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COMMUNICATIONS

from the International Brecht Society

THE GLOBAL BRECHT



*Brecht in China, Brazil, Northern India, Algeria,
the United Arab Emirates, Canada, West Germany,
East Germany, the United States . . .*

Volume 17, Number 1

COMMUNICATIONS

from the INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

Volume 17

November 1987

Number 1

Editor: Michael Gilbert
Department of Foreign Languages & Literatures
Valparaíso University
Valparaíso, Indiana 46383 USA

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See the inside back cover for information on subscriptions and membership.

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IBS Officers: Antony Tatlow, University of Hong Kong, President
Darko Suvin, McGill University, Montréal, Québec, Canada,
Vice-President
Ward B. Lewis, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia,
USA, Secretary-Treasurer

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of **Communications** appears a bit late due to technical problems, some late contributions, and general end-of-the-semester chaos. The theme of "The Global Brecht" suggested itself given the diverse contributions received from various corners of the world, which, more than anything else, was a fortunate coincidence.

With the next issue, my term as Editor of **Communications** "läuft aus," as do the terms of the other elected IBS officers (the President, Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer). I spoke with Antony Tatlow when he was in Chicago in late October (enroute to Ireland) and indicated my willingness to be a candidate for a second term. The forthcoming election will be on the agenda of the IBS Business Meeting which will take place at the MLA Convention in San Francisco (see the announcement on p. 5), and a ballot will be included in the April issue of this journal.

Professor Tatlow also asked me to solicit the ideas or recommendations of the membership for the next International Symposium to be held c. 1989-1990. The initial plan to hold the Symposium in Birmingham, England has been dropped. So far, Nicaragua has been suggested as a possible venue for the meeting, but the IBS leadership is open to suggestions from all of its members all over the globe. Those interested in the effort and resources required to sponsor such an event may wish to discuss the matter with Dr. Tatlow, whose current address is given in the "In Brief" section of this issue, p. 77.

Closing words: I would like to remind the readership that a need exists for someone to assist with the compilation of the annual bibliography, to be published in the April issue. Otherwise, reports, reviews, production notes, and other material of interest to the readers of **Communications** is welcomed at any time. Finally, I would like to express my thanks to my student aide, Anna Stubenrauch, for her patient assistance with the preparation of this issue.

01 Gilbert

N.B.: The editorial deadline for the April 1988 issue of **Communications** (Volume 17, No. 2) is March 1, 1988.

Letters to the Editor

(Editor's note: The first letter is a response by R.G. Davis to the letter from Jim Miller published in the last issue of *Communications*.)

Dear Editor:

These exchanges tend to fall into a pattern. The critic challenges the icons of the trade, the editor modifies the ascerbic comments, some letter writers accuse the editor of wasting space on such attacks, other letter writers make the critic sound irrational and hysterical and themselves rational. Jim Miller tries to make my views extreme. I never used the phrase "revolutionary communist music." I said "useful." Eisler's music is useful.

In this exchange it is, I think, important to trace the path I have taken to challenge Bentley's work as Brecht's disseminator in the U.S.A. True, he translated and even propagated Brecht's works, but still both Brecht's suggestions and Eisler's music are hardly lively theoretical forces in our culture today. Bentley's distortions have blunted the social bite of the texts. This alone does not account for all the trouble Brechtiana has had in the U.S., but it adds to the difficulties. Miller suggests we focus on the Brecht-Eisler Song Book put out by Oak Publications in 1967 as evidence of Bentley's radicalism and says that I fail to show that the book is anything less than a valuable contribution, true to the art and spirit of both Eisler and Brecht. OK, I'll focus on this publication.

Irwin Silber, Oak's co-owner (with Moe Ash), was responsible for the project. The Song Book was rather a quirk, as Oak had been in the forefront of folk music publication while Silber was editor of Sing Out! But Silber had had a long association with Eisler, having produced his farewell concert in 1948. This remains the only book of its kind published in the U.S., and sales have not been large. Silber sold Oak rights after it was published, and couldn't give me accurate figures, but he guesses sales were between five and ten thousand.

The Song Book is very much Bentley's. Silber told me Bentley spent three years acquiring rights to the songs and would not use any translation but his own. In the introduction Bentley tries to disarm the anti-Communist opposition he thinks will be engendered by the Song Book: "Are the songs in this book Communist propaganda? Had the question been put to Brecht and Eisler they might have answered: Well, we hope so! But will these songs be received as such by most people who will hear them? By Communists, yes: but what use is preaching to the converted? . . . Must propaganda for a cause one has not espoused, and may dissent from, necessarily offend one?"

The peculiarity of this introduction is that the Song Book was published at the height of the anti-war movement, at the lowest level of anti-Communism in this country. The issue of Communist or not-Communist was hardly on the minds of most people in the movement. Bentley's statement is brashly apologetic, yet the timing is off. In addition, to assume that the Communists automatically took to Eisler and Brecht ("what use is preaching to the converted") is an inaccurate cliché.

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Miller reveals a problem he has with Eisler's work: "There is no question that Eisler attempted to force together in an unstable fusion music which grew out of the most advanced experiments of early twentieth century European concert music and the needs of a mass movement for singable, forceful songs and simple dramatic forms. All of his career involved the attempt to square this circle." I'm not sure Eisler had a "career," and it seems Miller thinks "revolutionary music" is only mass protest-tune making. An answer from Eisler: "In our art there must be the finest unification of entertainment, highly developed technical standard, consciousness, humour, real power of propoganda, social feeling." (1938 speech to ILGWU). While Eisler was not opposed to tendenz tunes or songs for the picket line, his interests were broader. Like Brecht he attempted to recouperate the bourgeois best and find in pre-bourgeois art elements that would be useful in provoking socialist art and thinking. This is a fundamental problem of "squaring circles," especially in societies dominated by the consciousness industry.

Bentley's contribution is under examination here because of his tendency to mistranslate. For example, in the Brecht-Eisler Song Book, Brecht's title, "Lenin-Zitat" ("Lenin Quotation") becomes "Happy the Man." Says Bentley:

Happy the man who never makes mistakes!
But give me one who knows how to make them good.

A closer translation might be:

It's not the one who doesn't make mistakes who's smart,
It's the one who knows how to fix them quickly.

Or:

Smart is not he who makes no mistakes,
But he who understands how to better them quickly.

Jill Hannum, who helped me with this translation, writes: "EB rather turns the meaning on its head."

Someone will surely argue that Bentley had to fit the language to the music, thus his distortions are justifiable. Auden translated materials that fit, Nellhaus does it fairly well, Manheim and Willett do some well and fuss with others, yet the ease by which the language fits the musical meter is not the only criteria for translation. Bentley is generally erratic, but in one thing he is consistent: if there is a Socialist (Marxist) challenge in the texts, he avoids it and uses some liberal idea instead. Worse still, because he has no feeling for Communist or Socialist activity, Bentley enlarges the propagandistic elements and emphasizes the liberal elements: in the translation of "Praise of Illegal Work," BB's first word is schön, "lovely," "nice," in some situations even "pretty." EB says "glorious," bringing to mind propoganda about the glorious people's revolution. Further, BB says (translating literally) that it is "lovely to seize (grab) the word in the class war," while EB says it is "glorious to wield the word . . .," implying that it has already been seized and is ready to be used as a sword. BB says: "Difficult and useful is the daily work (chores), the tough (in the sense of hard) and secret knotting of the great (big) net of the party in front of the gunbarrels of the capitalists." EB says:

"Hard and useful the small daily labor, the grim and persistent spreading of the big net of the party for the guns of the capitalists." Different, no?

The work of "squaring circles" is always awkward, uncomfortable, and never finished. Miller brings up the example of Wolf Biermann to demonstrate Eisler's open-minded appreciation for music of another time and point of view. True, Eisler and the Berliner Ensemble befriended Bierman, but I understand from Werner Hecht that Biermann refused the protective umbrella of a job offer from Helene Weigel, saying that he would be compromised if he accepted. I like what Hecht said about Biermann--"He will always be a problem, wherever he goes. Even after he met and was accepted by Bentley and Miller, Biermann joined the Spanish Communist Party . . . as a dissident, he should be seen in a larger context than just his defection, but it is precisely the defection which made him acceptable to the liberals." What about the dissidents who remain Socialists? Heiner Müller is a disrupter on both sides of the Wall, and Werner Hecht a smiling personality who has stayed inside the Berliner Ensemble family. Both are making the works of Brecht available to the world--most likely the world on the other side of the Wall. Of the two, Hecht is the more fascinating character, one who has opened many doors to Brecht. But Miller and Bentley tend to ignore people like Müller and Hecht because they are not anti-Communist, they are just critical of their own government within its own context.

The trouble with anti-Marxists and anti-Communists who pounce on/expound the work of Brecht or Eisler is that they tend to manufacture a product that tends to lose its effectiveness upon use.

R.G. Davis
San Francisco, California USA

* * * * *

Dear Editor:

Without irony--without anything but Brecht's meaning--the Brecht quote regarding the founding of banks has become an epigram of an article on banking in Forbes Magazine (June 29, 1987, p. 67):

Crime wave

"Robbing a bank's no crime
compared to owning one!"—Bertolt Brecht

A 1928 expression of the criminality of high finance has come full circle in 1987. This, I believe, is worthy of note in IBS Communications.

Sincerely,

Lee Baxandall
Oshkosh, Wisconsin USA

READERS' INQUIRIES

Dear Editor,

Can you or a reader of *Communications* identify the source of the following statement attributed to Brecht?

"Die mit vielen Mitleid haben, dürfen keines haben mit den wenigen."

Sincerely,

Ward B. Lewis
Dept. of Germanic & Slavic Lang.
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602 USA

* * * * *

Dear *Communications* Readership:

I have been asked by Eyre Methuen, Ltd. to be responsible for the editorship of a second volume of Brecht poems, 1913-1956 as part of Methuen's collected edition of the works of Brecht in English.

The purpose of this letter is, in the first instance, to ask whether you would be interested in contributing translations to the projected second volume. At this stage the plan is to incorporate previously unpublished and/or uncollected poems, drawing on the Gedichte aus dem Nachlass, but also rectifying some omissions from the first volume. If you have already done translations of poems and would be prepared to submit them for inclusion in the volume, I should be most grateful if you could forward them to me. At the same time I should also be interested to hear whether you have any ideas about which poems you feel should be included in the second volume (whether you have translated them yourself or not). Tentative financial arrangements have been worked out with Methuen; please inquire for details.

I should also point out that as well as contacting translators who contributed poems to the first volume, I shall be asking other translators with whose work I am familiar to submit translations of Brecht poems. If you know of any writers who have worked on translations of Brecht's poetry and who you think might be interested in submitting their translations, I should be grateful if you could let me have their names and addresses.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Michael Morley
School of Humanities
The Flinders University of South
Australia
Bedford Park, South Australia 5042
AUSTRALIA

IBS FINANCIAL REPORT

| March 20, 1987 | September 20, 1987 |
|---|----------------------------|
| | receipts: \$1,924.25 |
| | disbursements: 3,837.06 |
| <u>balance:</u> \$3,702.37 | <u>balance:</u> \$1,789.56 |
| Deutsche Bank, Düsseldorf (Konto-Nummer 7674146) | |
| DM 709,03 | DM 784,64 |

Membership Statistics

There are presently 183 members of the IBS (124 individual and 59 institutional). This compares with 123 at about this time last year and 210 the year before.

A total of ten individuals and institutions have pre-paid their dues in the expectation of seeing Volume 14 of the *Yearbook*. Individual dues notices will be sent out in January.

* * * * *

IBS BUSINESS MEETING at the
MLA Convention, San Francisco

The Annual Business Meeting of the International Brecht Society will take place immediately after the second IBS-sponsored session of the MLA Convention, "(Re)presenting Brecht: Poststructural Readings," which is the last scheduled session of the Convention (#721, 12:00-1:15 p.m., Wednesday, December 30, 1987, Ramada Renaissance Hotel, Da Vinci Room II/III). See the following pages for a detailed announcement of the IBS sessions at the MLA.

Business Meeting Agenda

1. Report of the ad hoc Committee on Dues Structure (Vice-President Darko Suvin)
2. Secretary-Treasurer's Report (Ward Lewis)
3. Report of **Communications** Editor (Michael Gilbert)
4. Report of **Brecht-Yearbook** Managing Editor (John Fuegi)
5. New Business/Announcements

IBS President Antony Tatlow is currently in Ireland and will not be in attendance.

MLA 1987 - SAN FRANCISCO

The International Brecht Society is sponsoring the following two sessions at the 1987 Modern Language Association Convention in San Francisco. Both sessions will be held in the Da Vinci Room (II and III) of the Ramada Renaissance Hotel, 55 Cyril Magnin Street, San Francisco, and are open to non-members of the Modern Language Association provided they register at the Convention. The registration area for the Ramada Renaissance Hotel will be located in the Ballroom Foyer on the fourth floor.

Session No. 103: BRECHTIAN DISCOURSES IN THE AMERICAS

Monday, December 28th, 8:30-9:45 a.m.

Organizers: Carl Weber, Stanford University; Leslie Damasceno, Princeton University

Moderator: Beatriz Rizk, Graduate Center, City University of New York

Speakers and Topics:

Leslie Damasceno: "Brecht in Brazil"

R. G. Davis, California State University-San Francisco:
"Brecht Reception in the United States"

Beatriz Rizk: "The Essence and Presence of Brecht in the Colombian New Theater"

Respondent: Carl Weber, Stanford University

A stylized white line drawing of a suspension bridge, likely the Golden Gate Bridge, spanning the width of the page. The bridge has two main towers and numerous vertical hangers. The text "MLA 1987" is centered over the bridge.

MLA 1987

SAN FRANCISCO 27-30 DECEMBER

Session No. 721: (RE)PRESENTING BRECHT: POSTSTRUCTURAL READINGS
Wednesday, December 30, 12:00-1:15 p.m.

Organizer/Moderator: Janelle Reinelt, California State University-Sacramento

Speakers and Topics:

Ellen C. Caldwell, Clarkson University: "Poststructuring Brecht--Pluralism and Propaganda in Galileo"

Robert Miklitsch, Tufts University: "Reading Differently--Galileo in Quotations"

Sabine Gross, University of California at Santa Barbara: "Brecht's Discourse--Dialectics of the Text, Dialectics of Reading"

Respondents: Darko Suvin, McGill University; John Rouse, Tulane University

* * * * *

1988 MLA CONVENTION, NEW ORLEANS

In recent years, the organization of IBS-sponsored sessions at the MLA Convention has been somewhat haphazard and helter-skelter, in addition to which the Editor of *Communications*, for no logical or apparent reason, has had to serve as the intermediary for the MLA Convention Program Office. In order to encourage individual IBS members to assume this responsibility themselves as well as promote the organization of sessions for the 1988 Convention, the letter of inquiry for Allied Organizations of the MLA and Calendar of Dates and Deadlines is reproduced on the following two pages. In accordance with MLA policies, the IBS, as an Allied Organization, may sponsor two sessions; requests for as third session are subject to review by the MLA Program Committee vis-à-vis the guidelines applicable to "special sessions." Complete details on these and other matters pertinent to the IBS' status as an Allied Organization of the MLA can be found in the September issue of *PMLA*. Also, to simplify matters for the Editor of *Communications* (P-L-E-A-S-E!!!), session organizers are asked to send the Editor a copy of the final program copy at the same time it is sent to the MLA--i.e., by April 8, 1988--in order that an announcement for the Convention sessions can be published already in the April issue. Official request forms for the tentative program statement due by February 9, 1988 may be obtained from either the Editor or the MLA Convention Program Office (see address below).

One final note (IMPORTANT!!): The deadline for 1988 Convention session announcements for the Spring *MLA Newsletter* (for the purpose of soliciting papers, proposals, inquiries, panelists, respondents, etc.) is January 5, 1988--immediately after the convention in San Francisco. It is therefore highly advantageous for interested persons/potential session organizers to come to the MLA with a tentative proposal which can be announced/discussed at the Business Meeting following the last session (#721).

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MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

10 ASTOR PLACE

NEW YORK, NY 10003

Telephone (212) 614-6371

6 November 1987

Dear Colleague:

I write to inquire whether your group, as an allied organization of the Modern Language Association, plans to meet in conjunction with the 1988 MLA Convention in New Orleans. Programs arranged by allied organizations have traditionally enriched the range and diversity of the convention, and your continued participation is greatly valued.

Please note that program copy for all convention meetings is due by 8 April. In order to balance the final program copy deadline with the preliminary program deadline, the preliminary program deadline is 9 February. Please note that all that is required by 9 February is one completed preliminary program form for each meeting you plan to hold; each completed form should include a working title and a brief description of the meeting. You may submit names of speakers with the preliminary program if you wish, but names do not have to be submitted until 8 April. If you wish to use one of your meeting times for a business meeting, you may indicate "business" for the title.

You may also use the preliminary program forms to request social functions, executive committee meetings, and table space for distributing membership information and selling tickets to social functions. (We do not know yet, however, whether table space will actually be available; organizations that request tables will be informed in the fall of 1988.) Requests for a third meeting may be submitted to the Program Committee in the form of a special session proposal; proposal forms are available from me. As you probably recall, guidelines for organizing all meetings at the MLA convention were published in the September 1987 issue of PMLA. I urge you to read them carefully before making your plans for the 1988 Convention. Please note that members may participate in a maximum of two meetings (i.e., participate in the convention in any way that involves having his or her name listed in the Program) at a single convention. In addition to social functions and one closed committee meeting, each allied organization may arrange up to two open meetings of seventy-five minutes each. You may, if you wish, combine your two allotted meetings into one longer meeting which would count as two open meetings.

Please note that all speakers must be on the MLA membership rolls by 1 April. Exceptions to the membership policy are outlined on page 451 of the September 1987 PMLA and must be approved by the MLA Executive Director. Please remember that no one may participate in more than two meetings and that registration is required in order to attend any meeting (except MLA forums) in the convention Program.

We remind you that allied organizations are responsible for the cost of all audio-visual equipment and social functions. Estimates for such equipment or functions will be available from the MLA Convention Office. Please note that audio-visual equipment must be requested by 3 June. We must also point out at this time that the MLA cannot, unfortunately, provide funds for speakers for allied organizations' programs.

Organizations that request to meet at the 1988 MLA convention will receive, by 1 March, forms for submitting final program copy for the November Program issue of PMLA. The deadline for receipt of final program copy is 8 April.

We look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to write or call.

Sincerely yours,

Judith A. Verdino
Assistant Director of
Convention Programs

CALENDAR OF DATES AND DEADLINES FOR MLA-ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS

January through December 1988

Items listed below and correspondence concerning allied organizations should be sent to Judith A. Verdino, Assistant Director of Convention Programs, MLA, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003. The deadline for receipt of all items is the close of business on the date indicated. For more specific information, please consult the guidelines published in the September 1988 PMLA (pp. 451-52 and 456-57).

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 5 January | Deadline for receipt of announcements for the Spring <u>MLA Newsletter</u> (announcing deadline for submission of papers for allied organization programs at the 1988 convention and name of person to whom papers should be sent). Submit announcements only if you wish to solicit speakers. |
| 5 February | Spring <u>MLA Newsletter</u> mailed to members |
| 9 February | Deadline for receipt of statement of tentative allied organization program for the 1988 Convention (including topic of each session, brief description of each topic, and names of tentative panelists, if available) |
| 1 April | Deadline by which program organizers and speakers on allied organization programs for the 1988 Convention must be listed on the MLA membership rolls |
| 1 April | Deadline for receipt of requests for waiver of membership requirement for speakers (foreign scholars and persons outside the discipline of languages and literatures) on allied organization programs at the 1988 Convention |
| 8 April | Deadline for receipt of final program copy for allied organization programs for November 1988 Program issue of <u>PMLA</u> |
| 3 June | Deadline for receipt of requests for audio-visual equipment (if appropriate) for 1988 Convention |

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- mid-July Program copy proofs and information on date, time, and place of 1988 allied organization programs sent by Convention Office to program organizers
- 3 August Deadline for receipt of announcements for the Fall MLA Newsletter (announcing deadline for submission of papers for allied organization programs at the 1989 Convention and name of person to whom papers should be sent). Submit announcements only if you wish to solicit speakers.
- 8 August Deadline for receipt of corrections for program copy proofs for allied organization programs for November 1988 Program issue of PMLA
- late August Information on date, time, and place of 1988 allied organization programs should be sent by program organizers to speakers
- 28 September Deadline for receipt of announcements for the Winter MLA Newsletter (announcing deadline for submission of papers for allied organization programs at the 1989 convention and name of person to whom papers should be sent). Submit announcements only if you wish to solicit speakers.
- mid-October Fall MLA Newsletter mailed to members
- late November Winter MLA Newsletter mailed to members
- 27-30 December 1988 allied organization programs held in New Orleans

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT:

SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

"Brecht and the Paradigm Change"

Hong Kong, December 8-13, 1986

* * * * *

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF BRECHTIAN RECEPTION IN CHINA

Huang Zuolin, People's Republic of China

(Welcoming Address Delivered at the IBS International Symposium,
Hong Kong, December 1986)

. . . First of all, I must express my gratitude to Mr. Senda Korea, as it was he who started the ball rolling, if I may say so. When Mr. Senda visited Peking in 1956 he pointed out to the late Tian Han, the former President of the China Theatre Artists Association, that China knew next to nothing about Brecht. This was perfectly true, and Mr. Senda's frankness stimulated a few Chinese theatre workers. The outcome of his weighty remarks was the production of Mother Courage and Her Children in 1959, of which I happened to be the director. As a matter of fact, I began to introduce Brecht and Piscator to my theatre colleagues as early as 1951, giving a six-hour lecture in a single day. It took me more than six weeks to prepare, but no one seemed interested in it at all. This reminds me of a curious experience I had some fifty-five years ago, 1931 to be exact, when Bernard Shaw visited China to see the Great Wall. Before Shaw's arrival, quite a number of journalists went to interview Dr. Hu Shih, anxious to find out what the eminent scholar would do to welcome the world famous dramatist. Hu Shih gave a cut and dry reply, saying the best way to receive the queer old man was to ignore him altogether. I felt rather upset as I personally had a strong affection for Shaw, for it was he who had kindled my passion for the theatre as early as 1927. Consequently, I wrote an open letter to him published in an English daily in Tientsin in the name of the Shawological Institute, a pure whimsy on my part. The President of the Institute, I wrote in the letter, was Huang Zuolin; its Vice-President was Huang Zuolin, General Secretary Huang Zuolin, etc.; and the letter was signed "Yours very sincerely, Huang Zuolin." You see, I was using Shaw's own weapon, "an extraordinary weapon, that of humour," as Brecht put it, poking fun at the Irish dramatist. When I delivered the letter to Shaw in person, the grand old man seemed much amused.

I cite this incident not to blow my own horn, but rather to illustrate that in the case of Bertolt Brecht, as in the case of Bernard Shaw, I was a lonely soul, with no following whatsoever. I started from scratch, so to speak. Even though we put in a great effort staging Mother Courage, the production was a flop; it ran no more than eleven performances with only 40% attendance. This is quite unusual in my fifty years of professional experience. I had to console myself by telling my friends that I had administered such a strong dose of Verfremdungseffekt that the audience was distanced right out the theatre's doors. But that was 1959. Twenty years later, in 1979, conditions had changed when Chen Kong and I coordinated The Life of Galileo in Peking, which ran for eighty performances to consistently full houses. Before I left for Peking to

direct the play, my family was very worried; they called me "Father Courage" and reminded me considerably of the phrase "once beaten, twice shy." I wavered a little, but upon thinking the matter over, I decided to put my trust in the German poet-scientist or scientist-poet as well as in the forceful personality of Chen Kong and gathered up enough nerve to take the plunge.

Why, then, did Mother Courage fail and Galileo succeed? Well, Mother Courage failed because the public was not psychologically prepared for it; the Thirty Years War was totally alien to the people, it was nobody's business. Besides, Mother Courage being an anti-war play, some distinction must be made between a just war and an unjust war; one could not simply say "all wars are deadly, detrimental to mankind." Yao Wen-Yuan, one of the "Gang of Four" and the tycoon of critics in those days, condemned it as a "pacifist" play written by a "petty bourgeois author." Galileo, on the other hand, was put on not long after the downfall of the Gang of Four at a time when "the battle was for a theatre fit for the scientific age." So the production took the capital by storm and was televised all across the nation.

