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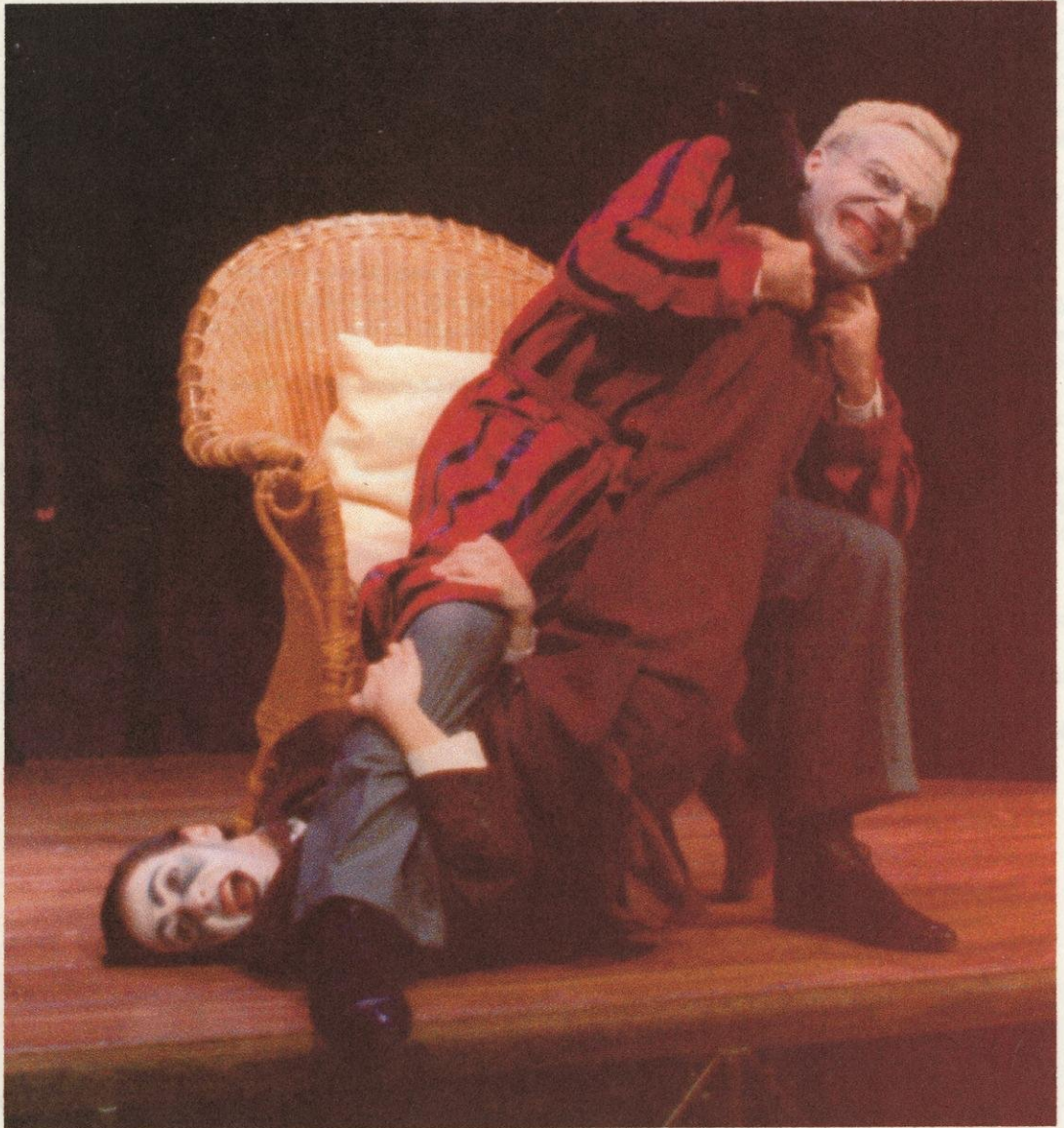
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COMMUNICATIONS

from the International Brecht Society



Volume 27 No. 2

December 1998

INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY *COMMUNICATIONS*

Volume 27 Number 2

December 1998

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All Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor. *Communications* welcomes manuscripts relating to all facets of Brecht's work. Manuscripts should conform to the *MLA Style Manual* and should not exceed 7,500 words. You are encouraged to include with your manuscript the text in Word Perfect or Microsoft Word on IBM formatted 3½ or 5¼ diskettes.

