorsed this procedure and worked with the editors in establishing editorial norms for dealing with the complexities of Brecht texts, considers the preliminary editorial work and the computer tape of the complete poetic texts that will result as a basis for further work on the historical-critical edition. All poems have now been entered into a data base, and the concordancing process has begun. Arrangements for publication have not yet been made, but they will begin shortly as sections of camera-ready copy are available to show.



notices

Kurt Weill Conference

A Kurt Weill Conference is being sponsored by the Music Library at Yale University, in conjunction with the Weill Foundation, on November 3-5, 1983, in New Haven. Lotte Lenya bequeathed the Weill manuscripts to the Yale Music Library, and the Weill Foundation has given Yale the remaining papers of Weill and Lenya. Yale has founded a Weill/Lenya Archive, which is being catalogued by means of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The conference, featuring papers and performances, will be a gathering of performers, critics, and scholars from around the world. Several papers will be of special interest to Brecht scholars, e.g., John Fuegi, "Weill, Brecht, and das Geld"; Jürgen Schebera, "A Comparative Study of Jasager and Maßnahme"; Ronald Shull, "Die sieben Todsünden: Toward a New History." The proceedings of the Conference will be published as volume 1 of the forthcoming Kurt Weill Yearbook. For information write to Harold E. Samuel, Yale Music Library, 98 Wall St., New Haven, CT 06520 (203/ 436 8319).

* * *

Edinburgh Festival

Almost 500 Fringe companies gathered at the fringe of the Edinburgh Festival this year. The official festival theme was Vienna 1900 which led many of the main Festival's theatrical presentations to focus on German language theater at the turn of the century. Critic Randall Stevenson reports the following in the Times Literary Supplement (Sept. 16, 1983):

Not surprisingly, Bertolt Brecht was the major focus of the Fringe's interest in German theatre: his strong provocative narratives always prove attractive to Fringe companies. As well as providing productions of Mother Courage, Caucasian Chalk Circle, and The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, this year's Fringe offered an opportunity to examine the inception of Brecht's own rise, and his development from within the expressionist phase of German theatre. This was made possible by good productions of his early fable, Lux in Tenebris (performed by Cambridge University Theatre Group) and of his mysterious early play, In the Jungle of the

Cities. This latter production, by the English Touring Company, was perhaps the best Brecht on the Fringe, his "inexplicable wrestling match" curiously complemented by the cast's own wrestle with their venue, a wretchedly-lit, low-ceilinged room with only one entrance to the stage. The actors' lugubrious drawls and dull stares as they struggled around their encumbered stage excellently (if perhaps partly inadvertently) extended the all-encompassing drabness of Brecht's vision of urban claustrophobia.

* * *

John Fuegi (University of Maryland) writes the following:

In a recent review (German Quarterly), I quoted Ruth Berlau as having told Gisela Bahr that she had given over a thousand of Brecht's letters to her to the Akademie der Künste (East Berlin). In a letter to me Hans Bunge writes that he believes that the figure given by Berlau to Bahr was vastly exaggerated. In Bunge's view, the number of extant Brecht letters to Berlau is about three or four times the number of letters printed in the Glaeser Briefe volume. Why only 25% - 30% of the Brecht letters to Berlau were printed in the Briefe remains a mystery.

* * *

Gerhard Seidel Visit to the USA

Gerhard Seidel (Bertolt Brecht Archive, East Berlin) will be in the USA for three to four weeks in January - February 1984. Visits are planned for the University of Maryland (College Park) and the University of California at San Diego. For further information and to arrange lectures/visits, contact James K. Lyon, Department of Literature D-007, UCSD, La Jolla, CA 92093.

KARL VALENTIN (1882-1948)

I am told that in Munich they are constructing a museum to honor Karl Valentin. They will display his broken zither, his defoliated Christmas tree, his overlarge shoes and putty nose. All this would have entertained Valentin immensely, if he were alive today. I suspect he would have solemnly attended the museum opening in the company of his usual retinue: dwarves on bicycles, giants on stilts, a screaming toy fire engine in search of smoke, Valentin himself gallantly playing the tuba. And his dwarves might perform their demolition act once more, destroying the handpainted scenery with an axe, if the museum has any of Valentin's scenery left intact when it opens. I used to play clarinet in this epic clown's band, and would do so again without the slightest hesitation, if I could recall how to play without laughing aloud at the waltzing tuba player next to me.

Bertolt Brecht, Versuche, 1952

Translated by Joel Schechter

(Joel Schechter, Yale School of Drama, submitted the above text with the following message:

This is an apocryphal document, forged by me, because I think Brecht should have written it even if he did not. Perhaps you could use it to initiate a series of "Brecht Apocrypha," material that would greatly aid our analysis and appreciation of Brecht's work if only he had written it.