Since then, Bertolt Brecht has become extraordinarily popular. In December 1984, college students from England, America, and Holland staged The Threepenny Opera in Nanking and were highly acclaimed. In the Spring of 1985, the first symposium on Brecht was held in Beijing where The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Good Person of Szechwan, and Schweyk in World War II were put on. Immediately thereafter, The Petty-Bourgeois Wedding was presented in Shanghai, along with scenes from Mr. Puntilla and His Servant Matti and one segment of Fear and Misery of the Third Reich, "The Chalk Cross." On both occasions, we were honoured by the presence of IBS President Antony Tatlow. All of the productions were enthusiastically acclaimed; the discussions following them were both heated and lively. As a by-product of these developments, the Brechtian perspective has recently been extended to the Ping-tan (that is, accompanied story-telling, an ancient Chinese performing art), and quickly found acceptance among the general public. Concurrently, the well-known Shanghai Comic Troupe has created a satire based on Brecht's noted saying "if you digest beforehand what you are going to offer to the audience, then you are going to serve them shit"--which in this production is ironically coupled with Brecht's rule that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating."

During the past ten days Mr. Senda Korea brought his famous troupe, The Haiyuza Theatre Company of Tokyo, Japan, to China to perform The Good Person of Szechwan. Wherever they went--Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou--they were warmly and widely applauded. All of this goes to show that Bertolt Brecht is establishing a firm foothold in China. Starting with one person in 1951, his following increased to at least 200 in 1979 and by now it has grown to thousands. In all, I see bright prospects for his plays and theories in my country.

國際布萊希特節

THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT FESTIVAL

一九八六年十二月八至十三日

8th to 13th December 1986

ADDITIONAL ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Brecht: Three Mother Dramas

Denis Jonnes, Faculty of Law and Letters, Kagoshima University,
Kagoshima, Japan

While critics have long recognized the significance for Brecht's late drama of character and configuration marked in terms of family role, only recently has commentary sought to account systematically for "family" as a pervasive (structural?) rather than simply incidental or thematic dimension of Brecht's plots. More specifically, critics have underscored Brecht's deployment in the late work of women figures marked as mothers, and indeed how in the critical sequence of dramas written or completed during the war--Mutter Courage (1939), Der gute Mensch von Sezuan (1941), and Der kaukasische Kreidekreis (1944-45)--the question of maternity or, in some more radical sense, the question of the possibility of maternity, becomes an overriding (and story-generative) center of concern. One also notes, however, a tendency on the part of commentators either to ahistoricize the questions of gender and family or to ascribe to Brecht's work itself an ahistoricist treatment of the relevant issues. Thus, for example, Ute Wedel, in Die Rolle der Frau bei Bertolt Brecht (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1983), reads Brecht's representation of the maternal as predicated on false assumptions about "eternal womanly virtues" and some unchanging--and unchangeable--"female principle," terms which inevitably, for Wedel, contradict "the category of historicity." It is on grounds of this imputed ahistoricism that Wedel goes on to conclude that "the criteria for an emancipatory representation of women are not fulfilled . . . in the plays of Brecht."

In reconsidering what a foregrounding of the mother means vis-à-vis the categories of historicity and emancipation, I would see, against a reading like Wedel's, the Brechtian turn-to-the-mother as conditioned by a not-simple and sometimes contradictory series of changes in the ideological and institutional environments out of which the dramas in question arose. I would point in particular to four factors constraining Brecht's representation of the maternal and the specific form which the mother-child relation assumes in these dramas. These include: 1) the immediate historical circumstance in which the plays were written, namely the outbreak and then prolonged reality of what Brecht was to perceive and record as total war, along with the deeper-lying anxieties about collective survival which such perceptions generated; (2) a growing awareness of war as a gender-specific activity, i.e., as an especially acute expression of specifically male behavior (the Brechtian representation of women cannot be abstracted from an increasingly incisive critique of a traditionally conceived masculinity); (3) recognition of an essentially new institutionalist (or bureaucratic) ethos, taken as variously supportive and repressive, characteristic or anticipatory of administered, i.e., welfarist or early-phase socialist, societies; (4) a broad-scope transformation of attitude occurring within administered societies towards sex and family, above all toward traditional legal and financial dependencies of women on men.

It is within a framework of this kind that I would read Mutter Courage, Der gute Mensch, and Der kaukasische Kreidekreis as tracing out a progression of sorts whereby the woman as mother is freed--in certain provisional terms--from traditional role constraints; at the same time, however, I would see this development as contingent upon an evolution, which the dramas also presuppose and reflect, from more rudimentary to more evolved forms of production and exchange (from Courage as pushcart peddler to Shen Te as shopkeeper to Shen Te/Shui Ta as tobacco monopolist), a progression which culminates with the collectivism posited in the prologue to Der kaukasische Kreidekreis. Viewed from the perspectives of recent social and family history, I see Brecht's triad of mother dramas as providing a vivid and more historically accurate picture of transformations occurring within sex and family role--and of the conditions affecting such changes--than recent critics have generally allowed.

Paradigm Change:

The Female Paradigm in Brecht's Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder
and Christa Wolf's Kassandra

Kathleen L. Komar, University of California, Los Angeles

The issue of Brecht's female characters and their political and social potential has become a popular topic of contemporary Brecht scholarship to which Volume 12 of the Brecht Yearbook, entitled Brecht: Women and Politics, attests. My paper compares the female paradigm that Brecht implies in his work with that offered roughly four decades later by another prominent GDR writer, Christa Wolf.

Building on the works of earlier Brecht scholars such as Sara Lennox, Sarah Bryant-Bertail and Sue-Ellen Case, I compare the female paradigm offered by Brecht in Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder with that offered by Christa Wolf in Kassandra and her Frankfurt Vorlesungen about the text. The two texts yield interesting comparisons because of the similarities in their central issues. Both texts are written by dedicated socialist authors who examine women in war situations. Both have not only complicated title characters, but also a host of secondary women characters (Brecht's heroic Katrin, and Wolf's missing Helen or seduced Polyxena) who help to round out the possible options of the female paradigms suggested by each author. In addition, both texts focus on women as readers and interpreters of signs--of economic, military, spiritual, and psychological semiotic systems. They also focus on the moral decisions made by women in war contexts. Like Katrin, Kassandra attempts to sound a moral as well as military alarm and she, too, pays with her life for the gesture. The two women also share the experience of being silenced--Katrin because of her muteness and Kassandra because of an external imposition of silence to curb her political effect. And finally, both texts are intent upon deflating the heroic tradition as well as examining mentalities that promote and sustain war.

The differences in the Brecht and Wolf texts prove equally enlightening. The generic difference between Brecht's drama and Wolf's narrative and essays is compounded by Wolf's use of a fleeting first person narrator. This narrator, who is clearly a contemporary of the reader and whom we suspect is Wolf herself, becomes the classical Kassandra in her own historical period. This merging of

the modern female writer with her classical prophetic counterpart raises questions about the place of the woman author in the modern world, in the GDR, and in the human world in general; it focuses on the historical problem of the woman interpreter of signs and events who is ignored by her contemporaries. The ignoring of certain aspects of women's roles may well prove central to the Brecht text as well.

Given the importance of both Brecht and Wolf for the GDR and the history of its development as a socialist state, such an examination of their differing attitudes towards women and towards a female paradigm proves particularly interesting.

Brecht and the Oriental Other

Shuhsi Kao, University of California at Los Angeles

In the Western epistemological perspective, the Oriental component plays a crucial though intermittent and often hidden role in the formation and production of a certain kind of theoretical reflection on literary writing. Starting from information presented in recent works by Foucault, Baudrillard, Lyotard, and, tangentially, Derridas and Barthes, I study the place occupied by Brechtian thought and writing in the emergence and survival of what I call the Oriental epistemological myth in the collective Western imagination since at least the turn of the seventeenth century. In my reading of certain texts (Me-Ti and several poems), which I will show to be symptomatic examples, Brecht's contribution to the configuration of this epistemological myth is revealed. Within this configuration, the Oriental component has an essentially functional and structural nature in that it constitutes the figure of otherness. Thus, in Brecht's work, it is not so much a matter of understanding as of producing--producing a process and reflection on this process by means of the presence of the Oriental Other.

(translated from the French by Randa J. Duvick, Valparaiso University)

The International Brecht Society

CONFERENCE REPORT:

BRECHT: THIRTY YEARS AFTER
International Conference and Theatre Festival
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, October 1986

Session & Performance Reviews
by Glenda Frank (New York)

I. MARTIN ESSLIN: BRECHT AND ACTING

Incisive and intellectually sophisticated as always, Martin Esslin placed Brecht's acting theory within its historical matrix before evaluating it in terms of the social significance of drama.

Commanding the skills that he had honed at the BBC, Esslin analyzed and demonstrated the styles of contemporary acting Brecht reacted against in formulating his theories: the "purple patches" of the declamatory, the "nervous naturalistic" delivery spoken against the rhythm of the verse, the emphatic expressionistic method, and the grandiloquence of the Nazi style; all of which assaulted the senses and blinkered the intellect.

On the positive side, Brecht developed his Gestus from the casualness of the cabaret, Frank Wedekind's unpretentious but impressive and effective walking through lines, and the direct demonstration and pleasure in skill of the circus performer, which lead to the historization of performance and non-empathic distancing (Verfremdungseffekt).

Reiterating that his recounting of the genesis of Brecht's style was to lay the factual basis for critical assessment, Esslin applied and evaluated the Brechtian theory. Affirming that when performance follows theory the productions have been aesthetically superior, he identified an ideological void: the plays do not create converts to Marxism. The theory, he continued, remains raw material, designed to make audiences sit up and take notice. The question of the medium as the message (the Brechtian tenet that the actors must interpret their roles from the political left) not only excludes the obvious talents of performers of other political persuasions but confuses style with content. It is the content in plays like The Caucasian Chalk Circle that is political--"in every word, gesture, and (piece of) music."

Brecht's theories of acting have proven especially effective in handling Shakespearean tragedies by incorporating a critical stance (woman as property in Othello, for example, does not preclude or predict jealousy as inevitability).

In conclusion, Esslin reinstated Brecht in the long line of dominant German theatrical directors, recalled that Brecht's acting theories have been condemned by the Communist Party, and praised the theories for their aesthetic effectiveness in combining skillful concentration with a relaxed aplomb.

II. ACADEMIC SESSION NO. 7:

Karen Laughlin (Florida State University):
 "Brechtian Theory: Feminist Theater"

Janelle Reinelt (California State University at Sacramento):
 "Brechtian Feminist Drama: Brecht and Caryl Churchill"

Surveying contemporary English-speaking feminist politicized theater for Brechtian tracings, Ms. Laughlin canvassed the playwrights while Ms. Reinelt, focusing on the writings of British playwright Caryl Churchill, adopted a more theoretical/analytic stance. The contrastive approaches of these well-researched, well-structured theses were complementary and defined the field.

Ms. Laughlin's text was liberally sprinkled with quotations from feminist writers (Roberta Sklar, Karen Malpede, et. al) and Brecht's theoretical writings. Her observations were categorical. Among the direct tracings were adaptations ("Rape," a woman's interpretation of "The Exception and the Rule"); cross-gender casting (Myrna Lamb's "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" in which gender-related attitudes are objectified by male pregnancy); casting and costuming as alienation devices (the females in Churchill's "Vinegar Tom" transform from the victims of a witch hunt into male apologists in formal Edwardian attire); historicizing to distance the social process ("Signs of Life;" Churchill's "Top Girls"); the personal into the political (sexism in the language of the typical American family in Megan Terry's "The King's English for Queens"); and episodic structuring (Louise Page's "Tissue," a 50-scene approach to one woman's breast cancer).

The extensive scope of Ms. Laughlin's documentation did not permit a selective critical stance. The next step would be an evaluation of the viability of these influences and their comparative effectiveness on Brechtian and feminist subject matter.

Ms. Reinelt identified three major areas of Brechtian influence in Caryl Churchill's work: rupturing the seamless narrative to permit the question of inevitability; exposing the ideological construction behind actions; and deconstructing the integrity of characters in order to expose contradictions. Arguing that feminist drama that portrays women as Essential Beings is trapped in a limited universe and citing Brecht's theoretical concurrence, the scholar posited the critical stance that works of art be judged by the suitability of apparatus. Among those explored in Churchill's works are transhistorical fields of being; the past as indicative of the impermanence of the present; historicizing gender relationships; juxtapositioning and decoupage to alienate realistic fragments of contemporary life. In a letter to the author, Caryl Churchill denied a studied knowledge of Brechtian theories but affirmed an informal influence.

A member of the audience identified the impact of the cultural nexus on communication. When Caryl Churchill's plays cross the Atlantic they do not meet a reciprocal tradition of feminist socialist drama and are greeted as the works of either an individual artist or a feminist and are subsequently subject to misinterpretation.

III. "MACHI'S BLOOD"

by Franz Xaver Kroetz
October 22-26, 1986

Director Peter Hinton's offering at the Brecht: Thirty Years After International Theatre Festival and Conference of "Mishi's Blood" at the Crow's Theater (Toronto) was particularly interesting for the combination of Horváthian linguistic disintegration with Brechtian Gestus.

This 15-scene play about the brutalization of a lower-class woman resulting in an on-stage abortion that leads to her death is uncomfortable, unpleasant and of limited audience appeal. Women in the audience, sickened by the abusive husband-wife relationship typical of Kroetz' work and by the bathtub scene where Michi encourages physical pain and the insertion into her womb of household chemicals, have walked out in the middle of the play.

Following Horváth, Kroetz depicted a "language no longer able to summon up the recollection of what was originally meant" ("Hörvath von heute für heute," Theater heute 12/12 (December 1971), 13) but replaced Horváth's middle-class protagonists with the proletariat. Dialogue repeats, turning on itself in direct contradiction to meaning like a stunned cry afraid to find words and all the more poignant for its surface deceptions. The young couple, tied together by mutual inability, act out a drama like marionettes doomed to move through futile motions toward happiness. The audience, distanced by repulsion for the unsavory couple and by their horrific situation, is forced to ask questions not only about legal abortion but about eugenics. Light years from Brecht's pastoral attitude toward motherhood, Kroetz raises unwelcome issues with unflinching insistence.

Peter Hinton's Brechtian production extends the puppet metaphor to all of society. As the audience crosses center stage to its seats, it passes a silent yuppie couple, rooted to the stage, almost touching, gesturing like wind-up toys in response to changing radio broadcasts. Funny at first, the performance (Hinton's addition to the two-person cast) soon becomes terrifying; the familiar is rendered strange in true Brechtian fashion, not to stimulate thought but to jolt recognition. Hammering home the message, settings have been localized to specific parks, streets, and subway lines in Toronto.

This silent couple (the manipulators), this mirror of ourselves, becomes on-stage voyeurs with comic input: donating change to Michi at the public telephone, peering from the kitchen at the couple in bed. Their clean-cut appearance is the yard-stick for further condemning the proletarian couple. Their total lack of language becomes not a deficiency but the audience's silence as auditors and a space in which our own vocabularies are inserted against the couple's stammering attempts at communication. Far from culinary theater, even compassion is absent.

Peter Hinton is a young, highly gifted Canadian director. This is not a production that is easily forgotten.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES & SYMPOSIA

Internationaler Brecht-Dialog 1988:
"BRECHT--KUNST UND LEBENSKUNST/BRECHT--ART AND THE ART OF LIVING"
Berlin/GDR, February 9-14, 1988

Sponsored by the Brecht-Zentrum der DDR,
Werner Hecht, Director

Highlights of the International Brecht Dialogue 1988 include: an exhibition "Ten Years of the GDR Brecht-Center;" ceremonies at Brecht's gravesite in the Dorotheenstädtischer Friedhof and at the Berliner Ensemble; the unveiling of Fritz Cremer's new Brecht monument; presentation of the first volumes of the new Brecht edition (Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe in 30 Bänden); opening of the exhibition "Brecht in the Graphic Arts" at the Akademie der Künste der DDR; theatre seminars on "Brecht: Art & Society" ("Theatre and the Transformation of the World," "Reason in our Time"); discussion sessions on "Brecht: 'Dead Dog' or Living Classic?" and "Brecht and Theatre Life in the 1980's;" dialogue sessions on "Reason at the Turn of the Millenium" (the role of the mass media, artistic production, and post-modernism); International Symposium of the GDR-AITA Center, "Amateur Theater: Creativity for a Meaningful Life" Seminar on Brecht in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; plus several film retrospectives and theater performances by local companies or guest performers. For more information write: Dr. Werner Hecht, Director, Brecht-Zentrum der DDR, DDR-1040 Berlin, Chausseestraße 125, GDR.

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Portland State University, Portland, Oregon
April 1988:

BRECHT'S GALILEO--THEATER FESTIVAL AND SYMPOSIUM
Heinz-Uwe Haus, Director

The Portland State University "Galileo-Project" will be a first in several respects: While Heinz-Uwe Haus has directed a number of successful Brecht productions in the United States, this will be his first engagement with a professional theater company, Portland's NEW ROSE THEATER, strengthened by several distinguished Equity actors. It will also be The New Rose Theater's first major production designed for and performed in Portland's new Center for the Performing Arts. Heinz-Uwe Haus will be Artist-in-Residence from January through April 1988. The production is scheduled for April 1st-17th. Michael Griggs, Artistic Director of The New Rose Theater, has secured a grant from the Portland Metropolitan Arts Commission in support of the Galileo-Project which will not be confined to the theater. In particular, The Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) is planning planetarium shows on astronomy and the skies at the time of Galileo. There will be an accompanying teacher's guide, and actors from the production will participate in OMSI presentations. In addition, OMSI will provide materials and notes for part of the production program and will host several post-performance discussions of the play. Depending upon funding, a series of symposia will also be held during the weeks prior to the production:

February 15th "Galileo and his Science"

February 22nd "Galileo and the Social Responsibility of the Artist"

February 29th "The Social and Political Implications of Galileo's Science"

March 7th "Galileo: The Play and the Issues it Raises"

Scholars from local colleges and universities as well as from elsewhere will participate in these symposia, which are being coordinated by Professor William Tate of the Portland State University Theatre Arts Department. Mr. Tate is also in charge of coordinating other supportive activities, seminars, and workshops at Lewis and Clark College, Portland State University, Reed College, and The University of Portland.

Heinz-Uwe Haus writes: "the focus of the Galileo-Project will be to show that the contradictions in Brecht's Galileo-figure reflect the antagonistic characteristics of our time, which cannot be kept in check by a heroic individual ready to assume responsibility . . . without a democratic political movement, which stands up against the power apparatus of the state."

(Editor's note: See the commentary "Gedanken v o r einer Inszenierung des "Leben des Galilei" 1988 in den USA" by Heinz-Uwe Haus which appears on the following pages.)

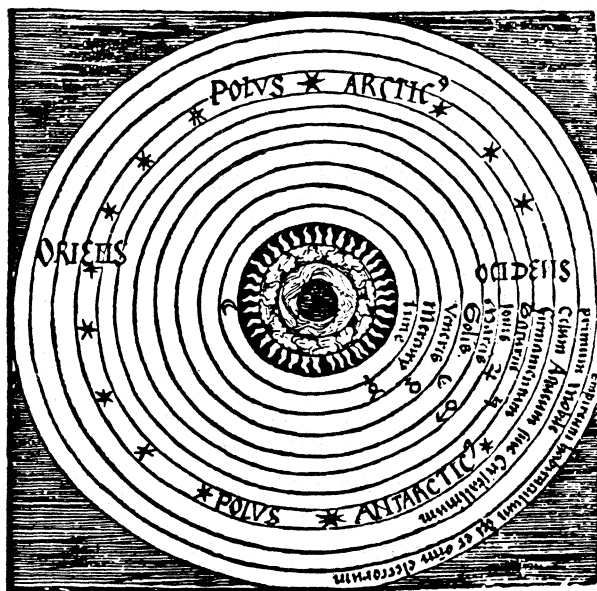


Diagram of the Universe according to the Ptolemaic System,
after an illustration in Reisch's *Margarita Philosophica* of 1508

GEDANKEN V O R EINER INSZENIERUNG
DES LEBEN DES GALILEI
1988 IN DEN USA

By Heinz-Uwe Haus

1. Unter dem Eindruck der Atombombenexplosion von Hiroshima veränderte Brecht im amerikanischen Exil 1945/46 das 1938 in Dänemark--noch vor Hahns und Straßmanns Mitteilung ihrer Ergebnisse über die gelungene Spaltung des Urankerns--geschriebene und 1943 am Zürcher Schauspielhaus aufgeführte Stück Galileo Galilei. Jener frühe Galilei kann weder mit Geradlinigkeit noch gleich auf dem ersten besten Wege die Vernunft durchsetzen, List, Durchhaltevermögen, illegales Verhalten sind vonnöten, um die Gratwanderung zwischen Taktik und Kapitulation halbwegs ohne geistigen und seelischen Schaden durchzustehen. Zwar bleibt nicht viel vom Triumphgefühl, mit dem er in den Kampf gezogen ist, doch fällt er trotz bitterer Erfahrungen nicht zurück in die alte Zeit: angeschlagen, aber nicht zerbrochen, besteht er vor sich und der Geschichte. Dieses eher universelle und hauptsächlich durch die aktuellen Hemnisse für einen wirksameren Antifaschismus motivierte Thema wird scharf eingegrenzt in der amerikanischen Fassung: wie besteht der Wissenschaftler, der die Wahrheit weiß, in schwierigen Zeiten. Nunmehr läuft alles darauf hinaus: dieser Mann fällt der Menschheit im entscheidenden Moment in den Rücken. Das Augenmerk ist auf den Prozeß der geistigen Ver lumpung, des Vorkommens, des Abstiegs gelenkt, Regie- und Schauspielkunst sind angehalten die Widersprüche hart und auf Kosten der Sympathie, die aufkommt, wenn der Fall Galilei tragische Züge annimmt, hervorzukehren. Während Brecht eigener Inszenierungsvorbereitungen 1954/56 in Berlin wird mit der vorherrschenden politischen Psychologie abgerechnet: "Er setzt provokant den Ruf seines Helden aufs Spiel" (Engel). Schrecken, der zum Erkennen nötig ist, wird zum "Furchtzentrum" der Figur--Brecht wird die Angst nicht los, daß Galileis "Selbstanalyse . . . von dem Darsteller dazu mißbraucht werden (könne), mit Hilfe von Selbstvorwürfen den Helden dem Publikum sympathisch zu machen."

2. Ein Widerspruch wie der zwischen der relativen Selbstständigkeit des wissenschaftlichen Werkes und der Unteilbarkeit von Erkenntnis und Haltung ist angesichts von Tschernobyl, Pershings und SS-20, Genforschung und bakteriologischen Waffen von existentieller Bedeutung. (Heute und hier kann nicht Dorts These, wonach das Stück die Tragödie des modernen Sozialismus--die Trennung von Wissen und Macht--beschreibe, aufgegriffen werden. Ebenso wenig sollte das auffällig Autobiographische den Zugang motivieren.) Die Frage ist nicht mehr und noch nicht wieder die der "dänischen Fassung:" was wiegt schwerer, das gesamte durchgestandene Leben oder das Versagen in einem entscheidenden Augenblick? "Geistige Brillanz in verdreckter Ausgabe" (Mittenzwei) ist das programmierte Modell im Computerzeitalter für die Selbstrechtfertigung der Kapitulation. Galilei erkaufte sich seine wissenschaftliche Betätigung am Ende mit Handlangerdiensten. Schamlos prostituiert er seinen Intellekt. Das List-der-Vernunft-Gehabe entpuppt sich als Ver brechertum. Brechts Probenstreit mit Busch über das Maß der Eindeutigkeit und Ungeheuerlichkeit des Fehlverhaltens des Forschers scheint weniger mit der Dialektik von Theatralik, sondern mehr mit der objekti-

ven Hilf- und Ratlosigkeit angesichts der universalen Zukunftsangst zu tun zu haben. Brechts Verlangen--"Man muß das Volk vor sich selbst erschrecken lehren, um ihm Courage zu machen"--ermöglicht eine erweiterte Auffassung von Gestus: die Metapher wird die Gegenstrategie zur allegorischen Darstellug im Tableau. Der "absonderbare Vorgang unter Menschen" (Organon) macht nurmehr Sinn, wenn die dialektisch argumentierende Aufklärung in ihm immer auch den prinzipiellen Zweifel ermöglicht, auf den Schiller bestand: "Kann aber der Mensch dazu bestimmt sein, über irgendeinem Zwecke sich selbst zu versäumen?" (Sechster Brief über ästhetische Erziehung). Alle Aufmerksamkeit ist auf die Mechanismen der staatlichen Gegenaufklärung zu richten. Die Schlußpointe der 14. Szene sollte als doktrinaire Ideologie in Frage gestellt werden. Konsequent sind die überindividuellen Verhältnisse in den Blickpunkt und ins Bild zu rücken.