The Editor wishes to thank Professor Carl Weber, Drama Department, and Professor Russell Berman, Chair of the German Department, Stanford University, for their support.

See the inside back cover for information on subscriptions and membership. Membership in the IBS includes subscriptions to both *Communications*, and *The Brecht Yearbook*. The Managing Editor of *The Brecht Yearbook* is Maarten van Dijk, University of Waterloo, 200 University Ave. West, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, N2L 3G1

IBS-Communications is a member of The Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ).

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IBS-Communications is indexed in the *MLA International Bibliography* and *Germanistik*, and is included in the databank of the Theatre Research Data Center, Brooklyn, New York.

The INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY is a non-profit educational organization incorporated under the laws of the The State of Maryland, USA.

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

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EDITOR'S NOTE

We have arrived at the end of the Brecht centenary year. The sheer volume of Brecht events world-wide is too overwhelming to be covered extensively in this issue of *Communications*. The contributions published here offer a glimpse at some of the issues that have dominated discussions and have made feelings run high. The reviews of stage productions such as *Die Maßnahme* and *Rundköpfe und Spitzköpfe* in Berlin, *Arturo Ui* in Delaware, *The Berlin Circle* in Chicago are examples of innovative approaches to Brechtian texts. Although interpretations may vary depending on the director, theater practitioners seem to agree on one point: it is not — to quote Marc Silberman — “how to understand Brecht but how to use Brecht to understand ourselves and our times.”

The contributions to the Articles section give an idea of the many questions that have emerged in recent Brecht-related events in different countries. What are the challenges for a Japanese director? How does Brecht fit into a Brazilian context? What does Brecht mean at the end of the millennium? In their articles, Marc Silberman, Tasuji Iwabuchi, Robert Cohen, and Charles Gannon offer interesting answers.

I would like to thank Vera Stegmann, Siegfried Mews, and especially Marc Silberman for their help with this edition of *Communications*. The front cover presents a photo taken from the *Arturo Ui* production (directed by Heinz-Uwe Haus) at the University of Delaware, in 1998.

Gudrun Tabbert-Jones, Santa Clara University

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At the time of this writing, the Brecht anniversary year is approaching its end. But it would be erroneous to assume that the worldwide activities that celebrated, honored, and critically examined Brecht and his work have come to an end. To be sure, in consulting various sources one notices a decline in the number of Brecht events — yet Brecht has by no means disappeared from the international scene. To mention only a few examples, the last 1998 issue of the well-informed *Dreigroschenheft* includes announcements about conferences and symposia in Turin, Paris, and Montpellier that are to take place from October to December 1998. These events were, of course, preceded by a veritable onslaught of publications, films, and productions of plays. In fact, as Werner Hecht, coeditor of the thirty-volume edition of Brecht's works, remarks sardonically in the same issue of *Dreigroschenheft*, the magnitude of the deluge of articles and essays on Brecht was such that it could not be accommodated in even the most spacious wastepaper basket.

In a more serious vein, one might well ask what the commemorative and other affairs have accomplished. Without endeavoring to provide an encompassing or systematic answer or to add to the flood of interpretive approaches seeking to establish or deny the significance of Brecht, a few aspects come readily to mind. First of all, the unprecedented media presence of Brecht especially in Germany demonstrated beyond a doubt that he cannot be confined to the realms of literary and other studies, the theater, or film but that his appeal extends beyond the boundaries of those fields of academic and creative endeavor into the public sphere at large. Hence it may not be entirely unjustified to call Brecht a “popular” playwright who, to be sure, has not entirely escaped the danger of being trivialized. Second, as an article in the *New York Times* on the occasion of Brecht's one hundredth birthday stated (the article is reprinted in the last issue of *Communications*), Brecht has remounted his pedestal, that is, in the post-Cold-War era his politics appear to be no longer offensive — a fact acknowledged, for instance, by German politicians of various stripes who paid homage to BB. Unlike some of his followers in the former German Democratic Republic, Brecht may then be considered an author whose reputation increased as a consequence of German unification. In the last issue of *Communications*

Martin Esslin makes the point that Brecht's political persuasion may eventually cease to be a bone of contention altogether because the Cold War will inevitably become a dim recollection in public memory.