Submissions will be accepted.)



mla

Modern Language Association Conference

New York City, 1983

The two sessions sponsored by the IBS at this year's MLA conference promise to be unusual and controversial. The first act will present some live entertainment with a discussion about performing Brecht. The second act, after a short intermission, will resume with two papers that are sure to raise some interesting questions and some eyebrows. IBS members who do not belong to the Modern Language Association may obtain passes to the Brecht Sessions at the conference hotel registration area.

1. Brecht and Performance

December 29, 5:15 - 6:30 PM

Commonwealth Room, Sheraton Hotel

"Love Songs for Hard Times", a program of Brecht's songs and poems, directed by Wal Cherry, followed by a discussion on performing Brecht with Wal Cherry (Temple University), Wolfgang Roth (stage designer, NYC), and Carl Weber (New York University).

2. Brecht and Women

December 29, 7:15 - 8:30 PM

Commonwealth Room, Sheraton Hotel

Organizers: Patty Lee Parmalee (Rutgers University) and Janelle Reinelt (California State University, Sacramento)

Sammy McLean (University of Washington): "Mother-Son Incest Bonding and the Attainment of the Good Community in Brecht's Later Plays";

Sue-Ellen Case (University of Washington): "Brecht and Women: Homosexuality and the Mother".

ATTENTION COMMUNICATIONS' BIBLIOGRAPHERS

This announcement is for those of you who have agreed to work with our collection network for bibliographical data, for others who may wish to help in this effort, and (as a sort of distant preview) for those who will make use of the information once it starts appearing.

We hope to make Communications more useful for researchers and scholars by creating an interesting bibliographical section which will be: 1) as complete as is possible for us, within the limits of our space and resources; and 2) definitely the most current available source of information on Brecht scholarship, publications, productions and exhibitions.

We hope our network of correspondents will keep us informed on several ongoing aspects of Brecht scholarship:

--brief analytical reports on significant theatrical productions, from the correspondents themselves

or

bibliographical data on published reviews, photos and other production documentation (usually in newspapers or magazines)

--brief analytical reports on exhibitions and shows which include significant new Brecht materials or which demonstrate interesting critical approaches to existing materials

--notices of dissertations in progress and other works in progress, including the name and address of the person doing the work

Information on the following types of publications will be sought:

--articles on Brecht from: 1) literary journals not indexed in the MLA yearly Bibliography; 2) professional and academic theater journals not indexed by MLA; 3) journals indexed by MLA, only when we get the data into print with significant lead time over their publication

--recent books on Brecht, and

--bibliographical data on published reviews of books on Brecht

A form for efficient information collection is being developed and will be sent to the correspondents in the near future along with suggestions for each individual's role in the project. For details contact the Associate Editor, Gary Chancellor.

reports

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The proposed Symposium in Beijing and Shanghai has had to be cancelled. This news was unexpected. We are now investigating alternative possibilities.

Five months after submitting a proposal, the Chinese Theatre Association invited me to Beijing last February. During the course of the lengthy and friendly discussions I was encouraged to make an announcement so as to give members time to prepare for the event. This "preliminary announcement" appeared in the April issue of Communications. The response was encouraging, both in-and outside the Society. In February I was told that approval would take about five weeks and that the prospects were very good. Further inquiries ten weeks later showed the unofficial signals were strongly positive. The final reply, when it came several weeks later, stated with deep regret that the Symposium would be difficult to arrange, citing three factors: 1. the expense; 2. the fact that "many of the major theatres are in the course of being reorganized at present"; 3. the difficulty of assuring accommodations. The conclusion: in spite of all their efforts, they could not "insure its feasibility at present". And there the matter rests. Let us hope that something may be possible in the future. One thing is certain: the interest on all sides was very great.

The IBS has held symposia roughly every three years, though we are not tied to this interval. The last Symposium met in Portland, Oregon in May/June 1982. Therefore we do have some time on hand, and there is no need to rush to a decision. Japan, Hong Kong and England have so far been suggested as alternative locations. Though it should prove possible to arrange, I doubt if a Symposium in Hong Kong is really suitable. We had a Seminar in March 1981 in Hong Kong, attended by China's major Brecht experts [the Proceedings, entitled Brecht and East Asian Theatre, were published this year by Hong Kong University Press]. These experts might not wish to come again. Furthermore, though Hong Kong is a stimulating place and relatively affordable and centrally located in East Asia, a Symposium there would not be an adequate substitute for a meeting in the People's Republic. At Portland the consensus held that it was time for a Symposium outside North America, also in view of the desire to "internationalize" the Society. We are exploring alternatives and would welcome suggestions.