3. Zweifelsohne überschätzt der leidenschaftliche Ideologe Brecht die geschichtliche Tragweite der Sozialethik von Wissenschaftlern. Der Regisseur und Dramaturg in ihm, der mit Laughton und Busch den ästhetischen und leiblichen Sinnenreichtum der Figur entdeckt, aber wollen es anders; "Indem sie auf der entfalteten Körpersprache Galileis insistieren, hinterließen sie der Bühne die Chance, den sinnlichen Überlebenswillen Galileis vor den Zumutungen eines lebensfeindlichen Fortschrittspathos in Schutz zu nehmen" (Sautermeister). Solche Ko-Existenz von Widersprüchen spiegelt die antagonistischen Wesenszüge unseres Zeitalters wider, das nicht durch heroische Individualverantwortung und opferbereiten Vernunftglauben in die Schranken verwiesen werden kann. Dafür das Bewußtsein zu schärfen ist wichtiger als die "Kriminalisierung" der Figur, die eher die objektive Macht des heutigen Staats und seine Wissenschaftspolitik verharmlost. Vielmehr hat die Erkenntnis Spiel-Raum zu bekommen, daß der hippokratische Eid ohne eine demokratische politische Bewegung gegen den Machtapparat des Staats zu wenig ist, ja zu den Privilegien moderner Opfermoral gehört. Selbst wenn man Galileis nachträgliche Überzeugung ernst nähme, daß er "einige Jahre (...) lang ebenso stark wie die Obrigkeit" gewesen sei, würde, wie Sautermeister sagt, "doch das Subjektiv-Zufällige dadurch nicht aufgehoben, vielmehr zur Farce gesteigert; nun hinge der Geschichtsverlauf nicht nur von der menschlich verständlichen Todesfurcht eines Individuums ab, sondern zu allem Überfluß auch noch von einer zufälligen Fehleinschätzung der persönlichen Situation." In jeder Hinsicht ist möglicher Dialektik auf die Spur zu kommen. Die Vorgänge und Verhalten leben aus den Widersprüchen von Intention und Material, von Text und Wirklichkeit. Es ist die Frage, wie aus dem Mausoleum das Laboratorium, aus abgebrochener Dialektik soziale Fantasie, aus dem "So-und-nicht-anders" eine aktuelle "Bildbeschreibung" initiiert werden kann.

4. Ängste, die nur verdrängt sind, bleiben. Furcht ist nur durch die Konfrontation mit ihr zu überwinden. Die Bildtheatralik selber kann Instrument des Fortschritts sein; die "Sinnggebung" muß pluralisiert und demokratisch "nach unten" an die Zuschauer delegiert werden. Das Interesse sollte den blinden Stellen des Werkes gelten. Nebenfiguren, Seitenstränge der Handlung, die Frauengestalten sind gegen die thematisch-ästhetische Autorität der Modelle zu behaupten. Die Herausforderung der Brechtschen Dramaturgie liegt zwischen ihrer (literarischen) Zerstörung und ihrem (theatralischen) Wiederaufbau, Kausalitäten sind (vorübergehend) zu beurlauben. Seit dreißig Jahren lernen wir durch Schrecken.

5. Beweisen läßt sich nur, daß man im Irrtum ist. Der Platonische Größenwahn hat die Wahrheitssuche zur Inquisition und die Bewegung zum Stillstand erzogen. Suchen wir den "bewegten Raum," den die Thrust-Stage ermöglicht; entorten wir die Figur, indem Gesten, Stimme und Bewegung getrennt werden. Spielen wir an gegen die ordnende Zentralperspektive, verliert die "Bühne" die geometrische Ordnung und wird zum rhythmischen Raum.

6. Theaterarbeit, wie sie Brecht versteht, kann nur erfolgreich sein im unmittelbaren Kontakt mit der gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit und ihren Veränderungen. Diese Spannungen werden in dem Maße fruchtbar, wie das Ursprungs- und das Wirkungsfeld Brechts konfrontiert und im Vorgang dieser Konfrontation auf ihre mögliche Einheit und ihren notwendigen Widerspruch befragt werden. Alle Philosophie und alles Handwerk werden nur einen Zweck zu dienen haben; der Entdeckung und Abbildung des Einflusses der Verhältnisse auf das Verhalten.

Im Herbst 1987

The Director in Perspective...

Bertolt Brecht

Chaos, According to Plan

John Fuegi

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BLOOM, BRECHT, AND THE BIG MAC:

B.B. and The Closing of the American Mind

In correspondence with the Editor, several readers have noted the reference to Brecht in Allan Bloom's bestselling, widely discussed, and intensely disputed book The Closing of the American Mind. Together with the latest abuse of the famous Brecht/Weill "Ballad of Mack the Knife" from The Three-Penny Opera as the basis of a television commercial for M cDonald's "Big Mac" hamburger, the following material taken from a variety of sources does indeed provide--the double-pun be pardoned--some genuine food for thought . . .

COMMENTARY: BRECHT IN AMERICA--

A FRONT MAN FOR NIETZSCHE AND NIHILISM, SAYS ALLAN BLOOM

by Lee Baxandall

An astonishing new chapter in the intellectual reception of Brecht occurs with the publication of The Closing of the American Mind by Allan Bloom (Simon and Schuster, 1987). A neo-conservative professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago, Bloom heartened his elders at the Washington Times, The New York Times, The New Republic and Commentary with his tome, which promptly shot to the top of the bestseller charts at the Times (the New York one, not the one launched by the Rev. Moon). Prof. Bloom traces the liberalization and a detested "liberalism" of average Americans in the street as well as in New York trendy circles to German intellectual origins and those, in turn, to Friedrich Nietzsche. That great anti-authoritarian scoffer is held responsible by Bloom for sponsoring contemporary nihilism--to him, the equivalent of a destruction, undermining, or loss of absolute (positive) values.

For many of us moderns, Nietzsche was merely the messenger of the news of the real and permanent state of affairs, the prophet who told the religious and state authoritarians that their absolute values were continuously contradicting each other. The contradictions occur because the "absolute" values are not truly so, and are only meant to appear so, bolstering the various heterogenous regimes displaying unreconciled traditions and spectacles of power. Nietzsche pointed out that philosophers and theologians of absolute values were a main support of absolutism in economics and politics, by which the masses had been held in thrall for millennia.

This "revaluation of all values" begot a revolution in values, as Nietzsche encouraged moderns to think for themselves and to realize that to live in history is to accept historicism--i.e., the relativism of values.

Not for Bloom, however, is this acceptable. A century after Nietzsche's major writings Bloom decided to lead a counter-revolution back to absolute values--and to absolutism in politics--for an America that could not be relied upon to follow its leaders.

In this context of academic recidivism, one is amused, and astonished, to find Bloom's tortuous reading of "Mackie Messer" in a Chapter entitled "The German Connection." It turns out now to have been Brecht's gloss upon a bloody passage in Nietzsche!

Indeed, Bloom seems to shudder as he reminds us of "the smiling face of Louis Armstrong as he belts out the words of his great hit 'Mack the Knife.' As most American intellectuals know, it is a translation of the song 'Mackie Messer' from The Threepenny Opera (1928), a monument of Weimar Republic popular culture, written by two heroes of the artistic Left, playwright Bertolt Brecht and composer Kurt Weill. There was a strange nostalgia among many of the American intelligentsia for this moment just prior to Hitler's coming to power, and Lötte Lenya's rendition of this song has long stood with Marlene Dietrich's singing 'Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuss auf Liebe eingestellt' in the Blue Angel as the symbol of a charming, neurotic, sexy, decadent longing for some hazy fulfillment not quite present to the consciousness. Less known to our intelligentsia is a story in Nietzsche's Thus Spake Zarathustra (a book well known to Brecht) entitled 'On the Pale Criminal,' which tells of a neurotic murderer eerily resembling Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment, who does not know, cannot know, that he committed a murder out of a motive as legitimate as any other and useful in many important situations, but delegitimized in our pacific times: He lusted after 'the joy of the knife'" (p. 151).

The unremarked elitist assumption, the guilt-by-association, the irresponsible leaps of logic exhibited by Bloom in this paragraph might qualify him for a "C" in a good philosophy class. But in the well-financed neo-con presses and journals of our land and time, Bloom is having his Bloomsday.

Bloom heaps a terrible guilt upon poor Louis Armstrong as the unsuspecting agent of a devious European relativism: "This scenario for 'Mack the Knife' is the beginning of the supramoral attitude of expectancey, waiting to see what the volcano of the id will spew forth, which appealed to Weimar sophisticates and their American admirers. Everything is all right as long as it is not fascism!" (p. 151). (Bloom's cohorts elsewhere make a strong case that poor fascism and Hitler have been misunderstood; the right was right about Communism; etc.) Bloom concludes on the Brecht matter:

"With Armstrong taking Lenya's place, as Mai Britt took Dietrich's, it is all mass-marketed and the message becomes less dangerous, although no less corrupt. All awareness of foreignness disappears. It is thought to be folk culture, all-American, part of the American century, just as 'stay loose' (as opposed to uptight) is supposed to have been an insight of rock music and not a translation of Heidegger's Gelassenheit. The historical sense and the distance on our times, the only advantages of Weimar nostalgia, are gone, and American self-satisfaction--the sense that the scene is ours, that we have nothing important to learn about life from the past--is served" (p. 151-152).

Of course, Bloom seeks not a sense of history but the tradition that sanctifies a ruling-class absolutism of rules. It is startling to have it turn up now. But the anxieties of living with an awareness of relativism call up many dreams of monsters and saviours. Bloom will have his day.

BLOOM, BRECHT, THE BIG MAC, AND BIG MONEY

Commenting further on Bloom's book, Lee Baxandall writes: "Allan Bloom is disturbed in thinking that Louis Armstrong unwittingly and insidiously smuggled Nietzschean doctrine into American pop culture, via Brecht's lyrics to 'Mack the Knife.' Bloom surely is having a cerebral-vascular accident now that McDonald's fast food uses 'Mack the Knife' as its new theme song as reported in Advertising Age, August 31, 1987:"

AD REVIEW

Could that someone be Mac the burger?

By BOB GARFIELD

Ronald McDonald meets Bertolt Brecht. Lord have mercy.

What we have here, in McDonald's Corp.'s new campaign, is the man in the moon playing the piano and lyrically imploring otherwise sensible adults to eat dinner beneath the Golden Arches.

The campaign is called "Mac Tonight," a loving send-up of "Mack the Knife," Bobby Darin, lame-clad lounge singers, overproduced TV commercials and who knows what else.

These three 30-second spots, created by Davis, Johnson, Mogul & Colombatto, Los Angeles, don't constitute an umbrella corporate campaign. They're much more narrowly targeted.

But they're apparently getting the lion's share of the media money for a while, and that is remarkable—partly because they weren't done by Leo Burnett USA, Chicago, and partly because conventional wisdom says they're all wrong.

It's true. They just don't fit.

They're technically flawed, somewhat dangerous and probably derivative.

They're also in large measure brilliant—proof yet again that Oak Brook, Ill.-based McDonald's doesn't always do the boring and predictable advertising that's expected of it.

The visual environment is a cartoonlike fantasy world. You've got your dark blue, starry night sky. You've got your piano floating by on an enormous, plaster Big Mac. You've got your man with a crescent-moon head singing to the tune of "Mack the Knife."

"When the clock strikes . . . half past six, Babe,

Turn to head for . . . golden lights. Hey!

It's a good time . . . for that great taste,

(Dinner!)

At McDonald's . . . it's Mac tonight!"

The singer is a real man in a fabricated moon head, so it appears the thing was done either with a laboratory matte process or very deft

Chromakey work. Either way, for a McDonald's commercial it's amazingly weird and surrealistic.

(But not so much so that it doesn't have the requisite product shots.)

The twist is the McDonald's burgers are popping, cuckoo-style, from a big, backlit town clock.)

OK, so maybe the combination of animation and an old standard vocal number are reminiscent of a certain raisin campaign. And, sure, the moon man's mouth syncs poorly with the music. And his lighting is a little awkward—so sometimes his head looks luminescent white and sometimes it looks like fabric stretched over a crescent-shaped wire frame.

I'll even grant you McDonald's is taking a possibly reckless risk. After dressing up clowns, giving away toys and otherwise wooing children for 25 years, McDonald's and its spooky moon man might now wind up scaring the bejeezus out of 40 million very important customers.

But all of that is overshadowed by a simple North-ian fact: "Mac Tonight" is a neat idea.

Market-dominating Hamburger Leviathans, of course, aren't supposed to be imaginative and surprising. They're supposed to trot out smiling families-of-four and little kids with their baseball caps turned cockeyed.

It's a tried-and-true marketing principle that the leader need take no chances. Conservative brands maintain market share for years and years.

That is not, however, necessarily how to keep building market share—which is what McDonald's evidently has in mind.

Thus "Hand Warming" and thus "Mac Tonight," a character first introduced by DJM&C for the southern California McDonald's ad co-op and brought national against all bureaucratic odds.

Terrific advertising. (The sandwiches you can have.)#

WEILL, BRECHT, AND THE BIG MAC

Editor's Note

Of additional interest to the readership in this context is the lengthy editorial by Kim H. Kowalke, President of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, New York, defending the decision of the Foundation to permit McDonald's to use the "Moritat vom Mackie Messer" for its new commercial (see "Is Anyone Minding the Store?" Kurt Weill Newsletter 5/1 (Spring 1987), 4-5). Kowalke emphasizes that "this license required the approval of both Stefan Brecht and the Foundation. In this instance, as well as in all others where the Foundation had discretionary influence or control . . . we have followed a consistent policy derived from Weill's and (Lotte) Lenya's own precedents and explicit instructions. They both made clear cut distinctions between commercial exploitation of single popular songs (outside of the theater) and productions of theatrical or concert works as complete entities." Noting further that "Weill himself allowed, even urged his publishers on both sides of the Atlantic to promote and exploit individual 'popular works' in the mass market, Kowalke writes: "In the case of the McDonald's commercial, the Foundation's decision was guided specifically by Lenya's own authorization of a similar use of the song for a television commercial promoting Schlitz beer in 1964. Here again the record shows that Lenya allowed such use of individual songs capable of popular exploitation but consistently denied requests for similar usage of sections from Die sieben Todsünden and other large-scale works. Furthermore, it was our opinion that 'Mack the Knife' is by now virtually indestructible; its identity as the 'Moritat' in the context of Die Dreigroschenoper is not jeopardized by such usage; it has survived renditions far less respectful of musical values than the one in the McDonald's commercial. Indeed, the high production and musical values of the commercial may even have reinforced the prestige of the most famous of Weill's tunes. It would, however, be misleading to deny that the Foundation derives significant financial benefits from such usages. Since all of the Foundation's activities are supported solely by royalty income, such licenses allow us to subsidize performances, recordings, editions, scholarly publications, as well as support the grants and programs and the day-to-day operations and acquisitions of the Weill-Lenya Research Center." Something to keep in mind the next time you decide where to each lunch when you're in a hurry.

Elsewhere in the same issue of the Kurt Weill Newsletter (p. 2, "News in Brief"), the McDonald's piece is characterized as an "imaginative television commercial" which has been "wildly successful both in the marketplace and within the advertising industry" (witness the clip from Advertising Age reproduced above!). The Newsletter notice continues: "The commercial was filmed on a lavish soundstage (one of the most expensive ever constructed for a TV commercial) filled with 35-foot high french fries and the world's largest Big Mac (12 feet by 2 stories). The spot first aired on Southern California in January and is being picked up nationwide. The campaign, including two radio ads and a Spanish adaptation, continues through spring." Digest that, if you can. --Ed.

ARTICLES

CAN BRECHT BE RELEVANT?: CURRENT EXAMPLES OF BRECHT PRODUCTION IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Marna King, University of Wisconsin-Madison

There seems to be no end to the controversies which have faced the West German theatre concerning the production of Brecht on stage. The most recent, the question of Brecht's relevance to contemporary society, is a complex debate fueled in part by current Brecht criticism, in part by major West German theatre practitioners. The concerns can be grouped in four major categories: the general lack of social-political relevance of the works to contemporary society, the lack of necessary psychological depth in the treatment of character, the depiction of idealized women in traditional role models, and finally the restrictions on Brecht materials through rigid copyright control.

The issue of social and political relevance has been especially worrisome to theatre practitioners of the 1968 generation, those who are the directors and dramaturgs responsible for the relevant theatre of the 1970s. Their attitudes are of continuing influence due to their dominance of theatre in the 1980s. Important members of this generation such as Peter Stein, Ernst Wendt, and Jürgen Flimm believe that the dialectical solutions in Brecht's plays offer only simplistic half-truths no longer relevant to the complexities of a multi-faceted society. Further, these particular plays advocate change, a process in which many theatre artists in the Federal Republic no longer believe. (1)

Antony Tatlow, in his article entitled "The Way Ahead, II. Brecht and Post-modernism," effectively summarizes the criticisms concerning psychological simplification (before offering his own refutation): "... too many characters in his plays amount to mere allegorizations and are hence deprived of that which distinguishes and helps to constitute human experience--the unconscious. Lacking this necessary psychological depth, the work has insufficient capacity for reinterpretation. It contains no mysteries, everything is on the surface." (2)

The feminist concerns should be self-evident so I will move on to the issue of copyright control. The Imagist Theatre in West Germany is known for its oblique use of a written text. The omission or transposition of text, or the juxtaposition of other materials with the primary text, results in an eclectic, highly personalized production in which the team of Regisseur/Dramaturg/Bühnenbildner function as both author and director. The rigid enforcement of the copyright laws has kept such a production team from experimenting with a Brecht text as it would like.

Obviously, the viewpoints outlined above may well have influenced the choice of which Brecht text, if any, to place in a current Spielzeit. Once in the Spielzeit the production decisions might well be equally subject to the issues of relevancy. I propose to show the effect of such concerns on three Brecht productions I saw in West Germany, productions which premiered between 1981 and 1984.

Mother Courage and Her Children premiered at the Bochum Schauspielhaus on April 1, 1981. The director, Alfred Kirchner, stated his intentions for producing Mother Courage in a radio broadcast concerned with the problem of presenting Brecht on the contemporary West German stage: "... we played Mother Courage purely for contextual reasons, not formal ones ...; contextual reasons because war, rearmament, and weapon sales are very under-discussed right now, because we wanted to show what this play, which is an anti-war play, had to say in today's society." (3)

The program in the contemporary German theatre is to be considered part of the production. The Bochum publication featured graphic war images from more recent conflicts above the text of Brecht's Kriegsfibel of 1938-45. Included were key trigger images which signified the present preoccupation with the threat of nuclear power. Thus, before and after the performance, the audience was encouraged to think of Brecht's writing in contemporary contextual terms.

The performance took place on the stage of the Bochum Schauspielhaus at the present moment. To make its point, all props and set pieces had been transported from storage to stage without refurbishment. Other more blatant Lehrstück elements were introduced. In the prompter's position center-front sat a permanent cash register in which the coins from each of Mother Courage's business transactions were deposited. A blackboard was suspended above the platform to the left of the stage proscenium; a television monitor, on the platform to the right. Before the performance members of the cast were relaxing on stage in armchairs when suddenly on the television monitor flashed a newsclip of nuclear warheads being fired. No panic ensued. It was the regular nightly news with a voice over extolling the free world's nuclear and chemical arsenal. The actors gradually roused themselves from their indolent comfort after one of their group began to read from a text of Mother Courage. The ensemble then gathered around the rehearsal piano to sing Mother Courage's first song. Meanwhile several of the actors moved behind the piano to add costume pieces to their modern clothing. As one could see from the image of the Humpty Dumpty figure seated on the piano (he played the field commander in Episode Two), costumes for the production functioned as part modern conceit and part blatant theatrical expressionism.

The interpretation of Mother Courage's character had been structured to overcome feminist criticism of Brecht's depiction of women. Kirsten Dene portrayed Mother Courage as a youthful, unsentimental woman with a strong hunger for life. She combated the male structured world by adopting many of its characteristics. In "The Song of Capitulation," Courage wore levis and a man's suit jacket, thereby adding a blatant feminist aspect to the moment. The oblique sexual overtones Brecht had introduced into the Courage/cook relationship were made overt. Theater heute critic Stefanie Carp described Episode Two in the following manner, "Courage's meeting with the cook is so erotic that only the words are about the price of a capon." (4)

The epic structure of the text was randomly interrupted by more direct teaching methods. Before the performance an actor with a paint spray can scrawled "für den 3. Weltkrieg" on the blackboard. During the performance, Death was introduced as a character. He first appeared in Episode Three singing one of the Brecht songs; thereafter, he was silent, his mimed commentary in counterpoint to the action. In Episode Eight, Death entered in sunglasses and protective sungear wearing huge links of fat German sausages around his neck. He assumed a grim watch over the destruction on the battlefield below.

The effect of the Bochum production was dependent upon the power of individual moments rather than, as in traditional Brecht, the continual culminative response to the parable. The most riveting of such moments occurred when a genuine Fiat G-19 descended from the fly-loft. Katrin and the audience both watched in horror as the guy wires lowered the fighter bomber. Here before their very eyes was an actual war machine--with a past history of destruction. As Katrin struck the plane repeatedly in hopeless despair, the audience too felt its invincibility. Two sharpshooters efficiently silenced Katrin with a volley of rifle fire. In another deliberate departure from the text, Katrin's body remained on stage while Mother Courage exited singing her song in stubborn, defiant tones. Kirchner had constructed a final contextual statement in visual terms. The spectator was left with the image of Katrin's corpse being watched over by Death, overladen with plenty. Brecht's intention--to make the audience aware that Courage had learned nothing--had been enlarged to include the audience in a direct indictment.

The next production we will examine is the Deutsches Schauspielhaus presentation of Puntila und sein Knecht Matti, which premiered in Hamburg on December 7, 1983. The demonstrative nature of the Brecht aesthetic remained dominant in the staging and Bühnenbild. Susanne Raschig designed a set which was starkly functional yet capable of that poetic sweep Brecht felt a necessary part of the play's landscape. Her use of pleasant but fairly neutral color in the set and costumes softened the harshness of the scenic Gestus. For example the horizon cyclorama was painted in striated, sky-blue diagonals while the large moveable platform on which much of the action was staged reminded one of a circus ring with its edge rimmed in red. In general, the costume aesthetic mirrored the simple emphatic shapes of the original Berliner Ensemble model; however, only Puntila's rumpled lounge suit was constructed of felt in the Hamburg production. (5) The color and texture of Puntila's suit helped to characterize him as a disreputable, weatherbeaten Puck. When drunk, Puntila seemed an incorrigible child, one clearly capable of charming the most hardened critic of his behavior.

An antique touring car occupied a central position on the rear platform. Although the placement was stationary, visibility and position were variable, the vehicle turning magically on its own private turntable. As in Peter Palitsch's 1965 production in Cologne, the touring car had become a strong visual symbol of Puntila's eccentric nature. (6) With this expensive toy, continual escape from his responsibilities remained a constant possibility for Puntila. In fact, until Puntila and Matti arrived at his farm in episode five, the car was the only means of entrance or exit for either character. Since the journey itself had become the link between scenes, the folk song oleos were eliminated.

The director, Frank-Patrick Steckel, took full advantage of all opportunities for farce within the framework of Brecht's characters and situations. He added to the fun by making the car a performer during scene transitions. It gleefully showed off its ancient technology to the accompaniment of tinselled music from the 1930s. To be sure, both the inherent and the added farcical qualities provided entertainment, but they did so without detracting from the singular focus of the production--the relationship between Puntila and his chauffeur, Matti.

Steckel streamlined the text to isolate for study Puntila's fluctuating behavior patterns. Matti's reluctant fascination with Puntila drew the audience

into his own careful examination of Puntila's erratic conduct. The casting of Puntila and Matti greatly enriched the confrontation. As an actor Ulrich Wildgruber is capable of registering as many emotions in an instant as a cat; therefore, he could portray Puntila basically on a farcical level while exposing glimpses of layered Angst beneath. Christian Redl as Matti served as the perfect foil for the volitale Wildgruber. Redl absorbed what he observed with an intense stolidity which kept the tension of their relationship taut. Also, Redl's impenetrable facade kept the contest stylistically within a Brechtian mode of performance.

The epic text was reduced to two hours of playing time with extensive internal cuts diminishing the importance of other plot incidents. The Eva/Matti duel was diluted to several short demonstrations of incompatibility. The emphasis on worker oppression was also diminished. Red Surkkala and his family were removed as well as Matti's last lines on workers rising to revolt for the Hamburg production placed relentless focus on one particular capitalist and proletarian.