Needless to say, the process of accommodation does not proceed without ironic twists and turns. For instance, the celebration in his honor that took place in September 1998 in the Lübeck Buddenbrookhaus, arch rival Thomas Mann's former abode, might have elicited a chuckle from BB himself. Third, it seems fairly obvious that Brecht is here to stay — even if a flagging of interest is to be expected in the near future after the almost excessive attention devoted to him in the anniversary year. It also seems obvious that Brecht will mean various things to different segments of the public and that no particular group, including the IBS, can claim pontifical status as to the correct way to read Brecht. In such a situation it behooves the IBS to facilitate the exchange between scholars and theater practitioners on a global scale — as it did during the May 1998 symposium in San Diego about which the last issue of *Communication* reported — and to provide, on a regular basis, a forum for all those interested in Brecht — as it does during the IBS sessions at the annual MLA (see the program in this issue). At the same time, the IBS should engage in an intermediary function with regard to the sources available to those not fully familiar with Brecht research. Surely, these are not spectacular tasks, but they do provide a sound basis for the continuation of our work.

Siegfried Mews, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

TREASURER'S REPORT

In cooperation with the Department of Literature and Philosophy at Georgia Southern University, the IBS now has the use of a credit card terminal. (Getting the machine cost us nothing, although transaction charges will be tallied when we use it.) As early as the next dues cycle in 1999, we should be able to accept credit card payments for dues.

DOLLAR ACCOUNT (SAVINGS)

2 May 1998 -----16 November 1998

Receipts:	\$ 6,259.08
Disbursements:	\$ 2,556.84
Opening Balance:	\$ 8,204.54
Ending Balance:	\$ 11,906.78

DOLLAR ACCOUNT (CHECKING)

2 May 1998 ----- 16 November 1998

Receipts:	\$ 3,275.00
Disbursements:	\$ 5,491.69
Opening Balance:	\$ 3,279.06
Ending Balance:	\$ 1,214.22

2 May 1998 ----- 16 November 1998

Receipts:	DM 216,53
Disbursements:	DM 17,60
Opening Balance:	DM 6.481,80
Ending Balance:	DM 6.680,73

(Deutsche Bank Düsseldorf Konto-Nr. 76/74146 BLZ 300 702 000)

*David W. Robinson, Secretary/Treasurer
Georgia Southern University*

**Report on the Business Meeting of the IBS at the MLA
Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco**

27 Dec. 1998 (18:40-19:40), 28 Dec. 1998 (12:10-12:20)

1. Announcements:-Mews drew attention to the new online BB mailing/discussion list.
-Vera Stegmann reported on her visit to the National Arts Club in New York city on 16 December 1998 on the occasion of a presentation by Eric Bentley, long-time Brecht interpreter and promoter. SM thanked VS for representing the IBS.
2. The potential distribution problems for the *Brecht Yearbook* were discussed on the basis of information supplied by Marc Silberman. Those present agreed that the best course of action is for Marc to continue negotiating with the U of Wisconsin Press inasmuch as moving the *Yearbook* to a different location would presumably cause all kinds of disruptions.
3. Gudrun Tabbert-Jones's proposal to reduce the publication frequency of *Communications* to one issue per year was discussed. In view of the heavy workload of the editor, the editor's substantial investment of time, the difficulty of finding qualified and willing colleagues capable of mustering a modicum of institutional support, and the increasing availability of electronic means of communications such as the list cited above, the general consensus was that the proposal had merit — provided the publication dates of *Yearbook* and *Communications* would be approximately six months apart.
4. The topics for the two 1999 MLA sessions in Chicago were discussed at length, and the following topics were accepted:
 1. In Brecht's Footsteps: Drama/Theater, Poetry, and Prose since the 1950s.
David Robinson, dwrob@gsvms.2.cc.gaspu.edu.
 2. Brecht's Theater as Philosophical Innovation: Brechtian and Post-Brechtian Theory and Practice.
Siegfried Mews, Mews@email.unc.edu.
5. David Robinson, Treasurer, gave a brief report on the sound financial health of the IBS and on his efforts to make available payment of membership dues via credit card (imminent) and via electronic means (there are considerable technical and other obstacles).

Submitted by Siegfried Mews

IN BRIEF

Mitteilung des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs

Die Nutzungsbedingungen für das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv haben sich geändert. Vom 1. Januar 1999 an ist die Benutzung nur nach Vereinbarung möglich. Die bisher gültigen Öffnungszeiten entfallen.