During the past year two important changes in our affairs have occurred. The Yearbook, now edited by Gisela Bahr, John Fuegi and John Willett, has finally appeared in its new form. The switch to a trilingual format should make it more attractive to those uncomfortable with articles in German only. Unfortunately it is also more expensive than heretofore, and the Society may have to consider raising membership dues to deal with the increase. The retail price of the new Yearbook will come to ca. US\$22.50. It costs the Society \$14.25 plus \$1.50 mailing per member; this is covered by the annual subscription but it represents a considerable increase over the Suhrkamp price for earlier yearbooks.

For some time we have been anxious to improve Communications and to make it a more memorable and useful part of our work. With Marc Silberman as editor we are hopeful of achieving this goal. In any event, the response to last April's first issue of Communications in the new format has been encouraging. Up till now Communications has been sent free of charge to everyone on the Society's mailing list. We will not be able to continue this practice. Because of production costs, we will be able to send it only to paid-up members, though the first couple of numbers in the new format are being more widely distributed for promotional reasons.

Those who are either behind with the dues payment, or let payment lapse entirely, will need to renew their membership in order to receive the Society's publications. We also urge members to draw others' attention to the change in the quality of benefits and to persuade libraries to subscribe. Although an encouraging number of new members have recently joined, we need still more subscriptions to sustain our publications. In this context John Rouse writes of the interests and perspectives among theatre people in the US and of the need to take them into account. He proposes, for example, to organize a Brecht panel at the American Theatre Association meeting.

Our aim to increase and broaden our membership, also to "internationalize" our activities and improve our publications, is meeting with some success. We need to maintain this momentum.

Antony Tatlow

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

After a long and often frustrating period of waiting, the new Brecht yearbook, Beyond Brecht: Über Brecht hinaus (Vol. XI, 1982) is now available. This attractive book contains many interesting articles in English and German, and it will be yours, plus two issues of the re-designed IBS bulletin Communications, for a real bargain price if you join the IBS and pay your dues. (The list price for the yearbook alone is US\$22.00!)

All those IBS members in good standing, i.e. those who have paid their dues, should now have received the yearbook directly from Wayne State University Press, our new publisher. If you have paid some time ago and not received the book, please let me know immediately. If you have paid very recently, give me some time; I usually wait a few weeks to collect addresses before I send them on to the people at Wayne State Press, who then mail out the books.

This brings me to our budget. As you can imagine, the IBS is not exactly swimming in money. We need every membership dollar, and we do not refuse gifts. (If you have a good idea about how to raise funds, please let us know.) And please contact me before you incur any expense on behalf of the IBS - even if it is only a very small amount. Unexpected bills can lead to unpleasant surprises; in fact I have not been able to pay for some!

Here are some figures to give you an idea of our financial situation:

Credit	Debit
Checking account \$2,181.88	114 copies of year-
Savings account 807.27	book + postage
	(estimate) \$1,850.00
Total \$2,989.15	November issue of
(as of 9/15/83)	<u>Communications</u>
	(estimate) 700.00
Checking account	Postage (dues,
Deutsche Bank in	notices) 21.68
Düsseldorf (7/6/83) DM 550,99	
	\$2,571.68

The difference of approximately \$415.00 is not really enough to pay for the spring issue of Communications that also has to be financed from this year's membership contributions. Between now and spring 1984, however, I hope to collect more dues, especially from libraries and IBS members abroad who have only recently been notified. As you can see, the financial picture is rather gloomy but not hopeless. It seems that with a new publisher, an attractive yearbook and a very attractive bulletin (thanks to Marc Silberman!), we are back on track and in a good position to attract new members.

One final and urgent request. I have received a dues payment for Motoko Funakoshi but I do not have his address - he sent me an American Express check. Does anyone know the address? Please inform me so we can mail yearbook and Communications.

Karl-Heinz Schoeps

Help Us Stay in Print

Please Suscribe!

letters to the editor

21 March 1983

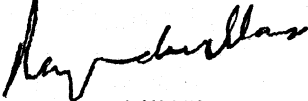
Dear Marc Silberman,

Thank you for your letter. Grimm is misinformed. What I wrote (in London Review of Books) was:

Bert Brecht, the communist poet and playwright, has become a cultural monument. Is it then not time, he might ask, to consider blowing him up? One of the early problems is this kind of tough talk...(etc.)

Do publish this if you wish.

Yours truly,



Raymond Williams

(Editor's Note: This letter was received in response to an inquiry about a comment by Reinhold Grimm in the last issue of Communications, cf. XII,2, p. 31.)