As the farcical elements gradually reduced, the audience witnessed a corresponding transformation in Puntila's image. For the engagement festivities in Part II, Puntila appeared as a gentleman attired in well cut evening clothes. This meant that his behavioral digressions now had a realistic visual reference thereby allowing the audience more empathy with the character. Throughout the production Puntila's reactions continued to register on many levels of meaning, while the characters around him registered their responses in a flat surface dimension. After the engagement party the audience was shown many glimpses of the child-man with his vulnerability painfully exposed. Contrary to the text Puntila remained drunk. He was never again seen in a sober state--a major point when one thinks of the alienating effect of Puntila's cruelty while sober. The plot shifted directly to the building of the imaginary mountain the next morning. Farm hands and household servants placed the moveable platform on edge. After Puntila and Matti climbed the tables-and-chairs-mountain, Puntila lapsed into a semi-conscious reverie. When Matti exited, the comatose Puntila was stranded high above the floor like a beached whale. As the bottle dropped from his hand, the curtain fell. The audience was left to ponder Matti's decision. Abandonment remained the only logical conclusion given the psychological and social makeup of the two main characters, yet was it the answer those of us in the audience would have chosen? As in so many productions on the contemporary West German stage, the presentation left the question unresolved.

While the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg was being renovated, one of its two performance locations was a former factory. It was here, at the Kampnagelfabrik, that a production of The Caucasian Chalk Circle premiered on November 3, 1984. The young director, Holger Berg, used both the program and the Bühnenbild to enclose the social-political significance of Brecht's work within a time frame long past. Brecht's familiar poem "An die Nachgeborenen" was reprinted for consideration. The last lines of each stanza appealed to the reader to look back on those gloomy times with Nachsicht--a word which can be translated as patience leniency or indulgence. When the audience member entered the converted theatre space he was confronted with rusted relics from this past. Behind the block of ramped seating, beside the audience aisle, an inside wall of the factory had been destroyed. Sitting within a gaping hole was the carcass of a German army jeep from World War II; astride the windshield, a corroded Nazi motorcycle. On stage sat an outmoded tractor. As the play began the tractor was pushed out of

the playing space joining several other pieces of rusted farm machinery nearby. Juxtaposed to the useless equipment were bright red Soviet flags and crude hand-lettered slogans.

As the prologue unfolded, winsome peasants earnestly discussed the disposition of their beloved valley with helpful young Soviet workers. When the singer arrived to teach them more about their decision through a fanciful fable, he was not the stern, sober teacher of the Berliner Ensemble model, but rather a handsome young Russian soldier with a maximum of musical comedy persona. His army comrades unhurriedly set up the gaily decorated arches for the play within a play. Throughout the performance these same Russian soldiers continued to cheerfully change the scenic elements. The deliberate stressing of such naive positive thinking juxtaposed to the visual result of that thinking effectively under the original social-political context of the fable. The stage was "set" for what Theater heute called "a Brecht operetta." (7)

The entrance of the Governor and his retinue in episode one immediately told the audience member he was in for an entertaining evening of vintage Brecht. The exploiters were suitably ridiculed and the foibles of both rich and poor isolated for ironic commentary. When one took a closer look there were, however, added ingredients not condoned by Brecht. The high social position of the court characters provided an excellent excuse for spectacle. Spectacle, in this sense, defines the use of extra embellishments which, though unnecessary for critical Brechtian commentary, delight the eye of the spectator. The sartorial embellishment of pattern and rich fabric on the Fat Prince and his incompetent Nephew was a prime example, yet the result--the grossly exaggerated nature of the caricature--fit within Brechtian tradition established by the model. Grusha, her brother and baby Michael illustrated a related tendency. Their costumes fairly radiated the charm of folk, a quality which Brecht hated. He wanted his poor characters to be garbed in functional, uninteresting clothing. The purpose of their garments was to depict the reality of their social position.

I do not mean to imply the action itself was re-interpreted in the Hamburg production. The staging remained harshly demonstrative. In the accompanying photograph one can see that Grusha was reduced to an extremely debilitated state following her flight through the mountains. The scenic Gestus pointedly revealed the callousness with which her brother and sister-in-law denied her needs; however, when the spectacle and folk qualities were superimposed on the Brechtian Gestus the nature of the criticism was blunted. The audience member could not then respond with the same degree of indignation to a scene which allowed him to be distracted by the beauty of a lacquered table or the pattern in a rug.

The depiction of the fable's two major characters did not depart from tradition. Grusha was portrayed as an uncomplicated young woman whose decisions were governed by the age old values Brecht stressed in his female characters, while Azdak continued to embody the hedonistic, asocial characteristics which Brecht allowed only to outsiders regarded as closed off from society. The program prints a biographical defense of Brecht's unconscious motives for the manner in which both characters are shaped. (8)

By defining Brecht as a classic author capable of being enjoyed for select values--in this case a comic yet darkly ironic view of human behavior--the director, Holger Berg, released his audience from the responsibility of critical action advocated by Brecht. They were free to embrace the production as a fond

old warhorse. They did so with enthusiasm throughout the four-hour performance. Each of the above productions made a fascinating evening of theatre out of its Brecht material. Each reflected an active engagement with the controversy of Brecht's relevance. In my presentation their solutions were offered as a starting point for discussion of the controversy.

Note to the Reader: Thirty production slides accompanied the original presentation of this material. The above article has been duly modified to compensate for the lack of those visual materials.

Footnotes

1. Igmarr Stomberg, trans., "Brecht--Only with the Hatchet? How Contemporary Directors in West Germany View Brecht and his Stageability Today," (Reprint of Interviews by Wolfgang M. Schwiedrzik, Cologne: Deutschlandfunk, 1981), Communications from the International Brecht Society 13/1, 20-26.

2. Antony Tatlow, "The Way Ahead, II. Brecht and Postmodernism," The Brecht Yearbook 12 (1983), 215-220.

3. Ibid., footnote 1, 25.

4. Stefanie Carp, "Zwei Frauen in Männerkriegen," Theater heute Heft 5 (1981), 28-31.

5. Ruth Berlau, ed. Theaterarbeit (Dresden, 1952), 363.

6. Ernst Wendt, "Wer wen? Palitzsch und Mink zeigen Puntilla," Theater heute, Heft 7 (1966), 38-40.

7. Peter von Becker, "Das Theater der Unalten," Theater heute Heft 3 (1985), 17.

8. Michael Schneider, "Bertolt Brecht--ein abgebrochener Riese," Literaturmagazin 10 (1978).

BRECHT ON THE MARGINS: FILM & FILM THEORY

Barton Byg, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

In considering Brecht's importance to film and film theory 30 years after his death, I have chosen the title "Brecht on the Margins." Brecht's influence on film has perhaps always been indirect, and this is certainly due in part to the profound challenge which his ideas pose to the dominant assumptions of cultural production. I would like to trace briefly the lines which Brecht's marginal yet persistent critique has allowed since his own experiences with the film industry. But more important to me here is the connection between Brecht's ideas on film and the similar political dilemmas faced by filmmakers and theorists today.

I believe there is an international tradition of Brechtian filmmaking at work in the U.S. today, but it needs to be constantly reclaimed, since its history is a series of dead-ends, betrayals, and misunderstandings. Today again there is a danger that what Martin Walsh has called "The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema" will disappear in the institutionalization and academicization of film theory. My goal, then, is to place Brecht's ideas solidly back into the discussion of radical film theory, particularly in the context of feminist theory. My example for this project will be Yvonne Rainer's 1985 film The Man who Envied Women.

First let me examine two avenues one might expect Brecht's influence to have taken, which turned out to be dead ends: his own involvement with film projects and the revival of American attention to German cinema since the 1960s. The insistence that Brechtian filmmaking is necessarily radical is useful in explaining why the Brechtian tradition is so slender and so often interrupted. Most film adaptations of Brecht are not Brechtian at all. Instead they have treated him as either a source of provocative material or as the inventor of a now-classical style. Thus, there seems to be a consistency between three Brecht productions that otherwise have little to do with each other: The Three-Penny Opera, Hangmen Also Die, and Galileo. Brecht himself sued the producers of the Three-Penny Opera (1930/31) since G.W. Pabst's direction placed the few "epic" elements preserved within a quite conventional, naturalistic narrative. Hangmen Also Die (1942/43), directed by Fritz Lang in Hollywood, similarly couches some Brechtian dialog, characters, and situations within the conventions of the gangster thriller genre. Finally, Joseph Losey's version of Galileo (1975) succumbs to the same contradiction as innumerable theater productions of Brecht up to the present. His theatrical alienation devices have hardened into an aesthetic style which no longer causes viewers to reflect on their role in the processes or institutions of cinema. This is why I take seriously Brecht's statement before the House Unamerican Activities Committee in 1947: "I am unaware of any influence, political or artistic, that I could have exercised on the film industry." (1)

One other Brechtian film made while Brecht was alive led to a different kind of dead end. The only film of its kind produced by the left in the Weimar Republic, Kuhle Wampe (1932), was censored but finally released. No tradition could be built on this slender basis, since the National Socialists soon took

power in Germany. The Soviet avant-garde tradition to which Kuhle Wampe was related, represented by Vertov, Medvedkin and in some ways Eisenstein, was also cut off between 1929 and 1932. Even since the war, in the GDR, neither the Brechtian nor the Soviet avant-garde tradition has been evident in feature films. In 1955, Wolfgang Staudte began filming Mother Courage, but Brecht was unwilling to abandon yet another script to the control of a film director. When he realized that his play was to become a Monumentalfarbfilm, Brecht protested strenuously. (2) This led to the interruption of the project, which could not be revived before Brecht's death the following year. Despite exceptions, such as The Gleiwitz Case by the late Gerhard Klein or some documentary films, one can safely say there is no radical Brechtianism at work among the thirty or so feature film directors of the GDR.

One might expect the most direct avenue for contemporary Brechtian influence in the U.S. to be the so-called New German Cinema, which for a time seemed to offer an alternative to Hollywood norms. Alexander Kluge and the team of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub were among the first notable artists of this period and I believe the most important in relation to the reception of Brecht for the cinema. Kluge's films, from Abschied von gestern (1965/66) to Der Angriff der Gegenwart auf die übrige Zeit (1985), owe much to Brecht in their fragmentation of narrative, the use of intertitles, quotation from other texts or art forms, and engagement with the audience aimed at dialogue rather than manipulation.

A Brechtian concern for the role of history in cultural self-definition is central to the work of Kluge as well as to Straub/Huillet. All of the films of the latter shed some light on the potential of Brecht's ideas for film, which is certainly why they take up a substantial part of Martin Walsh's work Brechtian Aspects of Radical Cinema. (3) Straub/Huillet's History Lessons (1972) could indeed stand as the only post-war film of a Brecht text which makes productive use of a Brechtian process as well. Based on Brecht's novel fragment Die Geschichte des Herrn Julius C., the film shares the novel's project of exposing the emptiness of the narrative view of history as the exploits of great men. Caesar recedes from both the novel and the film and is replaced by the testimony of various men who knew him. These "documents" certainly do not add up to produce a great man, but Brecht sought to produce through them a way of understanding the logic of empires. Straub/Huillet's film adds to this fragmentary approach to Caesar a Brechtian approach to film, the text, and their context. Along with a "documentary" approach to Brecht's words--mainly the monologues of the witnesses--other documents are presented: the unstructured everyday reality of 1972 Rome, a statue of Julius Caesar erected by the Fascists, and maps of the shrinking empire. If history's meaning is not to be found in an appreciation of Caesar's biography, the audience is left with the task of producing meaning from the materials presented through Brecht's words and the film's images. Brecht had criticized the film medium because its "mechanical reproduction gives everything the character of a result: unfree and unalterable." (4) The practice of Straub/Huillet opens up the possibility that the "result" of Brecht's investigation, and of imperial history, has yet to be determined. It may be just this Brechtian approach which puts Kluge and Straub/Huillet outside the category of new German

directors who have become well known in the U.S., i.e. those who built on Hollywood aesthetics (Fassbinder, Wenders) or those who return to earlier German models (Herzog). German feminist filmmakers have been similarly neglected in the American reception, perhaps also because they challenge conventional filmmaking, sometimes also in Brechtian ways.

The Brechtian film tradition I feel is most significant today in the U.S. arises indirectly from the work of Jean-Luc Godard, Straub/Huillet, and others, beginning in the early 1960's. The turning of Brechtian theory toward the film itself became most explicit after 1968. The importance of the social upheaval of 1968 in the course of film theory ought not to be underestimated. In any case, theoretical discussions have been at least as important as the reception of Brechtian films themselves since this period. An important mediator in this process was the British journal Screen which published a special issue devoted to Brecht in 1974. Brecht's role at the time is crucial for us to consider now, twelve years later, since the theoretical work which was so vibrant at that time threatens to degenerate into that which it initially opposed.

It is surely no coincidence that this new interest in radical film theory was simultaneous with a rapid and energetic development of feminist film theory. Screen had set out the Brechtian terms for a radical critique of film practice, and Ben Brewster had borrowed from Brecht a name for this enterprise, "The Fundamental Reproach." (5) In 1975 Laura Mulvey spelled out a fundamental reproach against the manipulative basis of film pleasure from a feminist point of view:

"The first blow against the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions (already undertaken by radical filmmakers) is to free the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into dialectics, passionate detachment. There is no doubt that this destroys the satisfaction, pleasure, and privilege of the "invisible guest," and highlights how film has depended on voyeuristic active/passive mechanisms. Women, whose image has continually been stolen and used for this end, cannot view the decline of the traditional film form with anything much more than sentimental regret." (6)

Screen and feminist film theory had returned to the idea shared by Brecht, Benjamin, and the Soviet avant-garde, that it was not enough to take over the mechanisms of cultural production, one must also transform them. Brecht's theoretical influence offered a way of merging into the subject matter of film a critique of the process of filmmaking, its place in society, and the role of the audience.

An editorial statement by Ben Brewster and Colin McCabe reveals Brecht's central position in 1974: "it is above all his reflections on his own work in literature, theatre, and cinema and on the politico-aesthetic controversies of his day that provide the framework within which it is possible to begin to think of a revolutionary cinema." (7) The connection between Mulvey's essay and Brechtian concerns of the time is made clear by McCabe: "It is this emphasis on the reader as producer (more obvious in Tout va bien, which is some ways more Brechtian than Kuhle Wampe) which suggests that these films do not just offer a

different representation for the subject, but a different set of relations to both the fictional material and reality." (8)

More than a decade later, Teresa de Lauretis takes this juncture in the history of film criticism as a starting point for her work Alice Doesn't. She also returns to it late in the book, in the Chapter "Semiotica and Experience," to discuss feminist anti-Freudian criticisms of Screen and its hopes for a Brechtian cinema:

"Unless we too want to toss the baby along with the bath water, both Marx and Freud must be retained and worked through at once, and this has been the insistent emphasis of Screen and its extraordinarily important contribution to film theory and, beyond it, to feminism. That patriarchy exists concretely, in social relations, and that it works precisely through the very discursive and representational structures that allow us to recognize it, is the problem and the struggle of feminist theory. It is also, and more so, a problem of women's life." (9)

This stress on the connection between theory and experience perhaps does not even go far enough in clarifying the priorities of Screen's introduction of psychoanalysis and semiotics twelve years ago. In their attempt to create a theory of revolutionary cinema in the Brechtian sense, Screen's editors were by no means interested in theory for its own sake. The "scientific" insights of psychoanalysis and semiotics were meant to serve as more advanced tools for the task at hand, and as a safeguard against Romantic, ultra-left and other simplistic temptations. As the editors wrote in 1974,

"In the last issue of Screen, we published Franco Fortini's text on 'The Writer's Mandate' which took the position that art is that area which deals with the irreconcilable contradictions of life over and beyond the particular contradictions of the class struggle and of their successful resolution in the revolution. It was suggested in the editorial that, in order to avoid a fall into romantic and ultra-left positions, these irreconcilable differences had to be theorized within the scientific concepts offered to us by psychoanalysis." (10)

Although seeking a revolutionary transformation is still implicit in feminist film theory, it has clearly moved from center-stage back to the margins since the early 1970's. Perhaps because a global transformation of society by feminism or by the left seems less and less likely, the theoretical aspects of the discussion have taken on a life of their own. There is less and less talk of political goals, little common ground between theorists and filmmakers, and the reference to psychoanalysis as a mere scientific tool in the service of Brechtian aesthetics would seem to many contemporary critics positively funny.

Therefore, such work as de Lauretis' is extremely important in restoring a balance between a Brechtian critique of representation and the theories of psychoanalysis and semiotics. What de Lauretis stresses too little, I believe,

is the political dilemma of the artist, which is clearly addressed by Brecht and again by Fortini in "The Writer's Mandate and the End of Anti-Fascism." (11) If the reader/spectator is to find room to move within this complex of irreconcilable contradictions, the artist must do so, too.

Yvonne Rainer has taken the sum of these practical and theoretical dilemmas as the starting point for her most recent film, The Man Who Envied Women. We can trace some Brechtian aspects of this film by comparing to one of Brecht's notes on epic form:

"Today, when the human being must be conceived as the 'ensemble of all social relations,' the epic form is the only one which can grasp those processes that serve drama as the material for a comprehensive world view. The individual human being, too--the flesh-and-blood human being--is only tangible through the processes in which and as a result of which it exists. The new drama must methodologically incorporate the experiment (Versuch) into its form. It must be able to use connections in all directions; it must make use of statics; it will have a tension reigning between its individual parts, mutually charging them. (12)

Rainer's film can be seen as an experiment, or test (Versuch), on several levels. Most fundamentally she is exploring and opening up the structure of relationships which make up her narrative or even authorial persona. The film does have a narrative, provided by the female voice-over of Trish, but this subjectivity does not incorporate all parts of the film. Instead it stands apart from other elements, producing the tension Brecht describes. The voice over near the beginning of the film sets up the terms of other relationships the film will examine:

"It was a hard week. I split up with my husband and moved into my studio. The hot-water heater broke and flooded the textile merchant downstairs. I bloodied my white linen pants, the senate voted for nerve gas, and my gynaecologist went down in Korean Airlines 007. The worst of it was the gynaecologist. He was a nice man. He used to put booties in the stirrups, and his speculum was always warm. (13)

J. Hoberman called this "brutally slapstick leap from the private to the public, unexpectedly clinched with a dancer's emphasis on pure physicality." (14) The montage of elements introduced here expands outward from the domestic melodrama of Jack and Trish, which is not acted out on the screen: we see Trish's shoulder from the back as she takes her ironing board out of the apartment. Jack also wants her to remove her "art work" from the wall, but the collage of photos remains to become a focal point for the wider issues Trish's voice will consider later in the film.

One of the photos is an ad for estrogen supplements for older women, supposedly helpless with a (male) doctor's care and prescriptions. Another is a photo of mutilated bodies of torture victims in El Salvador. Like Trish's opening speech, these images violently confront private biological reality with world

politics. Later in the film is another juxtaposition of the two, as Trish remarks on the photos, "the woman who has stopped bleeding and the corpses that have stopped bleeding."

The other half of the domestic melodrama is Jack, the husband who gets to keep the loft. Amid a variety of film quotations, Jack's language floods through the film with confessional and theoretical monologues related to women, sex, power, and psychoanalysis. The text itself is a collage of quotations from Raymond Chandler, Frederic Jameson, Michel Foucault, and others. Although Jack is often seen in New York lofts, he seems oblivious to the dispute over the renovation of loft space in New York City. The film returns to the documentary footage of hearings where low-income people compete with artists for housing. But it is the female voice over that says "property is profit and not shelter," and "the language troubles my New York sleep."

The narrative of the woman who leaves this theorizing man, and who ponders the connection of New York housing policy to war in Central America is not the only subject which is presented epically -- in a state of tension and constant revision. Since Rainer was once a dancer and performance artist, there is a strong sense of performance in her film as well. As Stephen Heath has noted in regard to Brechtian film practice, "One mode of distancing in film has often, and centrally, been the exact reference to theater." (15) Aspects of theatricality abound: two different actors portray Jack Deller, his text is made up of quotations, his monologues to his shrink are delivered from a stage while excerpts from Hollywood melodramas are projected behind him. A dream sequence is artlessly acted out, with Trish's voice-over narration, and at one point Rainer bends down near the camera lens to say "Would all menstruating women please leave the theater." Rainer also calls our attention to the materiality of the film image by including film footage which is deliberately of technically inferior quality.

This fragmentation of the film's material and its narrative does more than call our attention to its construction by the artist. It makes us aware that the artist's subjectivity is also constructed. When we hear the voice-over discussing with friend whether to call her friend Jack Teller or Jack Deller, we cannot be sure whether to identify this voice with a fictional character or with Rainer, the filmmaker. A strong alienation effect also takes place when Jack patiently or pensively moves one of the photos pinned to the wall. As the camera isolates the photo, the female voice-over says, "I have another to put up." The viewer must construct both the nature of this "I" and her own relationship to the image out of the relationships posited by the film.

There is no need here to analyze the other aspects of the film which have a Brechtian orientation. These would include the acting styles, the use of quotations of many kinds, the disjuncture between sound and image, or the use of documentary. Both Brecht and Godard are recalled by the theoretical discussion overheard on the streets and in a coffee shop. I would, however, like to concentrate on two scenes of the film to reveal its importance for a return of feminist film discussions to more materialist concerns. In these scenes, the "clash of ideas" J. Joberman finds so exciting (and reminiscent of Kluge) (16) is placed within a feminist and Brechtian transformation of the means of presentation.

In the first example, Jack Deller #1 is to deliver a lecture on Foucault et al. to a class. The process of filmmaking is foregrounded in the scene in several ways: the actor asks "are we rolling?" before he begins his lecture; as he speaks, the sound track is eventually distorted, then we begin to hear directions for the camera movement, which moves from Deller to the class, then back in the room until it isolates a single student. Returning to Jack, it reveals that the actor has been replaced by Jack #2.

To this intriguing study of film techniques is added the reference to the other "narrative" concerns of the film. As always, Jack is theorizing about sexuality and power, and establishing his own power at the same time. As the camera travels, it reveals that the classroom is in reality a remodeled loft-condominium. One critic referred to this scene as "numbing" because he was apparently concentrating on deciphering the sound track. (17) Rainer says this is "missing the meaning" of the space since the visual track "supplies a subtext for the lecture with its retroactive associations of urban university land-grabbing." (18) The Brechtian tension, which escapes many critics, can be made quite clear. One aspect of the lecture is Foucault's refusal to enter into political debates because, he says, "political discourse abnegates true discussion," and that there is only "opposition, not true difference." After this and some discussion of the nature and origins of language (Lacan vs. the ego-psychologists), the camera finally reveals the expansive accoutrements of the loft's kitchen and bath, and Trish's voice-over raises another claim on the meaning of this scene: "You know, this expression 'class struggle' . . . " (the soundtrack returns briefly to Jack #2 on Husserl and subjectivity) . . . (sound track beep) . . . "You know, this expression 'class struggle' applies to El Salvador or Guatemala, not to the U.S. In Guatemala the war against Communism is in reality a war against the poor. Here in America, the war against the poor does not yet have to be masked as a war against Communism."

My final question is the significance of all the theory quoted by Rainer. Is her importance to feminism suspect because she relies so heavily on the theories, and on the presence, of men? Her film even contains the line "in a manner of speaking we're all men," and the question raised by one critic must be addressed seriously: "Throughout the film, Jack keeps citing Foucault. Does this make Jack an authority or Rainer?" (19) First, of course, Rainer is an authority, pure and simple. And she is the author of the film. But in citing so much theory and filmmaking produced by men, is Rainer carrying on a male tradition of intellectual and artistic mastery? I don't think so. On the other hand, the film does not make simplistic oppositional claims, for instance that male-dominated theory be replaced by female-dominated theory, or even perhaps that the alternative to all this high theory is not theory at all.

This simplistic opposition, in fact, is criticised by the final segment of the film, where two theoretical arguments--texts by Michel Foucault and Meaghan Morris--supply the script for Jack and Jackie's heterosexual mating ritual. The content of these theories is clearly not absurd--neither Foucault's assertion that "there is no opposition between what is said and what is done," nor Morris's criticism of theory that has "no teeth." What is absurd is the placement of these theories in the context of clichéd sexual maneuvering rather than in a context where their usefulness in the world could be tested. To ask Rainer to depict this usefulness, however, would be to ask her to return to traditional narrative didacticism. We should also not look for a reassuring image of "woman"

in her film, since the imposition of such an image has long been central to film as an institution. Instead of presenting a true theory to replace the false ones, Rainer's film ends with women's voices, insisting one last time on a connection between the images on the wall and an individual's ability to act. The very last word in the film--over the credits--is not theoretical but practical: a documentary sound recording from a rally for abortion rights.