Anmeldungen an:

Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv, Chausseestraße 125,
10115 Berlin,

Tel.: 030 / 2830570-0 / Fax: 030/ 2830570-33

Einigung zwischen Hochhuth und Peymann

Der Dramatiker Rolf Hochhuth ist über eine Stiftung Eigentümer des Berliner Theaters am Schiffbauerdamm geworden. Der Stiftung gehört allerdings nur das unter Denkmalschutz stehende Jugendstil-Gebäude am Bahnhof Friedrichsstraße. Werkstätten, Magazine, Probenräume, auch Bestuhlung und Scheinwerfer sind Eigentum der Stadt Berlin, die den Spielbetrieb mit hohen Subventionen aufrechterhält.

Zum Konflikt kam es, als die Stadt Berlin mit Hochhuth einen Mietvertrag über das Gebäude abschließen wollte, mit dem das Berliner Ensemble dort für die nächsten 30 Jahre etabliert und außerdem die notwendigen Sanierungsarbeiten gesichert werden sollten. Hochhuth reizte sein Blatt voll aus, bis Berlin daran erinnerte, daß man auch noch zwei andere leerstehende Theater zur Verfügung habe. Hochhuth reiste nach Wien und besprach sich mit Claus Peymann, dem Chef des Wiener Burgtheaters. Peymann wird von der Saison 1999/2000 die Leitung des Berliner Ensembles übernehmen. Beide teilten am 19. Oktober mit, Mißverständnisse seien ausgeräumt worden; Hochhuth sei nun bereit, den Vertrag zu unterschreiben.

Durchsetzen konnte Hochhuth seine Forderung, daß seine Stiftung jeden Sommer in den Theaterferien Stücke eigener Wahl und an drei Tagen im Oktober Hochhuths Welterfolg *Der Stellvertreter* über Papst Pius XII. und die Nazis spielen kann.

“Jour Fixe” im Literaturforum

Das Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus und die Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste bieten an jedem letzten Mittwoch im Monat um 15 Uhr Vorträge zu Leben, Werk und Wirkungsgeschichte Bertolt Brechts und von 9 bis 12 Uhr Projektarbeit mit Kindern und Jugendlichen an. (Mindestanzahl der Teilnehmenden ist 10)

Themen: Brecht und Helene Weigel nach der Rückkehr aus dem Exil in Berlin (verbunden mit einem Besuch ihrer Wohnräume und des Dorotheenstädtischen Friedhofs) — Einblicke in das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv — “Ich, der Überlebende”: Brechts Lyrik im Jahrhundertkontext — Antipoden und Erben: Zur Brecht-Rezeption in der deutschsprachigen Lyrik — Brecht, Theatertheorie und -praxis — Brechts Medienästhetik — Brecht in Berlin — Brecht und Arnold Zweig — Brecht und die Natur — Modellbücher und Versuche — B.B. für Jugendliche (Projektarbeit) — Moritat und Plagiat: B.B. für Kinder (Projektarbeit) — Brecht in Moskau (mit Film) — Brecht und Walter Benjamin.

*Erdmut Wizisla, Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv
Berlin, 23. November 1998.*

Peter Palitzsch 80

One of the last of “Brecht’s students,” Peter Palitzsch, who turned 80 on September 11th, is one of the staunchest defenders and developers of politically engaged theatre. Eight turbulent postwar years spent working with Brecht at the Berliner Ensemble were the foundation for five decades of theatre spanning visionary projects, disappointing set-backs, hope, disillusionment and desperation. His 1958 premiere of *Arturo Ui* in Stuttgart established Brecht’s arrival in western Germany. Subsequent productions asserted against political boycotts followed. He became estranged from his political home in the East and found himself in exile with the closing of the GDR’s borders in 1961.

During the student protests of the late 1960s, Palitzsch succeeded in using the Stuttgarter Theater as a platform for thematising the conflicts of the times and for intervening in social discourses. From 1972-80 he headed the theatre in Frankfurt/Main, establishing an experiment that sought to gather political and artistic energies into a democratic process of theatre experience. After the collapse of the GDR, he once again enlisted himself in a hopeless cause in joining Heiner Müller, Peter Zadek, Fritz Marquardt and Matthias Langhoff to head the Berliner Ensemble. As Günther Rühle fittingly wrote on the occasion of Palitzsch's birthday: "No other German theatre director has been so enduringly and deeply caught up with German history."