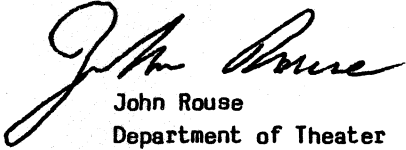
20 June 1983

Dear Marc Silberman,

...What would help spark the interest of American theater people in Brecht's theater work? It seems to me that one problem in attracting theater people to the IBS is that there isn't much available that discusses Brecht's own theater work effectively--at least not in English. Everyone studies the Short Organon and Brecht's plays (and not all of those) and is taught to regard Brecht as a theoretician/playwright. Students and teachers alike overlook or don't know the degree to which Brecht's "theory" changed as his practice changed, or the degree to which its formulation was a specific response to a specific historical situation (the residues of the Göring-theater, etc.). How many of them (you?) would consider Theaterarbeit a more important "theoretical" statement than the Organon?...

Last not least, let's encourage the Germanists to seek out the theater departments at their own universities, perhaps offer to co-teach seminars on Brecht, give visiting lectures in classes, etc. And I think I should add that while the theater people have a great deal to learn from the Germanists, the literary scholars have as much to learn from the theater people. Just let any German scholar function as dramaturg on a production of a play by Brecht or another German playwright and you'll see what I mean.

Very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Rouse". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

John Rouse
Department of Theater
Tulane University

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CONTRIBUTORS

Christina Alcantara teaches German at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Arnold Blumer teaches German at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa.

R.G. Davis is a theater director in San Francisco and New York City. Most recently he has been in Cuba working on a Mayakovski production.

Nora Eidelberg teaches Spanish at the University of Texas at San Antonio and works on contemporary Latin American theater.

Sara Lennox teaches at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. She has published extensively on German literature and feminist issues.

James K. Lyon teaches at the University of California--San Diego in La Jolla. He published recently the book Brecht in America.

Carlos Maldonado is a Chilean exile who now lives and works in Leipzig in the German Democratic Republic.

Harro Müller teaches at the University in Bielefeld in the Federal Republic of Germany. He was recently a Visiting Professor at Cornell University in the United States.

Joel Schechter teaches in the Yale School of Drama University and edits the journal Theater.

Linda Schulte-Sasse studied German at the University of Minnesota and now lives in Minneapolis.

Wolfgang Schwiedrzik is a dramaturge and a free-lance journalist living in Cologne.

Richard Spuler teaches in the German Department at the University of Houston. He publishes on poetry and literary theory.

Ingmar Stomberg is a graduate student at the University of Texas in Austin.

Dan Thibodeau is a computer programmer and does political graphics. He lives in Austin, Texas.

John Willett--literary critic, translator and Brecht specialist--lives in London.

membership

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

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

- ☐ US \$10 Student member (to 3 years)
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more than US \$20,000
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Address _____

INFORMATION FORM

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

I want to report: ☐ work in progress ☐ book
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 ☐ own publication ☐ dissertation/thesis
 ☐ other's publication ☐ translation/reprint

Title or subject _____

Author/Translator _____

Address/Institution _____

Publication Information _____

Completion expected by (date) _____ Signature _____

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

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

RESOURCE DIRECTORY NOTICE

Please list my name and address in the forthcoming IBS Resource Directory.

My specific area(s) of expertise is/are: _____

and/or I will gather and forward information on Brecht in theater and other cultural events in the following geographic/linguistic area(s): _____

Name _____

Mail to: Gary Chancellor
Foreign Languages
Trinity University
715 Stadium Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78284

Address _____

PRODUCTION NOTICE

I want to report a production of the play _____

Institution: _____

Director: _____ Stage Designer: _____

Music: _____ Translator: _____

Cast:

Mail to the editor and send one Bertolt-Brecht Archiv
copy of the program to each: Chausseestrasse 125
DDR-104 Berlin
German Democratic Republic

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

I would like to report a change of address: Name _____

Old address: _____ New address: _____

Mail to the Secretary-Treasurer.

OFFICERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

President: Antony Tatlow (University of Hong Kong)

Vice-President: David Bathrick (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Secretary-Treasurer: Karl-Heinz Schoeps (University of Illinois-Urbana)

elections

The terms of all elected officers expire this coming spring. Nominations for President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer and editor of Communications will be accepted until February 1, 1984. Please try to obtain the consent of the nominee beforehand! And self-nominations are welcome. Officers serve for two year terms.

Please provide the following information:

Nominee's name, address or affiliation, and office desired.

Send nominations to the editor of Communications. An election ballot will appear in the next issue of this bulletin.

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

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