In Rainer's own word, she is "talking about films that allow for periods of poetic ambiguity, only to unexpectedly erupt into rhetoric, outrage, direct political address or analysis, only to return to a new adventure of Eddy Foot or New Perils of Eddy Foot . . . " (20) Thus she does not reject theory or action, traditional narrative clichés. Instead she hopes to put them into a productive relation to each other, or to open up some breathing space, where the archetypal female rivals might one day stop tearing off each other's dresses to say "Hey, we're wearing the same dress, aren't we? Why don't we pool our energies and try to figure out what a political myth for socialist feminism might look like?" (21)

Rainer's film sustains the tense relationship between aesthetic theory and political practice which has been consistently central to the reception of Brecht. Without the Brechtian tension between the two realms, there is a danger that they will diverge and individually retreat from work on the means of production to work on its products alone. (22) In the realm of film theory the danger lies in aestheticisation of theory itself and its academic institutionalization (witness Rainer's film). In the political realm, some feminists have decided to appeal for greater state power to control pornography rather than addressing the continuum of violence on which that state power depends. Brecht's role in film theory today could be to challenge these diverging tendencies and maintain their productive tension. The history of Brecht reception so far warns us that this is not an easy task.

Footnotes

1. Bertolt Brecht, Schriften zur Politik und Gesellschaft, Gesammelte Werke 20 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), 305. The reasons for Brecht's lack of influence on commercial film deserve more study, since they could reveal something of the logic of the culture industry. For instance, it could be that Brecht's belief in the wisdom of popular culture was successfully incorporated rather than resisted by Hollywood. In capitalism, no political moment is inherent to the word "popular." Walter Benjamin seems to have been more sensitive than Brecht to this two-sided potential in mass culture.

2. Wolfgang Gersch, Film bei Brecht (Munich: Hanser, 1975), 292.

3. Martin Walsh, The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema, ed. Keith M. Griffiths (London: British Film Institute, 1981).

4. Ben Brewster, "The Fundamental Reproach (Brecht)," Ciné-Tracts 1 (1977), 45.

5. Ibid.
6. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen 16/3 (Autumn 1975), 18.
7. Ben Brewster and Colin McCabe, "Brecht and a Revolutionary Cinema?" Screen 15/2 (Summer 1974), 6.
8. Colin McCabe, "Realism in the Cinema," Screen 15/2 (Summer 1974), 18.
9. Teresa de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 165.
10. Colin McCabe, op. cit., 17
11. Franco Fortini, "The Writers' Mandate and the End of Anti-Fascism," Screen 15/1 (Spring 1974), 3-70.
12. Bertolt Brecht, "Der Dreigroschenprozess," Versuche 1-12 (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1959), 226-227.
13. Yvonne Rainer, The Man Who Envied Women, 1985 (distributed by First Run Features, 153 Waverly Place, New York, NY 10014).
14. J. Hoberman, "The Purple Rose of Soho," Village Voice 31/14 (April 8, 1986), 54.
15. Stephen Heath, "Lessons from Brecht," Screen 15/2 (Summer 1974), 117.
16. J. Hoberman, op. cit.
17. Yvonne Rainer, "Some Ruminations around Cinematic Antidotes to the Oedipal Net(tles) while Playing with De Lauraedipus Mulvey, or, He May Be Off Screen, but . . .," The Independent 9/3 (April 1986), 25.
18. Ibid.
19. J. Hoberman, op. cit.
20. Rainer, "Some Ruminations," op. cit.
21. Ibid.
22. Cf. Walter Benjamin, "Der Autor als Produzent," Versuche über Brecht (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 113.

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BRECHTS UND MONKS URFAUST-INSZENIERUNG MIT DEM BERLINER ENSEMBLE:
DRAMATURGISCHE KONZEPTION UND SZENISCHE REALISIERUNG

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(The following article represents the Kernpunkt of the illustrated presentation on the same topic given by Dr. Mahl at the IBS International Symposium in Hong Kong, December 1986. Prof. Mahl's Book Brecht und Monks "Urfaust"-Inszenierung mit dem Berliner Ensemble 1952/53 (Stuttgart und Zürich: Belser Verlag, 1986) = Studien zur Goethe-Zeit und Goethe-Wirkung/Schriftenreihe der Goethe-Gesellschaft Stuttgart, Bd. 1 is reviewed by John Fuegi in The Brecht Yearbook, Volume 13 (1984), Brecht: Performance/Aufführung.

1. DRAMATURGISCHE KONZEPTION

1.1 Schließen der Handlungslücken

Als Erich Schmidt im Jahre 1887 eine Anzahl Faust-Szenen im Nachlaß Hof-fräuleins Luise von Göchhausen entdeckte, war der lang gesuchte, später sogenannte Urfaust endlich gefunden. Vergleicht man die Szenenabfolge von Faust I mit der des Urfaust, so stößt man auf schwerwiegende Lücken. Denn im Urfaust fehlen die Paktszene zwischen Faust und Mephisto (Szene "Studierzimmer II"), die "Hexenküche," die Szene "Wald und Höhle," der gesamte "Walpurgisnacht"-Komplex sowie die Szene "Trüber Tag. Feld."

Brecht jedoch wollte den Zuschauern einen geschlosseneren Handlungszusammenhang vermitteln als ihn der fragmentarische Urfaust aufweist. Ja, er war gar der Meinung, man fälsche den Gehalt des Urfaust, wenn der Regisseur nicht bestimmte Handlungselemente in irgendeiner Form aus dem ersten Teil der Tragödie übernimmt. Er entschloß sich deshalb, durch selbstverfaßte Verse--"Brückenverse" genannt--die Handlungslücken im Urfaust zu überbrücken. So lesen wir kurz und bündig in den Regienotaten: "Pakt. Muß durch verse ergänzt werden." Solche Zwischentexte wurden von Wagner aus einem voluminösen Buch vorgelesen; er trat eigens dazu vor den Vorhang, vor der Brecht-Gardine. Diese Texte sollten erstens episch wirkend wirken, zweitens "die Fabel weiterführen" und drittens "das nächste Bild erklären."

Außerdem verfaßte Brecht einen Epilog zum Urfaust-Spiel und ließ in der Szene "Auerbachs Keller" die Zecher grölend das Volkslied "Der Mai ist gekommen" von Emanuel Geibel singen. Einen das Spiel einleitenden Prolog löste er aus Goethes Dichtung Maskenzug vom 18. Dezember heraus, und zwar ließ er jene Verse sprechen, in der Mephisto die Hauptgestalten Faust, Gretchen und Marthe dem "allerhöchsten" Publikum vorstellt. In dieser Form erweitert, wurde 1952 in Potsdam und 1953 in Berlin(-Ost) Goethes Urfaust aufgeführt.

1.2 Episierung

Episches Theater bedeutete auch für diese spezifische Einstudierung von Goethes Fragment, daß dem Zuschauer bewußt gemacht wird, daß er "nur" einer Theateraufführung beiwohnt, die jedoch einen bestimmten Bezug zu ihm herstellt. Er soll sich nicht abstands- und kritiklos in ein autonomes Guckkastengeschehen einfühlen, sondern zunächst Abstand gewinnen und behalten. Letztlich soll der Zuschauer Stellung nehmen zu dem Gezeigten, die Fehlerhaftigkeit dieser modellhaften Bühnenwelt feststellen und zugleich erkennen, daß ebendiese Welt verbesserungsfähig, veränderungsfähig ist. Er soll feststellen, daß bestimmte historische Gegebenheiten die Dramenfiguren Faust oder Gretchen so und nicht anders geformt haben, wie sie auf der Bühne gezeigt werden. Andere Bedingungen hätten ebendiese Figuren anders geformt--mit anderen Worten: die zu verändernden Bedingungen würden auch die Figuren mitverändern, ihnen einen anderen Charakter geben.

Letztendlich soll sich der Zuschauer darüber Gedanken machen, wie die dargestellte, fehlerhafte und von Goethe als kritikwürdig empfundene Welt im Verlauf der Geschichte sich in dialektischer Weise weiterentwickelt hat, wie der damalige Zustand inzwischen durch den Fortschritt der Menschheit aufgehoben worden ist. Als besonders zeitkritisch sah Brecht die Vorkommnisse in der "Schüler-szene" und in "Auerbachs Keller" an.

1.2.1 Zur Episierung der "Kerker-Szene"

Damit die Schauspieler nicht allzu leidenschaftlich ihre Rollen verkörperten und die Zuschauer sich nicht allzu sehr in die Gestalten "einfühlen" konnten, ließ Brecht bestimmte Szenen in sogenannter episierter Form probieren. In einem Brief erläuterte mir Egon Monk Sinn und Zweck dieser Szenenproben in episierter Form:

»Das Episieren gehörte zu den besonderen Brechtschen Probemethoden. Es handelte sich dabei um das Übertragen des Dialogs, der direkten Rede also, in erzählende Prosa. Angewendet wurde das Episieren bevorzugt bei sogenannten dramatischen Szenen, um während der Proben Ruhe und Sinn in den Ablauf zu bringen. Schauspieler, die sich beim Probieren dramatischer Szenen leicht zu vorzeitigen Temperamentsausbrüchen verleiten lassen, wurden durch die Gelassenheit der Prosa gezwungen, selbst gelassen an die Szene heranzugehen. Auch die Kerkerszene ist zeitweilig in episierter Form probiert worden. Gespielt wurde sie in der originalen Goetheschen Fassung.«

Welche Gestalt hatte nun eine solche episierete Probenfassung gegenüber dem Original? Zunächst Goethes Text, ein Ausschnitt aus der "Kerker-Szene:"

FAUST: Du bringst mich um.

MARGARETE: Nein, du sollst überbleiben, überbleiben von allen. Wer sorgte für die Gräber? So in eine Reihe, ich bitte dich, neben die Mutter den Bruder da. Mich dahin und mein Kleines an die rechte Brust. Gib mir die Hand drauf! Du bist mein Heinrich.

FAUST (will sie wegziehen): Fühlst du mich? Hörst du mich? Komm! Ich bin's, ich befreie dich.

MARGARETE: Da hinaus?

FAUST: Freiheit!

MARGARETE: Da hinaus? Nicht um die Welt. Ist das Grab drauß, komm! Lauert der Tod, komm! Von hier ins ewige Ruhebett, weiter nicht einen Schritt. Ach Heinrich, könnt ich mit dir in alle Welt!

FAUST: Der Kerker ist offen, säume nicht!

In episierter Form hat diese Stelle folgende Form:

G: G schüttelte den Kopf und meinte, nein, er solle übrigbleiben von allen. Es müsse doch jemand für die Gräber sorgen! Mit großer Geste das Stroh beiseite schiebend legte sie fein säuberlich Strohhalme nebeneinander und erklärte F dazu, daß er die Gräber so in einer Reihe anordnen solle: Neben die Mutter solle der Bruder, sie – etwas weiter weg – dorthin, mit dem Kleinen an der rechten Brust. Er solle ihr die Hand drauf geben, er sei doch ihr Heinrich.

F: Faust fragte: Fühlst du mich? Hörst du mich?

G: Gretchen nickte.

F: F hob sie auf und sagte: Komm! Ich bin's.

M: M kommt herein, lehnt sich auf die Brüstung und sieht zu.

F: F versicherte ihr, er käme sie zu befreien.

G: G nickte und ging zur Wand.

F: F folgte ihr, bot ihr seinen Arm und führte sie die Treppe hinauf.

G: G sah den Teufel und schreckte zurück: Da hinaus?

F: Freiheit sagte F.

- G: G schüttelte den Kopf: Da hinaus? Sie lief die Treppe hinunter und klammerte sich an ihren Pfahl und sagte zu F, daß sie nicht um die Welt mitkäme. Wenn das Grab draußen sei, käme sie, wenn der Tod draußen lauer, käme sie. Von hier ins ewige Ruhebett ginge sie mit, weiter nicht einen Schritt. Ach wenn sie doch mit ihm in alle Welt könne, sagte sie in leichtem Ton, vom Pfahl weggehend.
- F: Der Kerker sei offen, sagte F, sie solle nicht säumen.
- G: G rettete sich wieder zum Pfahl...

Im wesentlichen unterscheidet sich die episierete Fassung von der originalen dramatischen in zwei Punkten: Die Schauspieler sprechen Regieanweisungen bzw. die von ihnen auszuführenden Bewegungsabläufe und Gesten mit, die von dem jeweiligen Regisseur der Inszenierung stammen, und teilweise ist die direkte Rede in indirekte übersetzt.

1.3 Zur Strichfassung (see pp. 47-48)

Die Art und Weise, wie Brecht Streichungen vornimmt, möchte ich anhand des 1. Bildes, der Szene "Nacht," verdeutlichen. Betrachten wir nämlich genau, welche Streiche er im einzelnen setzt, so erkennen wir, daß er versucht, die Figur Faust in ein ganz bestimmtes Licht zu rücken. Schon in dieser ersten Situation sollte er als Scharlatan erscheinen, der bedenkenlos das Gute von sich schiebt und ganz bewußt zum Bösen greift, um seine egoistischen Ziele zu verwirklichen. Ja, Brecht läßt ihn gar--und das verdeutlicht er pantomimisch durch einen Zauberkreis--zur Schwarzen Magie greifen.

Betrachten wir die Streichungen im einzelnen: Brecht streicht beispielsweise die Zeilen 41-45, damit tilgt er die Licht- und Natursehnsucht Fausts: er reduziert ihn auf den lebensüberdrüssigen Wissenschaftler. Gestrichen sind auch die Zeilen 49 und 50: das liebe Himmelslicht darf gar nicht bis in Fausts Studierstube eindringen. Genauso werden solche Verse getilgt, in denen Faust davon spricht, doch noch Naturerkenntnis zu erlangen. Denn dadurch könnte er Zufriedenheit und Glück erringen, sei es beim Versuch, den Makrokosmos selbst zu erforschen (Zeilern 71-74), oder beim Versuch, die Zeichen des Makrokosmos in gelehrten Büchern erkennend zu deuten, die Zeilen 81-84 sind gestrichen. Auch die Streichungen der Verse 101-105, 108-111 und 118-120 sollen bewirken, jegliches Positive aus Fausts Innerem zu verbannen.

Zusammen mit pantomimischen Geisterbeschwörungen schafft Brecht durch diese Streiche ein Bild von der Faust-Figur, das nicht ganz Goethes Intentionen entspricht. Das aber war beabsichtigt, denn die Berliner Strichfassung ist nichts anderes als Brechts und Monks Bearbeitung des Goetheschen Materialwerts im Urfaust, unter weitgehender Beibehaltung der Vorlage.

1. Bild: Nacht

Faust. Wagner.

*In einem hochgewölbten engen gotischen Zimmer
FAUST unruhig auf seinem Sessel am Pulten*

FAUST: Hab nun, ach, die Philosophie,
Medizin und Juristerei,

5 Und leider auch die Theologie
Durchaus studiert mit heißer Müh.
Da steh ich nun, ich armer Tor,
Und bin so klug, als wie zuvor.

10 Heiße Doktor und Professor gar,
Und ziehe schon an die zehen Jahr'
Herauf, herab und quer und krumm
Meine Schüler an der Nas' herum
Und seh, daß wir nichts wissen können,
Das will mir schier das Herz verbrennen.

15 Zwar bin ich gescheuter als alle die Laffen,
Doktors, Professors, Schreiber und Pfaffen,
Mich plagen keine Skrupel noch Zweifel,
Fürcht mich weder vor Höll noch Teufel.
Dafür ist mir auch all Freud entrissen,

20 Bild mir nicht ein, was Rechts zu wissen,
Bild mir nicht ein, ich könnt was lehren,
Die Menschen zu bessern und zu bekehren;
Auch hab ich weder Gut noch Geld,
Noch Ehr und Herrlichkeit der Welt.

25 Es möcht kein Hund so länger leben!
Drum hab ich mich der Magie ergeben,
Ob mir durch Geistes Kraft und Mund
Nicht manch Geheimnis werde kund.
Daß ich nicht mehr mit saurem Schweiß

30 Rede von dem, was ich nicht weiß.
Daß ich erkenne, was die Welt
Im Innersten zusammenhält,
Schau alle Wirkungskraft und Samen
Und tu nicht mehr in Worten kramen.

35 O sähest du, voller Mondenschein,
Zum letztenmal auf meine Pein,
Den ich so manche Mitternacht
An diesem Pult herangewacht!
Dann über Bücher und Papier,

40 Trübselger Freund, erscheinst du mir.
~~Ach könnt ich doch auf Bergeshöhn~~
In deinem lieben Lichte gehn,
Um Bergeshöhl' mit Geistern schweben,
Auf Wiesen in deinem Dämmer weben,

45 Von all dem Wissensqualm entladen
In deinem Tau gesund mich baden!

Weh! steck ich in dem Kerker noch?

Verfluchtes dumpfes Mauerloch,

~~Wo selbst das liebe Himmelslicht~~

50 ~~Trüb durch gemalte Scheiben bricht!~~

Beschränkt von all dem Bücherhauf,
Den Würme nagen, Staub bedeckt,
Und bis ans hohe Gewölb hinauf
Mit angeraucht Papier besteckt,

55 Mit Gläsern, Büchsen rings bestellt,
Mit Instrumenten vollgepfropft,
Urväter Hausrat drein gestopft –
Das ist deine Welt, das heißt eine Welt!

Und fragst du noch, warum dein Herz

60 Sich inn in deinem Busen klemmt?

Warum ein unerklärter Schmerz

Dir alle Lebensregung hemmt?

Statt all der lebenden Natur,

Da Gott die Menschen schuf hinein,

65 Umgibt in Rauch und Moder nur
Dich Tiergeripp und Totenbein.

Flieh! Auf! hinaus ins weite Land!

Und dies geheimnisvolle Buch

Von Nostradamus' eigner Hand –

70 Ist dir das nicht Geleit genug?

~~Erkennest dann der Sterne Lauf,~~

Und wenn Natur dich unterweist,

Dann geht die Seelenkraft dir auf,

~~Wie spricht ein Geist zum andern Geist.~~

75 Umsonst, daß trocknes Sinnen hier

Die heiligen Zeichen dir erklärt.

Ihr schwebt, ihr Geister, neben mir,

Antwortet mir, wenn ihr mich hört!

Er schlägt das Buch auf und erblickt das Zeichen des
Makrokosmos.

80 ~~Ha! welche Wonne fließt in diesem Blick~~
Auf einmal mir durch alle meine Sinnen.

Ich fühle junges heiliges Lebensglück,

~~Fühl' neue Lust durch Nerv und Adern rinnen.~~

85 War es ein Gott, der diese Zeichen schrieb,

Die all das innre Toben stillen,

Das arme Herz mit Freude füllen

Und mit geheimnisvollem Trieb

Die Kräfte der Natur enthüllen?

90 ~~Bin ich ein Gott? mir wird so licht!~~

Ich schau in diesen reinen Zügen

Die wirkende Natur vor meiner Seele liegen.

Jetzt erst erkenn ich, was der Weise spricht:

»Die Geisterwelt ist nieht verschlossen,

95 Dein Sinn ist zu, dein Herz ist tot.

Auf! bade, Schüler verdrossen

~~Die irdische Brust in Sorgen set.~~

Er beschaut das Zeichen.

- 100 Wie alles sich zum Ganzen webt,
Eins in dem andern würt und lebt!
~~(Wie Himmelskräfte auf und nieder steigen
Und sich die goldnen Eimer reichen!
Mit segenduftenden Schwingen
Vom Himmel durch die Erde dringen,
Harmonisch all das All durchklingen!)~~
105 Welch Schauspiel! aber, ach, ein Schauspiel nur!
Wo faß ich dich, unendliche Natur?
~~(Euch Brüster, wo? Ihr Quellen alles Lebens,
An denen Himmel und Erde hängt,
Dahin die weite Brust sich drängt –
Ihr quellt, ihr tränkt, und sehmacht ich so vergeh'nd?)~~
110 Er schlägt unwillig das Buch um und erblickt das Zeichen des Erdgeistes.
Wie anders würt dies Zeichen auf mich ein!
115 Du, Geist der Erde, bist mir näher;
Schon fühl ich meine Kräfte höher,
Schon glüh ich wie vom neuen Wein.
~~(Ich fühle Mut, mich in die Welt zu wagen,
All Erden Weh und all ihr Glück zu tragen,
Mit Stürmen mich herumzuschlagen
Und in des Schiffbruchs Kirochen nicht zu zage.)~~

Komm, komm, komm! (Einfügung durch Brecht oder Monk.)

- Es wölkt sich über mir –
125 Der Mond verbirgt sein Licht!
Die Lampe schwindet!
Es dampft! Es zucken rote Strahlen
Mir um das Haupt. Es weht
Ein Schauer vom Gewölb herab
130 Und faßt mich an.
Ich fühls, du schwebst um mich,
Erflehter Geist!
Enthülle dich!
~~(Hal wie's in meinem Herzen reißet
Zu neuen Gefühlen
All meine Sinne sich erwühlen!
Ich fühle ganz mein Herz dir hingegen!
Du mußt, du mußt! Und kostet es mein Leben.)~~
135 Er faßt das Buch und spricht das Zeichen des Geists
geheimnisvoll aus. Es zuckt eine rötliche Flamm, der
140 Geist erscheint in der Flamme in widerlicher Gesalt.

Komm, komm, komm! (Einfügung durch Brecht oder Monk.)

- GEIST: Wer ruft mir?
145 FAUST abwendend: Schröckliches Gesicht!
GEIST: Du hast mich mächtig angezogen,
An meiner Sphäre lang gesogen,
Und nun –
FAUST: Weh! ich ertrag dich nicht.
150 GEIST: ~~(Du flehst erattend mich zu schauen,
Meine Stimme hören, mein Antlitz zu sehen.)~~
Mich neigt dein mächtig Seelenflehn.
Da bin ich! Welch erbärmlich Grauen
Faßt Übermenschen dich! Wo ist der Seele Ruf?
155 Wo ist die Brust, die eine Welt in sich erschuf,
Und trug, und hegte, und mit Freudebeben
Erschwoll, sich uns, den Geistern, gleich zu heben
Wo bist du, Faust, des Stimme mir erklang,
Der sich an mich mit allen Kräften drang?
160 Du! der, den kaum mein Hauch unwittert,
In allen Lebenstiefen zittert,
Ein furchtsam weggekrümmter Wurm.
FAUST: Soll ich dir Flammenbildung weichen?
Ich bins, bin Faust, bin deinesgleichen.
165 GEIST: In Lebensfluten, im Tatensturm
Wall ich auf und ab,
Webe hin und her!
Geburt und Grab,
Ein ewges Meer,
170 Ein wechselnd Leben!
So schaff ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit
Und würke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid.
FAUST: Der du die weite Welt umschweifst,
Geschäft'ger Geist, wie nah fühl ich mich dir!
175 GEIST: Du gleichst dem Geist, den du begreifst,
Nicht mir!
Verschwindet.
FAUST zusammenstürzend: Nicht dir?
Wem denn?
180 Ich, Ebenbild der Gottheit,
Und nicht einmal dir? Es klopf.



The title-page illustration from Marlowe's Tragical History of Doctor Faustus (1604) which appears to have influenced Brecht's and Monk's conception of the stage design for their production of Goethe's Urfaust.

THE GOOD SOUL OF BRECHT IN BRAZIL (1)

Fernando Peixoto
Serviço Brasileiro de Teatro

Translation and Notes by Leslie Damasceno

Brecht arrived in São Paulo, Brazil in 1945 with a production of Fear and Misery of the Third Reich. According to information in the Brecht Archives in Berlin, before 1945 Brecht had only one play produced in Latin America: in 1943, The Threepenny Opera was produced in Mexico, a play first put on in Berlin in 1928, the year in which the League of Revolutionary Proletarian Writers was organized in Germany. Thus, Brecht appeared among us as an antifascist writer, as a vigorous denouncer of the subtle penetration of Naziism in the daily life of society. In truth, his theatre and theoretical thought would only go beyond the socialist sphere, with a irreversible force and impressive fascination, after the triumph of the season of the Berliner Ensemble in Paris in 1956, the year of Brecht's death. But Brazil is present in many of Brecht's writings: in poems and songs that mention our cigars, in the reference to the burning of the coffee crop in the script of the film Kuhle Wampe, etc.