(impulse, IV - IX / 1998)

Brecht-Sammlung in Moskau

Larissa Belaja

Seit 24 Jahren sammelt der Moskauer Schriftsteller Wladimir Klimow alles, was mit dem Leben und Werk Bertolt Brechts verbunden ist. Der vielsprachige literarisch-künstlerische Reichtum des Moskauer, tausende Bücher, Broschüren, Programmhefte, Zeitungsausschnitte — ist sorgfältig systematisiert, wie in einer Staatsbibliothek. Eine zweite Sammlung dieser Art findet sich wohl in ganz Rußland nicht. Allein das Thema "Brecht und das Theater" ist durch hunderte Bücher aufgearbeitet. Das gleiche gilt für die Beziehung Brechts zu Musik, Film und Malerei. Dutzende Bücher und Artikel sind dem Thema "Brecht und Taganka" gewidmet. Mehrere tausend Bücher und Zeitschriften, in denen der große Dichter und Dramatiker nur erwähnt wird, Mappen mit Rezensionen, eine Sammlung ikonographischer Materialien, Diafilme, Souvenirs mit Brechtscher Symbolik, Faltblätter, Theaterhefte. Tagaus, tagein wird hier eine Chronik geschrieben. In einzelnen Spalten werden Daten, Titel der Inszenierungen und Besprechungen, Mottos von Kulturveranstaltungen angegeben, die mit Brechts Schaffen zusammenhängen. Mehrere Karteien, von denen jede ein wahres Lexikon ist, liegen vor. Aus

so einer Kartei kann man erfahren, in welchem Theater Sibiriens und wann berühmte Songs erklangen, welcher Rigisseur *Den aufhaltsamen Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* erstmals in Georgien aufgeführt hat oder wie Wsewolod Pudowkin 1942 eine Novelle Brechts verfilmt hatte, der Film jedoch nicht gezeigt wurde.

Das alles ist mit Liebe in der bescheidenen Wohnung eines Moskauer Intellektuellen zusammengetragen. Klimow unterhält rege Kontakte, so auch mit dem Ausland.

Der hier auszugsweise wiedergegebene Artikel wurde im Juni 1993 in der in Moskau erscheinenden deutschsprachigen Zeitung *Neues Leben* veröffentlicht. Wie Vladimir Klimov kürzlich einer Besucherin, **Yekaterina V Shabanova - McKeever**, versicherte, treffen die oben gemachten Angaben nach wie vor zu.

Adresse:

Vladimir Klimow

Otradnij Proezd 6/11

tel.: (095) 402-9713

Wörterbuch des Marxismus

The 12-volume *Historisch-kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus*, under the directorship of Berlin professor of philosophy Wolfgang Fritz Haug, will be including several encyclopedia articles related directly to Brecht and Brechtian aesthetics. Vol. 1 includes a lengthy, two-part entry under the title "Brecht-Linie," authored by Gudrun Klatt (part 1) and Haug (part 2), in which Brecht's aesthetic practice and philosophical grounding is situated within the tradition of nondogmatic Marxism. Vol. 2 includes a shorter article by Manfred Wekwerth on "dialektisches Theater" which explores the shift from the concept of "episch" to "dialektisch" to "philosophisches Volkstheater" and draws on unpublished notes by Wekwerth himself from rehearsals at the Berliner Ensemble during the fifties. Other Brecht-related articles to appear in later volumes include: eingreifendes Denken, episches Theater, Gestus, Montage, Tuismus, Verändern, Verfremdung.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION San Francisco, December 27-30, 1998

Program arranged by the International Brecht Society

(Session 61) I. Brecht, Jews, and Judaism

Sunday, 27 Dec., 5:15-6:30 pm,
Fountain Room, Fairmont Hotel

Presider: Guy Stern, Wayne State Univ., Detroit

1. "Worth of the Worthless: A Prolegomenon."
Speaker: **David Blostein**, University of Toronto
2. "Teaching Brecht and the Holocaust."
Speaker: **James K. Lyon**, Brigham Young University, Provo
3. "Race, Whiteness, and *Alienation* Effect."
Speaker: **Katrin Sieg**, Indiana University, Bloomington

Respondent: **Siegfried Mews**, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

(Session 287) II. Women Performing Brecht

Monday, 28 Dec., 12:00 1:15 pm,
Garden Room, Fairmont Hotel

Presider / Respondent: Vera Stegmann, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA

1. "Brecht, Hurston, and the Performance of Social Life."
Speaker: **Elin Diamond**, Rutgers University, New Brunswick
2. "Therese Giehse Playing Brecht."
Speaker: **Frauke Meyer-Gosau**, Deutsche

Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung, Darmstadt

3. "New Approaches to Interpreting Women's Roles."

Speaker: **Julie Klassen** and **Ruth Weiner**, Carleton College, Northfield

CALL FOR PAPERS

For *The Brecht Yearbook* / *Das Brecht-Jahrbuch*

Focus: Helene Weigel

On the occasion of her 100th birthday the International Brecht Society will devote volume 25 of the *Brecht Yearbook* (Spring 2000) to Helene Weigel – actress, Brecht's partner, and manager of the Berliner Ensemble.

The guest editor is Dr. Judith Wilke (Frankfurt am Main).

Even more stubborn than in Brecht's case are the usual clichés about Helene Weigel: grandiose mother figure on stage and in real life, heroic housewife and ingenious organizer during the exile years, the ideological conscience that kept Brecht politically in line, icon of postwar theater, "pure kitsch in a sackcloth gown" (according to theater critic Sibylle Wirsing), or clever trustee of Brecht's estate during the cold war. We are now seeking suggestions for critical essays and interviews for a volume that proposes to revise these images of Weigel and to examine her multiple talents in the confrontation of historical, aesthetic, and practical as well theoretical theater aspects.

Among the issues to be addressed are the following:

Weigel's practice and working methods as an actress and speaker, her collaborative work with Brecht and her influence on his work; the double role as actress in the theater and on the political stage, with Brecht and after his death; Weigel and the communist party; the private and the public person, wife, mother, friend; the perception and influence of Weigel in the consciousness of her time and thereafter.

Contributions are especially welcome that will

make use of little known archive material at the Helene-Weigel-Archiv and at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin and elsewhere (documents, letters minutes of meetings, films and tapes, photographs, etc.)

Submission deadline: October 1, 1999

For information, contact Dr. Judith Wilke

Tel./Fax ++4969 / 55 60 18

email: J.Wilke@tfm.uni-frankfurt.de

The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

offers research and performance grants to scholars and artists working on Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya. Contact the Foundation for information and grant applications:

The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

7 East 20th Street

New York, NY 10003-1106

Brecht Events at Kalamazoo College

During the academic year 1998-1999 we are planning a number of events centered around Brecht. Our *Center for Western European Studies* is sponsoring these in connection with our Theater and German Departments. In January Guy Stern is coming for a guest lecture. In Spring our Theater Department will present a production of *The Good Person*.

For further information contact:

Joe K. Fugate, Professor of German

Kalamazoo, MI 49006

Tel.: 616-337-7050 / Fax: 616-337-5740

e-mail: jfugate@kzoo.edu

Brecht Exhibit in Venezuela and Columbia

With the help of the German ITI Centre, a Brecht exhibit will travel to Venezuela and Columbia. The core of the 130-item exhibit on Brecht's work and life is two sets of 15 posters from the Berliner Ensemble and photographs of 25 productions with commentary in Spanish, which were produced by the former GDR Brecht Centre. The material was made available to us by the Literature Forum associated with the Brecht House. In Venezuela the exhibit will be shown in Caracas, the island of Margarita in San Carlos de Cojedes and other cities.

Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus, Berlin

BRECHT — TAGE: BRECHTS
ANTIPODEN

7. bis 11. Februar, 1999

Nach den ausgiebigen Würdigungen anlässlich seines hundertsten Geburtstages werden in diesem Jahr genauer jene Autoren in den Blick genommen, von denen sich Brecht abstieß oder die sich konträr zu ihm formulierten: Antipoden auch in dem Sinne, daß größtmögliche Entfernung möglicherweise aus zu großer Nähe resultiert.

Es sprechen: Klaus **Wagenbach** (Kafka als Antipode Brechts), Durs **Grünbein** (Antipoden Lyrik), George **Tabori** (Antipoden Dramatik), Katja **Lange-Müller** (Antipoden Prosa), Helmuth **Lethen** (Antipoden Ästhetik), und andere.