However, Brecht's presence as a "working comrade" was felt in the 60's. He influenced or awakened the enthusiasm of various theatre people, invading the three principle centers of Brazilian political theatre that were active during the years preceding the military coup of 1964: the Teatro de Arena (Arena Theatre) of São Paulo, Teatro Oficina of São Paulo, and the Centro Popular de Cultura da UNE, i.e. the CPC or Popular Culture Center of the National Students Union. (2) For the CPC, which had plunged into Piscator's writings, Brecht's work presented a problematic antidote: while Piscator, superficially understood, stimulated a tendency toward radical political sectarianism, Brecht introduced a healthy concept of dialectical theatre with irrefutable authority, broadening the horizons toward the construction of a politically committed theatre that essentially took on the use and meaning of aesthetic qualities as non-contrived transformative means of reflection and dialogue between stage and public. In the work of Arena and Oficina, Brecht's presence was a decisive intervention even in discussions about the limits of psychological realism. Guarnieri states that for some time he resisted Brecht: "Afterwards, I went from rejection to acceptance. To an immense understanding, really large. I began to understand and accept him, especially as a theatre person, his thinking, his practical goals, his political consciousness. My refusal wasn't so much against Brecht, but against fads. Only after this did I have a working relationship with his work. I tried to understand it, and he (Brecht) in turn, helped me." Almost the same thing happened with Vianinha. Augusto Boal furthered Arena's trajectory of political coherence through a rupture with then realistic dramatic intentions while writing Revolução na América do Sul (Revolution in Latin America). Proceeding from a personal definition and a basic, challenging investigation of Brecht's proposals, Boal went on to formulate his theories regarding what he called "teatro do oprimido" (theatre of the oppressed)--theories with continuing international repercussions. Thus, once digested, Brecht gave nourishment to both dramatic literature and staging.

The pilgrimages to Mecca began at this time: Brazilian actors and directors visited East Germany and, perplexed and wide-eyed, discovered the Berliner Ensemble. Antonio Abujamra, in an interview-debate in Porto Alegre, confessed that what he saw modified his idea of theatre and, responding to a question of mine, somewhat incredulous at the time, affirmed, with reason, that Brecht would be impossible without Marxism. With a caution and lucidity that was all the more vigorous for being neither a submissive nor naïve elucidation of Brechtian theory, Teatro Oficina passed from fidelity to the Stanislavskian method towards the first steps in its search for a Brechtian direction, producing Max Frisch's Andorra and subsequently Gorki's The Enemies as it moved in the direction of dialectical theatre. This trajectory had already been undertaken in Jose Celso Martinez Correa's production of Galileo Galilei, which, while still done in a relatively "well-behaved" manner, already integrated an independent creative vision--all the more Brechtian for its elements of differentiation. The Teatro Oficina also incorporated theoretical ideas of Grotowski in Jungle of Cities, and invented a new national and revolutionary scenic language in its production of Oswald de Andrade's O Rei da Vela (The Candle King), in which Brecht was chewed up, digested, cannibalistically assimilated and devoured. From the consequent love-affair with Brecht, my first book was born; Brecht: Vida e Obra (Brecht: Life and Work). Oficina sought out Leandro Konder for a workshop course on Marxist aesthetics and Brecht began to introduce himself in a much more perturbing way in the work of the intellectuals and artists of the Brazilian Communist Party (Partido Comunista Brasileiro).

Turbulent times followed: theatre and revolution, theatre and Marxism, the theatrical impass that came after the military coup, until we reached today's challenge--theatre and redemocratization. And the ghost of Brecht is always with us: deified by some, ridiculed by others, so misunderstood by so many, becoming irresponsibly posed as a commercial object, or else simplified and confused as a synonym for insupportable didacticism or for useless and tiresome proselytism. Today Brecht is one of the most frequently produced of all foreign authors, as he has been in the recent past, even during the dictatorship. An in-depth study of the creative and/or confusing presence of Brecht is still to be undertaken: in Porto Alegre, during the 60's, Brecht's presence changed theatrical positions and attitudes, leading Mário de Almeida to write and stage an exceptional play about the social-political process, O Despacho; and around the same time, in Pernambuco, Hermilo Borba Filho sought out and examined a dialectical relationship between Brecht and popular theatrical traditions that was, without a doubt, both surprising and inexhaustible. In the meantime, the polemic centering around the necessary revision of realism--an international problem that had given rise to stimulating essays from Benjamin, Dort, Lukács, and Werner Mittenzwei--was polemicized here, in Brazil, through texts of extraordinary critical vigor, with the essays of Anatol Rosenfeld and Roberto Schwarz or, within the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), by Leandro Konder or Carlos Nelson Coutinho, resulting in an immense theoretical corpus that should not nor cannot be overlooked. This theoretical thrust was a project that absorbed Paulo Pontes in his last years and led me to write Brecht: Uma Introdução ao Teatro Dialético (Brecht: An Introduction to Dialectical Theatre). And it is still a theme that awakens, in many parts of the country, uncontrollable and contradictory enthusiasm and/or polemical debates.

The best Brazilian theatre today, that which refuses lies and frivolity, is engaged in a return to the difficult search for popular national identity, realistic and critical, that implies a redefinition of that identity's social and

cultural significance in relationship to colonialism and dependency--a search provoked by the necessity for consequential action in confrontation with unpostponable historical tasks. Brecht continues with us; theatre is a manifestation of humankind in its concrete and material history, and intellectual and artistic work requires a free and democratic commitment in the construction of a sovereign society. Max Frisch ironically affirmed that Brecht possessed the "total inefficacy of a classic." As Werner Mittenzwei remarked, this is an astute formulation because it introduces caution to the recognition of greatness: the greatness of classic writers. Brecht's poetic talents and his international importance are incontestable today. The Brecht question is not just a chapter in the history of Brazilian theatre: it is a stimulating challenge to national identity. As a god, Brecht is useless. As a man, if he is "Brechtianized," he's alive, even if he's been dead for thirty years.

Footnotes

1. The following translation is part of a slighter longer article published in Brecht e o Berliner Ensemble (minC/INACEN, Colecao Exposicoes: Vol. II, 1986), that contextualizes Brecht for Brazilian readers and gives a brief overview of his influence on Brazilian theatre. Peixoto is concerned with the polemical question of the Brechtian spirit versus the canonic when applied to Brazilian theatre, stating that "what he (Brecht) really asks us is truly simple and singular: that we be capable of understanding him in order to historically go beyond him."

Currently director of the Servico Brasileiro de Teatro (Brazilian Theatre Service), the Theatre Section of the Instituto Nacional de Artes Cenicass (INACEN: The National Institute of Scenic Arts), Fernando Peixoto is a critic and translator, actor and director, who was fully involved in the theatrical events he describes here, being at the time a member of Teatro Oficina.

2. Founded in 1954 as an experimental alternative to the professional stage, Arena soon became the major force in the national theatre movement of that decade of economic development. Augusto Boal (internationally known for his theory expressed in Teatro do Oprimido), Gianfrancesco Guarnieri, and Vianinha (Oduvaldo Viana Filho), mentioned here by Peixoto, were among Arena's most politically active members.

Although it was also founded in the 50's, Oficina came to the forefront in the mid to late 60's with the work Peixoto mentions. In response to the growing repression of the dictatorship and under the leadership of its primary director, José Celso Martinez Correa, Oficina developed a political aesthetic of aggression in its work noted for its inventive inversions and grotesque caricaturing of the "exotic-erotic" stereotypical images common to foreign and elite Brazilian conceptions of Brazilian reality. In 1970, the Living Theatre and Los Lobos from Argentina visited Oficina in a frustrated attempt to produce a collective creation in Brazil.

The CPC was formed in 1961 by Vianinha, Paulo Pontes, and others as the cultural arm of the Students' Union. Professing a vanguard position in regard to popular culture, the CPC theatre groups relied heavily on an understanding of Brechtian techniques interwoven with popular theatre traditions to expand the public of their theatre pieces (full-length plays as well as short agitational skits) beyond the middle class intellectuals/students to include a working class audience.

BRECHT ON THE NORTH INDIAN HINDI STAGE:
FACTS & FIGURES

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Abbreviations used in the text:

NSD National School of Drama, Delhi
IPTA Indian People's Theatre Association
IIT Indian Institute of Technology

The Sixties: Brecht Introduced

The Hindustānī Theatre in Delhi made the first attempt to introduce Brecht in Hindi. In 1962 two members of the theatre, Shamā Zaidī and M. Sathyū, visited the Berliner Ensemble and on their return produced Der kaukasische Kreidekreis with methods they had observed in the Ensemble, moulding masks on the actors' faces but adapting Indian folk melodies for the songs. The play was accompanied by an exhibition on Brecht's theatre and a show of the film Mutter Courage with Helene weigel. There were, however, no immediate reverberations. The play had neither the publicity nor the technical adeptness of the later production by the NSD.

In 1966 E. Alkāzī, the director of the NSD, visited Germany and the Berliner Ensemble. Impressed by the work of the BE, Alkazi introduced Brecht's theories and works to the syllabus of the School. He participated in 1968 in the "Brecht-Dialog" in East Berlin organized by the International Theatre Institute and the Brecht-Zentrum der DDR. In the same year, the Goethe Institute (West Germany) sponsored the visit of Carl Weber, former assistant director of the BE. Weber directed Der kaukasische Kreidekreis for the NSD Repertory. It was Weber's effort to present the play in the style of the Berliner Ensemble and the model of the play created by Brecht. Backed by the aesthetic acumen and technical skills of Alkāzī, the play was the first introduction to Brecht's theatre for the students and for Delhi audiences. It was a great success and the Repertory toured the country with it.

The Seventies: Brecht in Indian Attire

The decade began with a visit of the director of the Weimar Theater, Fritz Bennewitz, as part of an agreement that NSD had entered into with the government of the GDR. Bennewitz directed the NSD Repertory Company in a production of Die Dreigroschenoper whereby he was guided by European tradition and the methods developed by Brecht. He made no attempt to adapt this to the Indian situation. For Delhi audiences this meant renewed exposure to the practice of the Berliner Ensemble. Though the play proved popular, Bennewitz, in a series of productions in India, increasingly attempted to establish the relevance of Brecht's theatre for Indian audiences. In 1973 he collaborated with the Marāṭhī director Vijayā

Mehtā to produce Der kaukasische Kreidekreis in an adaptation which Indianised the realia and was based on the techniques of the Marāṭhi folk theatre form tamāṣā. In 1979 Bennewitz came back to the NSD Repertory to direct Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti in an adaptation which transferred the locale to India and used elements of folk traditions, which included the use of the local Haryanwi dialect and folk melodies for the songs.

From 1972 onwards the graduates of the School began to work independently with Brecht, as directors, translators or later by forming their own groups, as for instance M.K. Rainā, Bānsī Kaul, J.N. Kaushal and Balrāj Pandit. Plays with definite historical backgrounds were not transferred to an Indian setting but there was an increasing tendency to Indianise where possible. So for instance Amāl Allānā, back from a study-visit to East Germany and the Berliner Ensemble, retained the period setting of Die Dreigroschenoper which she directed in 1972 for the Folk Theatre Workshop in Chandigarh but transferred the scene to an Arab country in Die Ausnahme und die Regel (1973) for the Theatre Department of the Punjab University, Chandigarh, where, as a mark of Indianness, the Coolie spoke Punjabi in contrast to the Hindi of the rest of the characters. M.K. Rainā in Die Mutter allowed the setting to remain Russian but turned Der kaukasische Kreidekreis into a Punjābī Opera using Punjābī folk melodies and he set the play in the Moghul Punjab of the sixteenth century. The students also carried Brecht's plays to all parts of the Hindi speaking areas, so for instance Bānsī Kaul, who directed Die Mutter for the Gwalior Artists Combine in 1976 and scenes from Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches for the Sagar Theatre Workshop in 1977. Meanwhile, Rainā and Allānā established their own groups in Delhi, Prayog and Studio 1 respectively, where Brecht's plays remained a part of their repertoire.

Habīb Tanvīr had been working consistently with folk theatre since the inception of his group in 1959, which consisted entirely of tribal actors from Chattīsgarh by 1970. Tanvir translated and adapted into Chattīsgarhi language and locale Brecht's Der gute Mensch von Sezuan in 1978. The folk artists contributed to the play acquiring the character of a folk play.

Amitāva Dās Gupta's "Brechtian Mirror" established in Delhi in 1973 attempted to combine the Jātra style of Bengal with Brecht's epic theatre. This group, consisting of members from all sections of society and working partly on the fringes of the elitist theatre of Delhi, contributed to a flexibility in the methods of production. It pioneered the creation of an intimate basement theatre and utilized this for the production of Brecht's Galileo in 1978. In addition, it made use of all levels of space, roof top, shrubbery as theatre space for the open air production on an improvised stage for Arturo Ui in 1979. Both these were historical plays and could not be treated as Indian folk plays. As programme for the eighties, Dās Gupta envisages the production of Die Gesichte der Simone Machard and Schweyk im zweiten Weltkrieg.

The influential Anāmikā Kalā Sangam of Calcutta joined in the rising tide of Brecht productions with Der gute Mensch von Sezuan in 1977. Pop music was used, also masks, the use of which was generally equated at once with Brecht's "alienating" technique and traditional folk theatre. Brecht in Indian attire, adapted into local or near-local dialects often with folk music and with devices common to both Brecht and folk theatre, became increasingly the trend in the seventies.

The Eighties: Brecht in Dialect Adaptations

The trend continues unabated in the present decade. In 1982 Fritz Bennewitz directed Der kaukasische Kreidekreis for the NSD in a Hindi coloured by Bi_hārī dialect and localised in Bihār. In the same year M.K. Rainā produced Die Drei-groschenoper with elements of the folk form Nautanki. In 1983 Kartik Awasthi, an NSD graduate produced Die Ausnahme und die Regel and Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti in the dialect version used by the School, with his own group "Awadh Theatre Group."

In 1983 Fritz Bennewitz directed an adaptation into the local Bundelkhandī dialect of Der kaukasische Kreidekreis for the Rangmandal, Bhopāl. Here there was again an attempt to establish an equation with folk theatre, in costumes, music and presentation.

Meanwhile, in 1980 M.S. Sathyū, formerly of the Hindistani theatre, Delhi, produced Der kaukasische Kreidekreis with IPTA, Bombay. Though it was unavoidably influenced by the Hindi commercial film in acting style and music, Sathyū himself saw Brecht's epic devices as corresponding with folk theatre. A production on the same lines, more self-consciously "folksy" but technically less well coordinated, was Ekjut's Der gute Mensch von Sezuan in 1984 (in Bombay) under the direction of Nādira Babbar, an NSD graduate.

In all, there is a marked tendency to perform the same plays in the guise of a new dialect adaptation, a different locale, and different folk music in an effort to establish a relevance, indigenous but at the same time contemporary.

(see accompanying chart, pp. 56-61)

PERFORMANCES OF BRECHT'S PLAYS IN HINDI 1963-1983

| Year | Play | Translated Title & Translator | Group and Director |
|---------------|--|---|---|
| 1963 | Der kaukasische Kreidekreis | Sufaid Kundali Trans.: Qudsiā Zaidī, Niāz Hyder | Hindustānī Theatre, Delhi Dir.: Shamā Zaidi |
| 1967- 1968 | Das Elefanten- kalb | Hāthi kā bacca Trans.: K.M. Sontakke | NSD 3rd Year Students Dir.: Amāl Allānā |
| 1968 | Der kaukasische Kreidekreis | Khariā kā gherā Trans.: Raziā Sajjād Zaheer | NSD Repertory Dir.: Carl Weber |
| 1970 | Die Drei- groschenoper | Tin ṭake kā svāṅg Trans.: Surekhā Sikri, Sheilā Bhātia | NSD Repertory Dir.: F. Bennewitz |
| 1972 | Die Ausnahme und die Regel | The Exception and the Rule Trans.: Mansūr Saiyad | Delhi University Students Dir.: M.K. Rainā |
| | 'Rechtsfindung' Szene aus: Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reichs | In Search of Justice Trans.: Mansūr Saiyad | Delhi University Students Dir.: M.K. Rainā |

| Year | Play | Translated Title & Translator | Group and Director |
|------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| 1972 | Die Mutter | The Mother Trans.: Balraj Pandit | Miranda House College, Delhi University Dir.: Anurādhā Kapūr |
| | Die Ausnahme und die Regel | The Exception and the Rule Trans.: Mansūr Saiyad | IPTA, Delhi |
| | Die Drei- groschenoper | Tin ṭake ka svāṅg | Folk Theatre Work- shop, Punjab University, Chandigarh Dir.: Amāl Allānā |
| 1973 | Die Ausnahme und die Regel | The Exception and the Rule Trans.: J.N. Kaushal | Theatre Depart- ment, Punjab University, Chandigarh Dir.: Amāl Allānā |
| 1974 | Die Gewehre der | Senora Carrar's Rifles Trans.: Surekhā Sikri | Brechtian Mirror, New Delhi Dir.: Amitāva Dās Gupta |
| 1975 | Lux in Tenebris | Nisācar Trans.: Anil Chaudhury | NSD Students Dir.: Anil Chaudhury |

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| Year | Play | Translated Title & Translator | Group and Director |
|------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 1975 | Die Maßnahme | The Measures Taken Trans.: Rekha Kāmāth, Vijay Shankar Chaudhary | Internal performance, Jawāhar- lal Nehru University Students Dir.: Vijay Shankar Chaudhary |
| | Die Mutter | The Mother Trans.: Balrāj Pandit | Yatrik, Delhi Dir.: M.K. Rainā |
| | Mutter Courage | Mother Courage and her Children Trans.: Anwar Azīm | Brechtian Mirror Workshop Dir.: Amitāva Das Gupta |
| 1976 | Der kaukasische Kreidekreis | Kharīḍā kā gherā Trans.: Kamleshwar | Uttar Pradesh Natak Akademi, Lucknow Dir.: Śaśānk Bahugunā |
| | Die Mutter | The Mother Trans.: Balrāj Pandit | Gwalior Artists Combine, Gwalior Dir.: Bansī Kaul |
| 1977 | Der gute Mensch von Sezuan | Bhalī Aurat Trans.: Shyāmanand Jālan | Anāmikā Kalā Sangam Calcutta Dir.: Shyamānand Jālan |

| Year | Play | Translated Title & Translator | Group and Director |
|------|---|---|---|
| 1977 | Szenen aus: Furcht und Elend des dritten Reiches | Ghar kā bhedi Trans.: Amrit Rāi | Sagar Theatre Workshop, Sagar Dir.: Bansi Kaul |
| 1978 | Leben des Galilei | Life of Galileo Trans.: Vinod Kumār Sharmā, Dinesh Agrawāl | Brechtian Mirror, Delhi Dir.: Amitāvā Dās Gupta |
| | Die Ausnahme und die Regel | The Exception and the Rule Trans.: J.N. Kaushal | Studio 1, Delhi Dir.: Amāl Allānā |
| | Der gute Mensch | Sājāpur ki śāntibāi Trans.: Habīb Tanvīr | Nayā Theatre, Delhi Dir.: Habīb Tanvīr |
| | Die Mutter | The Mother Trans.: Balrāj Pandit | Prayog, Delhi Dir.: M.K. Rainā |
| | Szenen aus: Furcht und Elend des dritten Reiches | Chunāv. Trans.: Amrit Rāi | Samānantar bāl rangmañc, Gorakh- pur Dir.: Aparājītā |
| 1979 | Szenen aus: Mutter Courage, Der kaukasische Kreidekreis, Der gute Mensch von Sezuan, Arturo Ui, Galilei, Drei-Groschenoper | Brecht on Trial | NSD Students Dir.: F. Bennewitz |

| Year | Play | Translated Title & Translator | Group and Director |
|------|--|---|--|
| 1979 | Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui | The resistable rise of Arturo Ui Trans.: Anwar Azim | Brechtian Mirror, Delhi Dir.: Amitāva Dās Gupta |
| | Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti | Chopṛā Kamāl aur naukar jamāl Trans.: Anil Chaudhury | NSD Repertory Dir.: F. Bennewitz |
| | Die Drei- groschenoper | Tin take kī nauṭankī Trans.: Praśhant Khirwādkar, Rajesh Joshi | Vātāyan, Dehradun |
| 1980 | Der kaukasische Kreidekreis | Sufaid Kundali Trans.: Qudsiā Zaidi Niāz Hyder | IPTA, Bombay Dir.: M.S. Sathyū |
| | Die Ausnahme und die Regel | Dekha andekhā Trans.: Vinod Talib | IPTA, Bombay and Agreedoot, Delhi Dir.: Ashok Lal |
| 1981 | Die Ausnahme und die Regel | The Exception and the Rule | NSD 3rd Year Students Dir.: Rudraprasād Sen Gupta |

| Year | Play | Translated Title & Translator | Group and Director |
|------|--|---|--|
| 1982 | Die Mutter | The Mother Trans.: Balrāj Pandit | Prayog, Delhi Dir.: M.K. Raina |
| | Die Drei- groschenoper | Dekh tamāsā dekh Trans.: Hemendra Bhātia | The Hellions, Kanpur Dir.: M.K. Rainā |
| | Der kaukasische Kreidekreis | Insāf ka gherā Trans.: Rāmgopāl Bajāj | NSD 3rd Year Students Dir.: F. Bennewitz |
| 1983 | Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti | Chopprā kamāl, naukar jamāl Trans.: Anil Chaudhury | Awadh Theatre Group Delhi Dir.: Kārtik Awasthi |
| | Der kaukasische Kreidekreis | Insāf kā Gherā Trans.: Madan Sonī | Rangmandal, Bhopāl Dir.: F. Bennewitz |
| | Die Mutter | The Mother Trans.: Balrāj Pandit | Rangkarmī, Calcutta Dir. M.K. Rainā |
| | Die Ausnahme | Jiski lāṭhi uskī bhāims Trans.: Kārtik Awasthi | IIT Students, Delhi and Awadh Theatre Group, Delhi Dir.: Kārtik Awasthi |

"BRECHT, OF COURSE:"
THE ADVENT OF BB IN THE GULF

Dr. Lamice El-Amari
Université d'Oran, Oran, Algeria

(Editor's note: A slightly different version of the following report appeared in the September 1986 issue of notate, the Information and News Journal of the Brecht Center of the GDR.)

Some readers of Communications might wonder which Gulf or which continent is meant here. Those who think of the the Persian or Arabian Gulf probably associate the region with unpleasant episodes: the distant, six-year-long, senseless war which rages on, or such things as the famous oil crisis, etc. But hardly with cultural matters--and least of all things Brechtian.

When I planned my visit, Brecht was not central to it; I did not think there would be enough material or interest to justify the trip on that basis. No, I went for another reason: to do field-work on the origin of theatre in the Arab world and give some talks on the subject. The time and venue of the first lecture was already fixed, but the title was left open until after my arrival. I was prepared to accept my host's polite hint that the topics of my lectures should be of a general nature; Brecht would be a difficult topic.

The first lecture was programmed for the Emirates Writers Union (EWU) at its headquarters in El-Sharjah. This Emirate is considered the cultural capital of the country, whereas Abo Dhabi is the diplomatic/business capital. A cordial meeting was arranged with EWU President Mr. Abdul Hamid Ahmed, to give him the privilege of choosing one of themes I had prepared. This meeting proved decisive in a positive way. What began as a courtesy meeting turned into a serious discussion about Brecht. At first I took this as a sign of politeness by Mr. Ahmed towards my work. But it proved to be genuine interest, because when we finally came to fixing the title (Brecht was not on my list), he brushed all of the options aside, saying "we want Brecht. Brecht, of course." This settled the matter, as well as the nature of the entire visit. Notices about the lecture in the press meant that my main interest was known, and whatever general theme I began with, we always came back at length to BB.

Within ten days there were two lectures (both videotaped), and separate interviews in the two leading daily newspapers with circulation throughout the Gulf region (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qattar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE). The highlight of the trip was a television interview on Brecht's birthday: 20 minutes, for prime-time broadcast. No mean achievement, remembering that it was not even planned! The credit goes to Mr. Ahmed and my host, Mr. Farouk Ohan, who kept opening new doors and thus "extracted" more and more Brecht from me.

"Brecht in Arabic Focus" was the theme of the talk before the Writers Union. A number of plays by Arab dramatists were analyzed and the particular (often barely discernible) influence of Brecht on them explained. Examples were cited from the first and second generation of writers in Algeria, Egypt, Syria,

Iraq, and other countries. The discussion broadened the scope to include production questions. The production of Puntilla in Iraq, for example, had shown the need for new techniques in acting, design, and music, as well as a new approach on the part of the audience. Another major point raised involved the attitude toward the cultural heritage. This is a basic concern in the Arab world, and they wanted to know why and how Brecht treated the classics. What was his purpose in adapting works of past periods (only to avoid censorship?); and who among present Arab adaptors is following Brecht and worthy of emulation? In this context several artists were mentioned: Karoumi and Jalal (Iraq); El-Siwissi (Tunisia); El-Sidiqi (Marocco); Alloula and Ben Issa (Algeria); Fedha (Syria).