*Ein detailliertes Programm erhalten Sie ab 10.
Januar, 1999 auf Anfrage.
See also: IBS Website*

CONFERENCE REPORTS

NEH Report

Vera Stegmann, Lehigh University

A major highlight in the celebration of Brecht's centenary this year was the NEH Summer Seminar "Bertolt Brecht: The Berlin Years," conducted by Professors Siegfried Mews and Marc Silberman in Berlin from June 8 until July 17, 1998. Following the diversity guidelines suggested by the NEH, our group consisted of academic scholars specializing in different subject areas (literature, theater, music, politics, and philosophy), originating from every geographic region of the United States, and teaching at all varieties of institutions of higher education -- community colleges, four-year colleges, and PhD granting universities. The 15 participants in the seminar were: Stephen Brockmann (Carnegie Mellon U), David Caldwell (U of Northern Colorado), Mark Clark (Clinch Valley C of the U of Virginia), Paula Hanssen (Webster U), Meredith Heiser-Duron (Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, CA), Elisabeth Hostetter (Stephen F. Austin State U), Ellen Klein (U of Evansville), Astrid Oesmann (U of Iowa), Audie Olson (U of Wisconsin at La Crosse), William Rasch (Indiana U), Barry Salwen (U of North Carolina at Wilmington), Kristina Sazaki (C of the Holy Cross), James Stark (Seattle U), Vera Stegmann (Lehigh U), and Carsten Strathausen (U of Missouri).

Most of the group lived in the Gästehaus der Humboldt-Universität. The location could not have been more central: Our rooms were either facing a quiet courtyard or looking out directly at the Spree river, the Bode-Museum, and the Museumsinsel. Within an easy ten minute walk of our accommodations, we had access to the Bahnhof Friedrichstra 8e (the former border transit point from East to West), the Humboldt University where our seminar met, the Brecht Archive, the Berliner Ensemble, Deutsches Theater, Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Komische Oper, the Kabarett-Theater Distel, several fine book and record stores (Dussmann, Haus der Demokratie, Hugendubel), the Oranienburger Straße with its diverse restaurants and nightlife, Tacheles, die Neue Synagoge, and Hackesche Höfe.

This area, formerly East Berlin and now Bezirk Mitte, is also one of the sections of town most radically in transition: Beautifully restored historical buildings and modern structures as well as untouched ruins from the war and neglected sites exist side by side. A walk through our neighborhood conveyed a sense that this area might serve as barometer for the possible success or failure of reunification.

Berlin was the natural city in which to hold the seminar. Our studies concentrated largely on Brecht's years in Berlin, the Weimar period (1924-33) and the GDR years (1949-56). Besides our own readings and discussions of Brecht's works, we listened to lectures by German scholars who live in Berlin or international (mostly American) scholars who frequent the city each summer for research. Several speakers came to our seminar: Konrad Jarausch, historian at the University of North Carolina and Director of the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung in Potsdam, gave an introductory lecture on Weimar Culture. Pamela Potter, musicologist at the University of Wisconsin, spoke about Brecht, Weill, and *The Threepenny Opera*. One seminar took place in the Brecht Archive, whose director, Erdmut Wizisla, showed us the collections. Another day we met in the Berliner Ensemble to talk to the directors Peter Palitzsch and Holger Teschke. Inge Gellert, coeditor of the recent book *Der verborgene Brecht*, guided a city walk through Brecht's milieu in Berlin. Werner Hecht, coauthor of the new *Werke* edition, spoke on Brecht's years in East Berlin and presented his own massive *Brecht Chronik*. Joachim Lucchesi, Berlin musicologist and author of many books including *Musik bei Brecht* and *Das "Verhör" in der Oper*, introduced us to the work of the composer Paul Dessau and his opera *The Trial of Lucullus*.

Besides the activities that took place during our class time on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, the two seminar directors kept us informed about a wide range of cultural offerings in Berlin. During the months of June and July, regular Ringvorlesungen were held in the Audimax der Humboldt-Universität. Paolo Chiarini spoke on

Brecht und das dritte Jahrtausend: Mutmaßungen über einen "wirkungslosen Klassiker," Marc Silberman gave a lecture entitled Brecht-Ehrungen: ein Rückblick; Gerd Rienäcker talked about music theater in his presentation Musik oder Misuk; Jost Hermand spoke on Der arme b.b.: Brecht nach 1989; and Helmut Lethen discussed Körpertechniken und Verhaltenslehre bei Brecht. All of these public lectures were followed by "Kolloquia" in the Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus, where members of the audience had the opportunity to discuss the subject in a smaller, more intimate setting with the speaker.

in a staging by Robert Wilson; others saw *Leben des Galilei* with Joseph Bierbichler in the title role, and later a remarkable staging of *Baal* in a guest performance by the Thalia Theater in Hamburg. We also had the opportunity to see Müller's famous interpretation of Brecht's *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* with Martin Wuttke in the title role on the last day of its run. This was a beautiful performance, although afterwards, in discussions over beer, some of us wondered whether the humor and sensuousness of this production almost serve to belittle the atrocities that the play addresses.