In the case of the lecture "The Language of the Theatre" presented at the Itehad Union Theater (Abo Dhabi), it was the role of the actor which prompted most of the questions. The audience consisted of the members of that company and other people associated with culture and mass media. Excerpts from Brecht's poem "On the Everyday Theatre" were read for the first time in Arabic translation. This certainly helped to clear up some confusion about Brecht's theatre (lack of emotion, coldness, etc.)

The El-Itehad newspaper asked how Brecht came into the Arab world, which plays were popular, and why the didactic plays were more frequently performed in the early phase of Brecht reception than now. Special attention was given here to the theory of the didactic plays, and a discussion of productions in the Arab world, some of them good, some bad. When a producer places the action of a didactic play in a new setting he does not always succeed, as shown by the "updated" Iraqi production of He Who Says Yes, He Who Says No.

The Al-Bayan newspaper asked for a comparison of the various Arab productions of Brecht plays: what is the best (in the sense of the most "Brechtian") production? The response focused in particular on the production of Sezuan in Egypt mounted by Saad Ardes (Egypt) and Kurt Veith (Berliner Ensemble) with the blessing of Helene Weigel. Another question involved translation, whether this should be done in classical Arabic, or allow for a certain use of dialect. In short: how different is Brecht's language from other writers of his generation, and when this is taken over into Arabic how much of this originality will or can be preserved. Most translations done in the early phase (mid-sixties) were faulty. In more recent years, some, including theatre specialist Nabil Haffar (Syria), have begun translating directly from the German.

The T.V. interview concentrated on the importance of Brecht to twentieth century theatre. The fact that the state television network should devote time to commemorate this occasion (BB's 88th birthday) was in my view sufficient evidence of his relevance to contemporary theatre in the Arab world. Mention was made of his life, his work, his particular contribution to world theatre, and in concrete terms the promise his theatre holds for Arabic theatre.

Following this brief trip to the Gulf region, I have no doubt that this genuine interest in Brecht will yield significant results in the future. I had the good fortune to enjoy the attention of an audience who wanted to understand Brecht for immediate and practical ends. After many theory-oriented sessions on BB in the "civilized" world, I found this "primitive" approach was most invigorating. Having gone to what I thought was an island (not to say a desert) in matters Brechtian, I left behind many human and intellectual bridges which will bind me to the place for years to come.

"BRECHT IS A FRIEND:"

Interview with ABDELKADIR ALLOULA conducted following the successful production of his play Al-Ajouad at the first Festival of Professional Algerian Theatre held in Algiers, September 1985.

(Abdelkadir Alloula is a playwright, producer, and actor associated with the Regional Theatre of Oran, Algeria (TRO) and, as guest producer, with the National Theatre of Algiers (TNA). He began as an actor with the TNA in 1963, and later produced plays (among them El-Kessbah's Sons, Hassan Tiero, and Sultan al Haier). After joining the TRO, he presented his first play, El-Allaq (1968) and adapted Gogol's Diary of a Mad Man for the stage (Homq Saliem), serving as both producer and actor. He has received several awards for his work, including the first prize at the first Professional Theatre Festival in Algiers, October 1985 and a prize at the Arab Theatre Festival in Tunis, December 1985, and was acclaimed by the press in 1986 following a guest production in Paris.)

* * * * *

Synopsis of Al-Ajouad ("The Good People")

The play contains four episodes and three songs, linked together by the theme of "the pressure of bureaucracy on the mass of the people."

Episode One concerns the plight of the animals in the public zoo which are starving to death due to a lack of public funds. A true humanist, el-Rabouhi, organizes the local people to provide food for the animals.

Episode Two shows two contrasting figures, the cook and the guard at a village school. The cook donates his skeleton to the school so that the students can benefit from it as study material. His friend, a religious person, is horrified, but goes along with the idea, and even assembles the skeleton and serves as its keeper in the school. It is displayed in an anatomy lesson in which the teacher and the friend (the guard) alternately discuss the natures of the bones and their function and the functions they play in society, as a living entity. In this episode there is a good example of the use of multiple levels of language on the stage. The teacher speaks in classical Arabic, in simple, factual scientific terms; the guard speaks in dialect which rises at times to the stature of poetry, full of metaphor.

Episode Three, the longest and perhaps most important one, takes place in a hospital. The main figure, Jeloul el-Fhaimi (whose name could mean either "the idiot" or "the clever") finds himself in a fix, when, as a guard of the mortuary a supposedly dead person starts talking to him, asking him the way to hell. Another patient, dead for two days, was found still in bed, while this one was sent down by mistake. The mother of the living patient had already completed the papers for his burial, but the person himself refuses to join the world of those still alive, saying "I have served my time, I have cheated and bribed . . ."

Episode Four is about a woman who is now paralysed from the waist down due to poisonous chemicals used in the shoe factory in which she worked. She wants

to continue working at home so that her daughter can continue her studies. The access of the poor to education and knowledge will mark the second independence of Algeria. This was also the motto of the second Episode.

These characters, simple, ordinary people, are great in their perseverance, but the underlying message of the play is that they should organize themselves to set things right. Alloula reminds us of Gorki in his deep love for and attachment to the simple people. He says people can make their own history. Al-Ajouad (the good people) can and must make their own decisions; and when knowledge, rather than superstitions, prevails among them, they can make the world a better place to live in. The zoo, so to speak, can become a garden.

* * * * *

Among prominent theatre artists in the Arab world, Abdelkadir Alloula is an exception in more than one sense, and he is certainly unique in his overt acknowledgement of Brecht's relevance to his work. Many of his contemporaries would rather speak of being different from Brecht than of how they benefit from his work. Others echo the worn out phrase that BB is no longer applicable to our time, or to non-European conditions. Declarations, but no explanations.

Alloula will have none of this. In fact, he gives the impression that such squabbles over the relevance of Brecht are simply nonexistent. He does not join in this oratory, he ignores it. He takes every opportunity to voice his positive relationship to Brecht, and to explain features in his work which he learned from BB.

Recently, during a lecture he gave at the Institute of Foreign Languages at Oran University, he stated emphatically in response to questions that "Brecht is most important for us in Algeria" and went on to explain why:

"Brecht offers a synthesis which is of particular importance for world theatre. He is different from other theatre theoreticians in that his theory offers a complete world-view based on historical materialism, and the use of the V-Effekt as a necessary means to heighten awareness of the concrete and the essential in life. We are interested in his views about the structure of theatre, and the V-Effekt is an important aspect of it. Brecht, who felt the limitations of the Aristotelian convention, developed his new theory as a result of assimilating a long tradition in theatre arts. He formulated his ideas in a clear way, and we can benefit from him greatly to develop or "new" theatre. We feel that the Aristotelian convention limits our work, and by understanding Brecht and using his theory we can break away from this convention. Brecht helps us tremendously in our present search."

Concerning the Brechtian features in his plays, Mr. Alloula went on to say: "Ours is not a dramatic, but a narrative theatre. We tell a story. There are no 'positive' heroes in my plays. The mover of action is not an individual, but a collective hero, if you like. Central characters in any episode are sympathetic, yet you cannot identify with them. This maintains a dynamic attitude on the part of the spectator: sympathizing and criticizing at the same time. The narrator has an important function. He is singer, actor, and commentator. He introduces the various episodes, and holds together the general frame of the play. The new type of play posed problems in the writing of the text. However, it was more

difficult to acquire the new technique of acting necessary for a narrative way of telling the story. For example, an actor in Al-Ajouad (The Good People, premiered on July 4, 1985) had to play about fifteen characters, changing roles all the time. Brecht helped us find solutions to these problems. We also benefitted from him in terms of giving the decor a new function: it is part of the action, and yet it makes its own comment on the events presented on stage."

It was refreshing to hear an artist talk so freely and without reservations about his way of "using" Brecht, and to observe the enthusiasm of an attentive audience of students who wanted to know more about BB. In a special interview with Mr. Alloula, I had occasion to inquire about his use of Brecht in more detail.

El-Amari: Your interest in a narrative rather than a dramatic theatre is shown by the importance of the narrator in your plays. How much is this narrator different from the traditional Goual (narrator) in your oral culture and how does Brecht come into this?

Alloula: Before answering the question I would like to state my opinion concerning an unfortunately widely-held view that the Arabs did not know the art of theatre. True, the Arabs did not develop a form of theatre akin to that known in Europe, i.e. the Greek model, but this is no proof of the statement that Arabs did not know theatre. There are more forms of theatre art than the great Greek form. Japan and China are but obvious examples. I am consciously studying our Arab culture to evaluate various forms of theatrical expression in our heritage. I am of the opinion that the theatre was always there in the Arab world, but its presence took forms different from those of the Greek model. It was present in poetry: El-Magaama, for example, is poetry, but it is a theatrical statement. Then comes Al-Goual, especially in North Africa. It was his duty to make poetry praising the heroism and grandeur of the tribe or court to which he belonged. This poet/singer/orator would argue and compete with poets performing the same duty and showing their allegiance to their respective tribes. His poetry speaks of the social life of his tribe, and he offers his art, reciting in the presence of an audience. We see this as theatrical performance. In our theatre, we try to give this element of folk art a new function. In this we benefit from theatre experimentation in the world. We try to give Al-Goual a new function, within the structure of the play. And Brecht was our example. This new approach--and I use the word "new" with reservation, because we are still at the beginning of our search--treats Al-Goual as the principle persona: he plays the main role in the action. In consequence the theatrical presentation becomes narrative, not dramatic. Having said this, I would like to add that theatre is not only narration, or not merely narration, as was the function of Al-Goual in past times. The words given to him in our theatre are made to serve the requirements of theatre language. They are theatrical statements. Here also Brecht's theatre theory was of tremendous help. We are still studying this theory in the hope of benefiting from it in our attempt to use the traditional and popular forms of our culture to present a modern world-view of social happenings.

El-Amari: Brecht definitely uses the narrator as a device of alienation--to break the flow of action, if you wish, to comment on the action, to throw light on the events presented, etc. This is also seen in your treatment of

the narrator. Is this taken directly from Brecht?

Alloula: Yes. This attempt to break the "flow of action" by the use of the narrator is certainly a conscious use of Brechtian technique. We employed it in the text, but in this play, more than before, we felt the need for a new form of acting to put this concept across. The episodes of Al-Ajouad are presented by a group of artists who are Goualeen (plural of Goual), but are at the same time actors playing many roles in view of the audience. In the first episode (at the zoo), for example, the main character, El-Rabouhi, enters as a figure from a traditional (realistic) play. His costume, make-up, performance are real. But he delivers his words to a group of Goualeen, who wear a uniform costume, but who would change their roles from listening to him or narrating his actions to performing the various parts of the animals in the zoo. The audience sees this change of roles and their attention is drawn to how the story is being told rather than to any one actor's part or view of it. This is a device against identification, and it is observed throughout the play. It is our hope that this will help the audience remember that they are in a theatre; they are spectators, and that those on the stage are but actors presenting a story. All this is taken directly from Brecht. Brecht's theoretical explanation of the new function of the narrator has given us a hint to go back to our cultural forms and to avail ourselves of the narrator with enthusiasm. To us, the narrator, rather than pacify the audience, is meant to help it take an active part in the play. That is, by thinking about the course of the action and hence becoming a producer with us in the performance.

El-Amari: With this theatre of narration, I see that your interest is above all to show aspects of social togetherness (as Brecht put it) from an angle which demands investigation. The audience might accept or reject the solutions suggested by the course of the action on the stage. But one hopes that they leave the theatre thinking about the issues presented to them, and will try to find solutions. In this sense they become producers with you. Would you accept this explanation?

Alloula: Yes, they think with us, but reach their own conclusions.

El-Amari: You provide the incentive but you do not give a ready-made formula. You do not feed them with a message.

Alloula: We do not press them.

El-Amari: As the producer of Al-Ajouad, would you please say a few words about your use of the V-Effekt in the production, especially in acting?

Alloula: This is not easy to explain. We have used this technique in plays before but we are still studying its theory. It is not a simple theory, and needs much work. It is an urgent issue which we face in our theatre. Indeed, this theory presented us with many problems when it came to acting. Our actors generally did not receive the necessary education that would help them to understand the requirements of this form of acting. As a new method, alienated acting presented our actors with many problems. For example, the voice. Many of them presented many roles, as I said before, but to

create these roles as individualities, voice was important in the narration. The tonal value of the presentation was decisive, the actor almost became a singer.

In addition, the new way of writing, the episodic, demands the use of multiple levels of language: from plain speech to poetry. The actor is asked to perform this, and to think at many levels. He cannot create the role (in this case roles) by delving into the inner motives of the characters, as, say, in Aristotelian drama. Here, the actor must put his mind, his intellect, to work, instead of giving priority to feelings and emotions. If he can do that, his acting would correspond to the requirements of the new type of acting. We made use of many hints which Brecht gave actors in his writings, but we are still studying this theory and consider it of vital importance to our work.

El-Amari: So far as I know, this technique of the actor playing many roles in the text of the play, and not simply as a production device, is new in Algerian theatre, am I right?

Alloula: Yes, that is correct. The alienation effect is a basic concept of the play: in the text, in acting and in the stage design, and to some extent also in the music. Such a comprehensive application of the V-Effekt is new. I mentioned before the importance of voice; let me cite the example of one Goual, the zoo guard, who plays fifteen roles in the play. During rehearsals this actor complained: "how could I give (portray) all these characters in one play?" I explained to him that we could do 20, even 25 characters if we could create tonality of voice that stimulates the imagination of the audience. By certain tones, we could even clothe the characters that the audience would see them in the flesh. We worked slowly towards this aim, so that he was able to do it at the end. Here, training the actors in the techniques of the V-Effekt was very helpful; i.e., the actor himself becomes a spectator, that is, a mediator between the text and the audience, or between the audience and the event presented to it.

El-Amari: I suppose you know the example Brecht gives to help the actor understand the essence of alienated, or epic acting: that is, to act as someone who has witnessed a car accident, he describes the event to other people, to passers-by. He imitates the driver, the man crossing the street, etc. changing his voice, moving with gestures, but without losing his personality. By such a technique, the actor remains himself but can invoke in the minds of the spectators the person he is presenting. Is this example known to you?

Alloula: This is precisely what we relied on to acquire the new technique of acting I was talking about. The actor narrates an accident: this is what we used. It helped us to overcome the lack of training of our actors. We were doing this grand-scale epic acting for the first time. We have made some attempts at this before, but this is the first time it was done on such a comprehensive and conscious level. The car accident example was great help as a start, but we cannot stop there. That is why I said earlier that I am still studying the theory of the V-Effekt, and the theory of Brecht. Indeed I talk to Brecht about my artistic problems, and look for solutions in his theory and practice. To me, Brecht is a friend. I talk to him, I argue with him, and he is always helpful. He IS a friend.

PRODUCTION REPORTS

Edward II, directed by Warner Crocker
Absolute Theatre Company, Chicago
October-November, 1987

Review by David Graver

This production, the Chicago premiere of Edward II, made a number of innovative alterations to the play which recommend it as a noteworthy addition to the repertoire of Brechtian theatre. Since I was the dramaturg for this show and might be accused of bias, I will refrain from praising the skill with which Absolute Theatre performed the play and devote my attention instead to describing the innovations and what I consider their conceptual significance to be.

To begin, Warner Crocker made the Ballad Peddler (played by Janis Henri) the most frequently seen character and principle element in the play's frame. Edward II was presented as a play within the play. A ragged troupe of actors lounge on the stage as the audience enters. Just before the houselights dim, the Ballad Peddler begins a song (lyrics and music by Charles Wilding-White) that invites the audience to watch the play and briefly outlines the action. During this song she picks the actors who will play the main parts, and they shift noticeably into character. Throughout the play, the Ballad Peddler remains on stage singing songs (with lyrics taken from Brecht's poems and ballads or written by our composer), playing messengers and other minor roles, and proclaiming the lines Brecht intended for placards or projections.

Using the Ballad Peddler and acting troupe as a frame draws attention to the presentational moment of the play. This is not just a story of medieval England but a performance by actors on a stage. The immediacy of performance is heightened further by the addition of songs in which each of the main characters comments on his/her predicament or in which the soldiers lament the hard life inflicted upon them by their leaders. Asides and soliloquies are thrust aggressively upon the audience, and actors not involved in particular scenes often remain on stage to accompany the songs with musical instruments or to enrich the spectacle with their silent tableaux. I think this style of presentation combines elements from Elizabethan theatre and Brecht's late theatrical practice in proportions appropriate to the spirit of this early play.

The alterations Crocker made to two key scenes, the "Great Battle" after Edward captures the peers and Edward's death, also deserve some attention. For the "Great Battle," Edward (Gary Lowery) sends his soldiers offstage to their positions and mounts alone to the highest platform of the multilevel stage (designed by Thomas B. Mitchell) where he cries "Forward!" with sword outstretched and a bloodthirsty gleam in his eyes; but in place of a battle, the Ballad Peddler sings a verse of Brecht's Ballad of Friendship (a recurring theme up to this moment): "And now came the day when they parted . . ." The king lowers his sword, his face twisted in mourning, soldiers move slowly onto the stage and drop to the floor to play corpses, and a trap door opens where Gaveston (Woodring Stover) is digging his grave for the next scene. Crocker and I felt Brecht intended "A Great Battle" to show the common soldiers butchering

each other for the whims of the aristocracy, but in rehearsals we began to worry that making this scene a theatrical success would turn the soldiers' agony into a pleasant spectacle. Crocker's alterations to this scene suppress the theatricality of violence in order to point up its futility: Edward's great battle cannot bring back his Gaveston. Instead of the thrill of brutal combat, Crocker gives the audience the sombre reality of death--Gaveston digging his grave in a field strewn with the corpses of common soldiers.

In the other important scene alteration Crocker simply restored Edward II's historical death. Instead of smothering Edward, Lightborn (Michael Barto) drives a red-hot spit into his abdomen through the anus. Seconds before penetration the stage is plunged in darkness where the audience is left to its own imagination and Edward's scream. While Crocker and I did not want the violence of the Great Battle to obscure the deaths it brought with it, we felt that the violence of Edward's murder was more important than the fact he was murdered. The death of common folk is rarely called to mind and so needs emphasis; the death of kings is a convenient way of dividing historical periods and rarely as harsh as their deeds would warrant. The extent of a common person's right to existence is the best measure of his or her quality of life; the violence that surrounds and upholds the positions of the world's governors is the best measure of the quality of their lives. With this in mind, I think it was appropriate that Edward's death mirrored in its violence the brutality in which he often indulged.

Edward's historical death also provided a poignant coda to his struggle with Mortimer (Dameon Carot). From the moment Edward refuses to abdicate, death becomes the trump card in his psychological and political battle with Mortimer. As in Im Dickicht der Städte, temporal wealth and power are not definitive measures of existential preeminence. Although Edward is reduced to rags and misery, he traps Mortimer in a double bind secured by his own victimization: the longer Edward lives under Mortimer's power, the more Mortimer's political powers ebb, but by killing Edward, Mortimer guarantees his own immediate downfall. Smothering Edward would have made his death simply the last move in the macabre, homoerotic, political game between him and Mortimer; leaving Edward's death to the sadistic ingenuity of Lightborn raises it above the game. Edward's death becomes an emblem of the mind-numbing violence that permeates the whole play, that overwhelms the culinary proclivities of the audience, and that the audience is led to suspect will not abate in history's sequel despite the prayers of Edward III.

EDWARD II There's trouble when the king's a queen. Warner Crocker directs Eric Bentley's translation of Bertolt Brecht's rewrite of Christopher Marlowe's tragedy. "A lively and intelligent production, moving at a vigorous pace on the strength of three fine performances" (*Reader* critic Albert Williams). Absolute Theatre Company, through November 28. Thursday and Friday, 8 PM; Saturday, 6:15 and 9:30 PM; Sunday, 3:30 PM. No performance November 26. \$10-\$15.

(noted in the
Chicago Reader)

SHAKESPEARE'S RICHARD III,
directed by Heinz-Uwe Haus

The Inner Stage Theater, University of Guelph
Guelph, Ontario, Canada, October 26-31, 1987

Dramaturgical Notes (Heinz-Uwe Haus)

On the stage, all events must be shown as human behaviour; and all human behaviour must be shown in the form of human actions. The actors, in collaboration with their director, have to remodel the literary dialogue into visible, socially important individual actions, and then remodel these into attitudes of speech, movement, and groupings. The building-block of a theatrical production is the event, each event consisting of a sequence of several actions which must be revealed and performed by the actors. A text becomes 'gestic' when a human behaviour is laid under the action by the actors. It is a common error to assume that events, with their structure of actions, pre-exist in the text of a play, and that the actors have nothing to do but to execute them. In the theatre, the plot must not be solely a literary device, nor the action only a quality of the text. The events must be discovered; and that is not only a question of analysing the text but, to a much greater extent, it is a question of the volume and profundity of the actor's personal knowledge of the world outside the theatre. The actor must develop specific faculties for observing human relationships within their larger social and historical settings, as well as the ability to copy them in a physical, 'gestic' manner.

In his working diary Brecht wrote about the means to discover the 'events' of a scene. First a long scene must be divided into its several episodes. Then the director, in collaboration with the actors, must find a heading for each single episode of a scene, each episode distinct and contrasted to the one before. These headings can take the form of sentences, like the chapter titles in books on aesthetics, on life and manners, on history, on psychology; or they can take the form of newspaper headlines, ballads--anything that describes the pertinent action and, by its form, reflects the underlying gestus.

Examples of Headings: Act IV, Scene ii:

First Event: The expected coronation does not take place (from opening of scene to line 1).

Second Event: Not even a celebration of the coup d'etat with the closest accomplice; but new orders for murder (11. 1-26).

Third Event: He who hesitates is lost; Richard prefers a servant (11. 27-41).

Fourth Event: Further symptoms of Apostasy (Stanley and Catesby, 11. 42-59).

Fifth Event: Richard rushes at the most obedient subject (Tyrrel, 11. 66-81).

Sixth Event: The former main accomplice begs with the utmost humiliation (Buckingham, 11. 82-117).

Seventh Event: Escape of an accessory with empty pockets ahead of certain death (Buckingham, 11. 118-121).

Example of Headings: Act I, Scene ii:

Main Heading: Daughter of Murdered Godfather Marries Rival Don.

First Event: A grieving Daughter-in-law's public mourning turns to private cursing (11. 1-28).

Second Event: A murderer gate-crashes his victim's funeral; a fight breaks out (11. 29-88).

Third Event: An awkward courtship in an unromantic setting (11. 89-113).

Fourth Event: An ugly man tells a beauty that her looks can kill (11. 114-150).

Fifth Event: A chauvinist proverb: Nothing washes away a woman's anger like a warrior's tears (11. 151-173).

Sixth Event: A 'Daddy's Girl' fails to avenge her father's death (11. 174-185).

Seventh Event: A local heart-breaker swallows her pride (186-223).

Eighth Event: A trick so easily performed, even the trickster believes it.

This method of analyzing a play--giving its separate events titles which communicate an important social behaviour and an obvious task for the actors--cannot be applied to every kind of play, but it certainly lends itself to the particular dramaturgical structure of Shakespeare's plays.

In the theatre the audience wishes to participate in the development of an action and its effects. It expects not only the communication of facts, but the actions of character that are strong enough to create an urge to participate. The pleasure of theatre lies in this process of action and response. No one can resist its poetic truth and incomparable possibilities for communication.

Heinz-Uwe Haus, with Stephen Johnson

FOLLOWING BRECHT'S ADVICE:

RICHARD III AT THE INNER STAGE, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

Review by Kevin Hill

Richard's plot is, until the final act, virtually congruent with Shakespeare's own. This production shows that the actor is the essential medium of theatre. The reality that theatre strives to show is communicated on stage chiefly through human behavior--through the actions of individuals attempting to shape their lives according to their desires and wishes. And the actor's knowledge of reality outside the theatre--his/her knowledge of human relationships, of the society in which he/she lives, of typical social behaviors--determines the richness of his/her creation in the theatre. Haus had the actors work to observe daily life and then do improvisations on the observations of people in the subways, in supermarkets, on the streets. To create a sense of ensemble, the company did collective warm-ups, helped one another create costumes, sets and props, and every actor not featured in a scene would participate in the actions as spectator, soldier, citizen, attendant. To find the events, Haus and the actors analyzed the play scene by scene, defining what Brecht called the Gestus, those actions which illustrate clearly to the audience the social meaning of a relationship, a situation, a conflict. Rather than focusing on the revelations of private personality, the actors worked to create the characters as social identities, as people whose actions have social consequences.

Haus combined two qualities all too rarely found in the same director: a histrionic imagination and an excellent mind. He gives us scenes which are not only dramatic or funny but appropriate to the play's historical/ethical/religious/political/poetic/psychological/artistic (or whatever) framework. He can explain--not defend or rationalize, but elucidate--every choice of blocking or costume or sound effect for every bit of the play. And he sees to it that the lines make sense. The guest director from the GDR has staged the play with the dramatic inventiveness that is the hallmark of his imagination. Not only is the vivid staging endowed with speed and simplicity, but Haus's strong feel for Shakespearean relevance leads him to line readings that are notable for their appositeness and sense. He had taken the latest research on Shakespearean theatre into consideration in order to understand the text. Shakespeare's language expresses human behavior; it is used to formulate human relationships; it cannot be regarded as merely a philological issue.

Haus has tried to emphasize the significance of Brecht's term Gestus in the text in order to comprehend the relationship of the play to elements of the medieval popular theatre. For most of the people in Shakespeare's audience, the old morality plays, the chief form of British drama before the late 16th century, were still a familiar theatre experience. None of Shakespeare's histories has a stronger kinship with the morality plays than Richard III, in which characters are carefully schematized--there are, for example, the figures of the victims who appear to Richard in his guilt-ridden dream--and moral lessons are constantly drawn, though they frequently sound hollow in relation to the dreadful events they are supposed to summarize.

Recognizing the echoes of the earlier genre helps explain why much of Richard III seems allegorical, even "stiff" compared to other Shakespeare histories, which tell their stories in more natural, less alienated ways. For Shakespeare's audience the recollection of the morality play must have made Richard III seem even darker--for the old plays were written in a time of seeming moral certainty, where one could take pleasure in seeing Good Guys and Bad Guys receive their just deserts. Richard III, on the other hand, mirrors a period of moral disintegration. It offers pungent images of the world's cruelty with little underlying sense of reassurance. Often, in fact, a tragic event is amplified not by consoling wisdom but by some grotesque irony. There is no doubt that Shakespeare's Richard is one of the most colorful figures that he put on the stage, in spite of Richard's "negative fame." He acts according to the feudal tyranny of the Middle Ages; he kills by plan. The figure is divided into the genuine King Richard who gains power and the throne by violence and into the player/jester, who, in old English theatre, had a hunchback and limped: the figure of Vice.

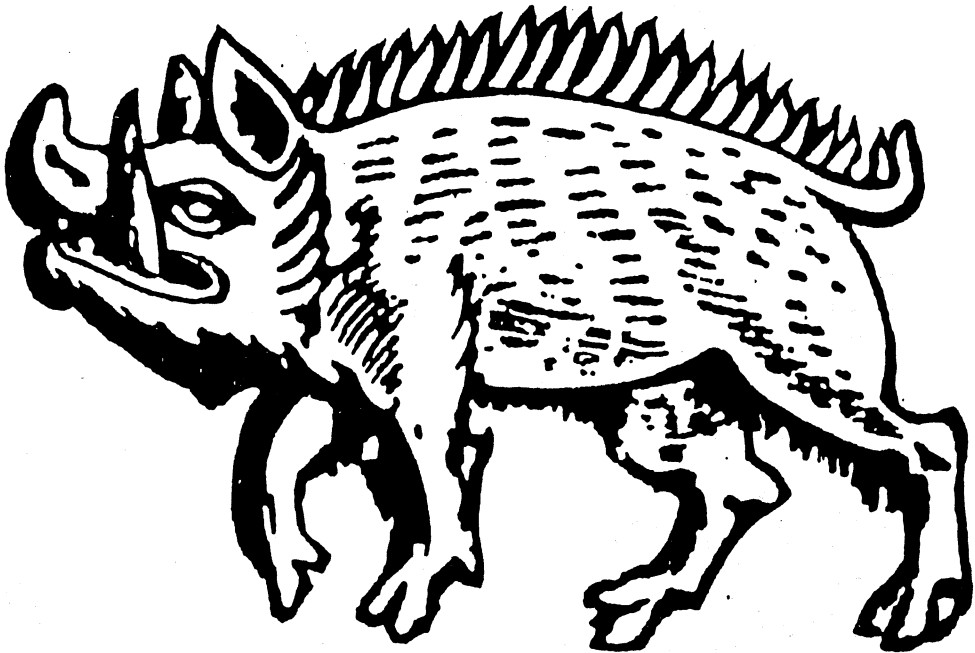
In this second role, he makes friends with the audience and gives them a rather plebeian view of "high" history; he invites them to join him in this experiment by adopting their jargon. He shows the audience that power is man-made. Here, the political viewpoint is mediated not only by the historic figure but directly by the actor. He does not simply merge with the figure, but energetically represents the interests of the audience when viewing the blood-soaked history of the king.

The tradition of the sarcastic villain in English theatre, complete with asides and puns in close contact with his audience, took on a new kind of realism. This meant placing the vice convention into the play's scenic and stylistic production. An objective view of late feudal anarchy was thus generated. The figure becomes the audience's representative to illustrate their common perspective. Haus, as adaptor and director, has wrought an immensely intelligent show, conceived with knowledge, thought, and care, but executed so as to keep the cerebral process off-stage, while the searing moment as it is suffered through is down stage and center. He gives it the clarity and fast pace necessary to rivet the attention of youngsters getting their first exposure to Richard, yet also the subtlety and innovation which will intrigue those for whom this staging provides the opportunity for reacquaintance with an old "killer." What's more, Haus finds the play's humor, and not just in the scenes with the citizens who achieve insight. To define the characters for us, the actors incorporated familiar social types into their characterizations. Lady Margaret was in some ways a bag lady; the Duchess of York a haughty dowager; and Clarence's murderers were workers troubled by their job. The actors wore costumes fashioned from both the period and today, which deemphasized the characters as individual personalities

and made them emblematic of the range of responses to the social problem of the play: every character had to find his/her way in the endless instability created by the fight for power.

For one thing, Shakespeare made Richard a devil masked as a man: able to put on in turn the masks of the loyal brother, the impassioned lover, the kindly uncle, the self-sacrificing king. The masks are both tragic and comic; they hide death, and they mock at human folly. We pity Richard's victims, but we feel superior to them; we, of course, would never be taken in. For another thing, Richard is the underdog who fights his way to the top, one man against the world, with everything against him. The climb to power is a treacherous one, dangerous to Richard, deadly to anyone who blocks his path; he climbs over their bodies until he stands, though not for long, where he had determined to stand. The triumph of will is exciting theater. But Haus's direction in its Brechtian exaggeration of Richard's villainy also shows clearly what brings destruction upon himself. Right does not triumph without probability, as in melodrama, but as a probable result of human actions. Richard rises steadily until he orders the murder of his nephews; from that moment he turns friends into enemies, till "he hath no friends but what are friends for fear" (V, ii). But he does not have the inner conflict of Macbeth, who inspires pity as well as fear. Retributive justice strikes down not only Richard but the whole family of Plantagenet. Finally, Shakespeare shows how the people of England suffered from tyranny and civil war, when "the brother blindly shed the brother's blood." He ends the play with a heartfelt prayer that this country, united, may now live in peace. But this message comes through the puppet Richmond, who speaks with no voice of his own. This end reminds of the "plotted tragedy," a bloodbath plotted like a stageplay. Haus's directing approach to the play is to take us out of Shakespeare's theatrical techniques and devices of viewing reality and presenting the history so that reality is experienced as lively, vital, and changeable.

THE DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
PRESENTS



the
LIFE and DEATH
of
KING RICHARD
the
THIRD

BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY HEINZ-UWE HAUS
DESIGNED BY ALLAN WATTS

OCTOBER 26 • 27 • 28 • 29 • 30 • 31, 1987
THE INNER STAGE, 8:00 P.M.
[Preview: Sunday, Oct. 25, 3:00 p.m.]

STUTTGART: Ellen Hammers überaus erstaunliches Brecht-Programm (Theater heute 8/87, p. 53)

Ein Brecht-Abend im Staatstheater – »Von der weißen Hölle dieser Erde«: Wer sagt's denn, die Akte Bertolt Brecht ist noch lange nicht zu schließen, obwohl der »Zeigeist« es nahelegt! Das bundesdeutsche, aber auch das DDR-Theater hat seinen Friedhofsrieden mit dem wirkungslos klassisch gewordenen Jahrhundertge- nie geschlossen: alles geges- sen und verdaut, die (politi- schen) Lehren kapiert, der märchenhafte Legendenton von chinesischer Weisheit und Freundlichkeit. Kitsch- und peinlich, der kraftmeiernde Bürgerschreck Baal ein Fall fürs Lyrikalbum (Abteilung Villon), die Theatertheorie vom V-Effekt ... (vgl. zu- letzt TH 2/87). Und nun hat Ivan Nagels Stuttgarter Dra- maturgie für sensiblerbare Zeitgenossen völlig übertra- schend und wie aus Versen mit dem alten B.B. ihren größten Triumph errungen: Ganz bescheiden mit einer in der Kammertheater-Black- box zunächst nur als Schau- spielübung einstudierten Sonntags-Matinée, die nicht mehr zu versprechen schien als – wie schon bei Claus Pey-

mann vor genau neun Jahren im Stuttgarter Schauspiel- haus – Lieder und Gedichte von Bertolt Brecht, quer durch alle Schaffensperi- oden.

Neugierig macht freilich schon der Titel »Von der weißen Hölle dieser Erde«. Das Ergebnis kann man ruhig sensationell nennen. Es sind wohl mit die ungewöhn- lichsten, anregendsten an- derhalb Theaterstunden, die zur Zeit auf einer deutschen Bühne zu sehen und hören sein dürfen.

Dieses Wunder, mit einem so noch nie befragten und präsentierten Brecht höchst irritierend bekannt gemacht zu haben, hat Ellen Hammer vollbracht: eine scheue Dramaturgin und eher nur mal nebenher Auch- Regisseurin, von der Schau- bühne kommend und seit zehn Jahren nicht von der Seite des geheimnisvollen Regie-Gurus Klaus-Michael Grüber weichend. Ellen Hammers Stuttgarter Brecht-Trouvaile ist denn auch wie von Grüber selbst inszeniert: eine Scenace von unheimlicher Bannkraft und Intensität, schwerwütig la-

stend und gleichzeitig von spielerischer Leichtigkeit. Es ist schade, um die Men- schen klagend und zugleich sentimental zynisch, beiläu- fig und gefährlich, voller In- teraktionen und Binnentra- gödien der dritten Art – Brecht-Texte, denen man eine solche Dimension im Grenzbereich ambivalenter Halluzination und greller Absurdität nie zugekraut hät- te. Ein Wunder, fürwahr!

Das geht schon op- tisch los. Ramund Bauers Papierwände als Teil eines (Proben-)Bühnenbildes, das zu dem Odets-Stück »Wa- chet auf und rühmet!« gehört (TH 5/87), gliedern den ei- nen Teil des Raumes um den Flügel herum, und in einer anderen Ecke steht noch ein Schifferklavier, mehr aber braucht der auch als Sprecher exzellente Musiker Joachim Kuntzsch nicht. Den große- ren Teil des Raumes bilden Caféhausische, über denen wie Sterne an dunklem Fir- mament tiefgehänge Glüh- birnen ein magisches Ar- beitslicht streuen. Eine Lichtschacht-Tür geht auf, herein schleichen die typi- schen Grüber-Figuren (also

alle mit Hut) und setzen sich traumverloren an die Tische ihres Wartesaals.

Jeder bringt sich et- was mit, David Benannt zum Spielen Stöckelschuhe, Klaus Steiger versinkt hinter einer gelblichen Finanz- gazette, Klara Hofels stellt sich eine Milchkanne mit Schwertlilien auf ihren Tisch, Yvonne Devrient legt Patien- ten, Eleonore Zetsche zieht an einer Zigarre und schreibt, Udo Thies macht – auch als erfundene Spielfigur »Bill« für den Bilbao-Song – lässig das machohaft Brecht-Ganoven-Double, Anne Benannt pult gedan- kenverloren in den Zähnen, Maria Wiecke schlägt in Zeit- lupe die Beine übereinander. Den geheimnisvollsten Auf- tritt aber hat als letzter, spät kommender Zufallsgast die wunderbare Geno Lechner: ein verloren dastehendes Mädchen mit ungebrochener Liebeshingabe wie ein Fräulein von Horváth; und Beckett ist sowieso die ganze Zeit über präsent. Brecht, der an diesem Abend seine beiden größten Antipoden wie selbstverständlich mit- einschließt, wenn das keine

Überraschung ist.

Doch wie sagt der ar- me B.B.: »In mir habt ihr einen, auf den könnt ihr nicht bauen!« Aber auch: »Wir wissen, daß wir Vorläufer sind und nach uns kommen wird nichts Nennenswertes.« Sein Selbstbewußtsein, zu- mindest was die Dichterkol- legen betrifft, hat ihn kaum getrogen. Und dann geht al- les seinen Gang, und wenn die Chose aus ist, dann fängt's von vorne an, und das Meer ist blau, so blau, und das geht ja auch noch lang ...

Das hinreißende En- semble spricht, singsangt, haucht, verhaucht den Brecht, als hätte er speziell für sie lauter persönliche Zu- standsbefunde und Welt- (schmerz)elegeren von heute geschrieben. Nur vereinzelt in größeren Abständen steht das auf dem Mainée-Pro- gramm, auch in der kommen- den Saison – aber ensuite je- den Abend. Vormittag oder Nachmittag müßte es laufen. Denn unaufwendig Besseres ist weit und breit nicht zu sehen.

Christoph Müller

In Brief . . .

The current bibliography listings in the last issue omitted one recent doctoral dissertation on Brecht: Patricia Elizabeth LINDERMAN, "'Jein': Brecht's Jasager and Neinsager Considered as Vehicles for the Promotion of Critical Thought," University of Georgia, 1986 (reference submitted by Ward Lewis).

Beginning with the current issue, the quarterly publication of the Brecht Society of America has a new title--Gestus: The Electronic Journal of Brechtian Studies. The full text of each issue will be accessible online. A paper print supplement will be published containing photographs and illustrations, plus abstracts of each article. Free access to the online edition is offered to all IBS members. For information, please write (by paper mail) to Dwight Steward, The Brecht Society of America, 59 S. New Street, Dover, Delaware 19901. Your E-mail address should be included. Any IBS Members who wish to explore the combined possibilities of electronic publishing and computer conferencing are invited to join a two month online conference. The conference will be carried on /BRECHT NET/in January-February 1988 and will include reports from the Internationaler Brecht-Dialog-1988 "Brecht: Kunst und Lebenskunst" Berlin-DGDR, February 9-15, 1988 (see CONFERENCE REPORTS elsewhere in this issue).

NEH--News of interest to IBS members from the United States: Since its founding in 1983, the Travel-to-Collections Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities has provided support to more than 1400 humanities scholars to assist them in their research. Just recently, the NEH adjusted the program to make it more useful to the scholarly community. Specifically, the stipend has been increased to \$750, and there are now no geographical limitations on the program, i.e., the \$750 may be applied toward research travel anywhere in the world. The application deadlines have also been placed on a regular, easier-to-remember, six-month basis: January 15th and July 15th. For additional information, write the Division of Fellowships and Seminars, NEH, Washington, D.C. 20506, or call the Travel-to-Collections Program Officer, Ms. Kathleen Mitchell, at 202-786-0463 or 202-786-0466.

MARC SILBERMAN, Book Review Editor for The Brecht Yearbook is currently on leave from the University of Texas at San Antonio; his current address is c/o Professor Friedrich Knilli, Institut für Medienwissenschaften, Technische Universität Berlin, Ernst-Reuter-Platz 7, 1000 Berlin 10, Germany.

IBS President ANTONY TATLOW is also currently on leave of absence and can be reached at 11 Trafalgar Terrace, Monkstown, Dublin, Ireland until September 1st.

Chicago's Absolute Theater Company not only made a significant contribution to Brecht performance/adaptation with its creative production of Edward II, but also aided AIDS victims by hosting benefit performances for both the Reimer Foundation, a not-for-profit group named for Chicagoan Brad Reimer, who died of AIDS in 1984, and the Howard Brown Memorial Clinic.

From IBS Member Lee Baxandall (Oshkosh, Wisconsin USA): "Brecht's image--before HUAC, no less--is now in New York City bus shelters to provide an artistic statement. In the age of Mac Tonight, that's progress." (See the Arts and Entertainment Section of the New York Times, Saturday, September 19, 1987 for an article by Douglas C. McGill on the Public Art Fund, Inc. ("Curator of the New York Streets") which shows an oversized photographic image of Brecht in a bus shelter at 14th Street and Third Avenue. The "work," called "Bus Shelter II," was created by artist Dennis Adams.

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Resumé:

notate/Journal of the Brecht Center of the GDR

notate, No. 2/1987

Main Theme: "Brecht & Berlin"

Continuing the emphasis in issue no. 1/1987, the editors devote most of this issue to matters relating to the 750th anniversary of Berlin. The main article concludes Therese Hörnigk's extensive study on Brecht's early years in Berlin: "Brecht Performances in Berlin as Reflected in the Berlin Press from 1922 to 1933." The part published in the previous issue ended with the Berlin premiere of Baal in 1926; the continuation begins with Brecht's participation in Piscator's adaptation of Jaroslav Hasek's novel The Good Soldier Schweyk for the stage. Then Hörnigk turns to the triumphant success of the world premiere of Brecht's and Weill's Threepenny Opera at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. The working-class press and the "gutter press," reactionary and liberal publications--all were caught up in the dispute over this social ballad of big-city life. One large-circulation newspaper, the Vossische Zeitung, in alluding to the fact that Brecht's previous works had never found such public resonance scoffed gently: "Luck has come to needy hands," while the Kreuz-Zeitung sniffed at what it called "pseudo-revolutionary sentimentality mixed with sugar and cinnamon" in the new play, which drew huge audiences. The next complex in Hörnigk's study deals with Brecht's didactic plays such as The Flight of the Lindberghs and The Measures Taken, which were greatly influenced by the socio-political situation in Germany at the time. A new triumph was achieved at the turn of the year 1931-32, when the opera Mahagonny broke the Berlin en suite record for successive performances in one theater. It was preceded by the flop of his new version of the comedy Mann ist Mann at the State Theater. Hörnigk notes here: "Brecht and his dramatic works had by now reached a point where not only bourgeois audiences but especially the bourgeois theatre critics . . . split in their positions . . . the aesthetic problems of Brecht's dramatic works were now debated and evaluated less than the social views he propounded." This situation would continue right up to the last Brecht premiere in Berlin--The Mother, based on Maxim Gorky's famous novel--before his plays were forced off German stages and the writer himself out of the country.

Two pages of this issue are devoted to this year's "Brecht-Days," which, as always, were planned to commemorate the writer's birthday on February 10th. For three days the Brecht-Center invited teachers from GDR schools named after

Brecht or Helene Weigel, as well as university educational and literary experts, theatre people, and students to exchange experiences and discuss methods. The main goal was to discuss and test in practice the possibilities of overcoming contradictions between learning and having fun, and finding joy and satisfaction in discovery and understanding.

Articles elsewhere in this issue are devoted to two important personalities linked to Brecht and his work. First, Manfred Grund, chief stage designer at the Berliner Ensemble, pays tribute to Caspar Neher, born 90 years ago on April 11, 1897, and the designer of countless noteworthy Brecht premieres. Grund calls him "a universal spirit, who epitomized European culture in his creations for the theatre and developed it to new, high levels." Neher's designs for The Mother at the Berliner Ensemble are described as being sophisticated and simple at the same time, and the author aims to counteract the danger that "the recognition of such achievements might fade away into unclarity." Second, Austrian composer Gottfried von Einem recalls his acquaintance with Brecht (which was arranged by Neher) in an interview with Viennese literary historian/journalist Kurt Palm. He mentions their joint projects for the Salzburg Festivals, some of which reached a fairly advanced stage. However, an opera never got beyond the initial planning stages due to incompatible aesthetic viewpoints. Von Einem recalls the proposed title: "Joys and Sufferings of the Greater and Lesser Pirates."

Reviews in this issue cover Victor Fenigstein's musical adaptation of Saint Joan of the Stockyards at the Städtische Bühnen in Augsburg, as well as work with Brecht in two very distant parts of the world: Argentina and the Philippines. Reporting from Argentina, Roberto Aguirre, head of the professional Grupo del Invierno, discusses productions of both Der Jasager/Der Neinsager and Senora Carrar's Rifles, while the work of GDR Director Fritz Bennewitz in the Philippines on a production of Puntilla in the Tagalog language is discussed in the other review.

notate, No. 3/1987

Main Theme: "Fragments--Fatzer, for Example"

The issue features Brecht's Fatzer fragment in conjunction with the Berliner Ensemble's production of Heiner Müller's version of The Downfall of the Egoist Fatzer directed by Manfred Wekwerth and Joachim Tenschert. For the discussion of the problems involved in editing Brecht's fragments, Günther Glaeser takes Fatzer as his example. (For the drama complex alone, the stock of unpublished material consists of some 155 different incomplete plays and fragments of plays). He characterizes Brecht's intention briefly in the following manner: Through the example of the individual in opposition to the collective, Brecht conveys dialectical thinking through aesthetics and teaches a method of realization which activates and enables the recipients to intervene in changing social life. Brecht recognized that this ambitious aim could not be achieved through conventional means and was therefore compelled to try various experiments, above all with the structure of the plot and the characters. Just how Brecht hoped to link both levels of the play on the stage is unknown, wherein lies one possible reason for the abrupt break-off in this ambitiously begun dramatic and pedagogical experiment.

The other main piece in this issue contains excerpts from a discussion which Wolfgang Heise (who died on April 10, 1987) had with Heiner Müller in December 1986 (scheduled to be published in full in Brecht-88). Müller explains concerning his work on the Fatzer-Fragment: "One point which got a raw deal in our adaptation but which is of great interest to me is that concerning 'Learning through Shock,'" by which is meant "the moment of truth, when the enemy is reflected in the mirror." Müller goes on to relate this to Brecht's views concerning the relationship of the actor and the audience, using his work on Fatzer as a focal point of discussion.

Other articles in this issue deal with Brecht productions and workshops in such places as Spain (Barcelona--Saint Joan of the Stockyards, directed by Konrad Zschiedrich (GDR)); Colombia (workshops conducted by Jochen Ziller (GDR) and sponsored by the Colombian Theatre Association in Bogota and Cali); Bangladesh (a Brecht workshop at Shilpakala University in Dacca conducted by Alexander Stillmark (GDR)); and the Soviet Union (a production of Mann ist Mann by the German Drama Theatre of Termirtau/Moscow Satirical Theatre under the direction of Alexander Yeshanov).

Finally, the issue includes a discussion of the book Young Readers and Brecht published by the Brecht Center (Brecht-Studien, Vol. 18) and a tribute to Elisabeth Hauptmann entitled "Modesty and Achievement" in honor of her 90th birthday.

notate, No. 4/1987

This issue has no primary theme and focuses on Brecht performances in Vienna, Berlin (both East and West), Jena, Hungary, and elsewhere. In particular, Werner Hecht reviews Alfred Kirchner's production of Arturo Ui in Vienna and describes the neofascist tendencies in that country which are attacked by the production; Jürgen Schebera reports on the production of Fatzer at the Berliner Ensemble, questioning whether the fragment is really suitable for stage adaptation; Jochen Gleiß reviews Günter Krämer's production of The Threepenny Opera at the Theater des Westens in Berlin-West, which he discusses in relation to the Kreuzberg disturbances going on at that time; and Sigmar Gerund gives impressions of his study tour to Hungary during which the author witnessed three different productions of The Threepenny Opera in Budapest and Győr and a production of Galileo in Miskolc, all of which took place in early 1987.

This issue also contains Jan Knopf's (FRG) second "Werkstattbericht" concerning the new Brecht edition, in this case problems encountered with the Keuner Stories. Knopf almost comments on a discovery involving the Hauspostille (the topic of the first "Werkstattbericht"): the twelve-verse version of the so-called "Ballad of Francois Villon." Knopf also addresses an inquiry to the readership concerning the year of origin of the poem "Orges Wunsch," which was not included in the original Hauspostille (1927).

Other articles and reports in this issue include notate-Study no. 21 by Fritz Hennenberg entitled "Simon Parmet, Paul Burkhard, and the Music for the Premiere of Mother Courage," presenting the results of Hennenberg's latest research in the area of Brecht and music; and several book reviews, including Gudrun Klatt's contribution on Werner Mittenzwei's Das Leben des Bertolt Brecht, a two-volume, 1400-page biography published by Aufbau-Verlag earlier this year.

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