One of the theatrical high points of our six



We enjoyed group excursions and many theater performances together. One weekend we could visit Brecht's house in Buckow (Märkische Schweiz) and also listen to readings by Volker Braun and Rainer Kirsch, as well as a concert of music by Eisler, Weill, and Milhaud. In Berlin at Deutsches Theater, many of us watched *Im Dickicht der Städte*, directed by Brecht's granddaughter Johanna Schall, and *Die Dreigroschenoper*. At the Berliner Ensemble, several members of the group went to *Der Ozeanflug*, a collage of Brecht, Heiner Müller, and Dostojevsky

weeks was the first complete staging of *Die Maßnahme* at the Berliner Ensemble. In a seminar session we had already engaged in a heated debate about the political dimensions and revolutionary qualities of the play. Some of us questioned the aesthetic values of the drama, others defended it passionately. The BE performance with the complete musical score by Hanns Eisler and the ensuing international conference about *Die Maßnahme* were seminal to the research of those who specialized in the *Lehrstück* and *agitprop*.

Berlin celebrated not only Brecht's centenary, but also that of Hanns Eisler, one of his major musical collaborators. Concerts and theatrical performances with Eisler's works took place in Berlin throughout our stay. Furthermore, the Akademie der Künste mounted an exhibit on Eisler entitled "'s müßt dem Himmel Höllenangst werden.'" One of its organizers, Peter Schweinhardt, gave our group a beautiful tour through the display rooms at the Akademie on Hanseatenweg. Eisler was also the subject of an international colloquium sponsored by the Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung in the Musikinstrumentenmuseum in Berlin. Discussions covered Eisler's twelve-tone music and his relationship to the Vienna School, modern Eisler interpretations, and Eisler's film music. For film scholars, this was an excellent opportunity to view films with musical scores by Eisler that are otherwise unavailable to the public. The high point of this conference was an evening with Mordecai Bauman, the American baritone who befriended Eisler during his exile and who first sang his songs in the United States.

While participating in the seminar and in Berlin's cultural life, we were also working on our own research projects. Siegfried Mews and Marc Silberman generously advised and helped us in our investigations, and the last week was dedicated to presentations by each member of the group. Following our diverse interests, subjects varied greatly. We heard about Brecht's *Kalendergeschichten*, Brecht and the metropolis, Brecht's role as post-war intellectual, his political role during the 1953 uprising, and his view of politics as represented in *Die Maßnahme*. We learned about two very different productions of *Arturo Ui* at the Berliner Ensemble, revolutionary musical theater in the Weimar Republic, Brecht's construction of the public sphere, pedagogical approaches to the play *Die Ausnahme und die Regel*, the possibility of viewing Brecht as a "national" poet, and *Zeitoper*. The last day concluded with presentations on the role of the prostitute in Brecht's works, teaching the *Lehrstücke*, Brecht and film, and Eisler and film. Our two directors were very resourceful in suggesting possibilities for publishing our projects.

Much, though by no means all, of our time was consumed by academics. Many cultural outings had

little to do with Brecht. For example, we heard the writer Peter Schneider give a talk in Potsdam on "Ausländerfeindlichkeit" and multi-culturalism in Germany, and we enjoyed Israeli folk dances in the courtyard that same evening afterwards. We went to cabaret Distel in our neighborhood to see the show "Alle Brüder werden Menschen," a collage of skits on the trials and tribulations of reunification written by Peter Ensikat, among others. There were also opportunities to visit art exhibits. The Neue Nationalgalerie hosted a grand retrospective on Lyonel Feininger as well as a show on the artists Arnold Böcklin, Giorgio de Chirico, and Max Ernst. A visit to the Hamburger Bahnhof, the former train station that has been converted into a modern gallery space, housed a special exhibit on the Russian artist Ilya Kabakov. Among the many musical offerings, Richard Strauss's opera *Elektra*, conducted by Daniel Barenboim at the Staatsoper with Deborah Polaski in the title role, provided one of the highlights.

As we lived so closely together, friendships formed easily. Furthermore, Berlin's nightlife offered plentiful opportunities to mix with the resident population. Some major social events took place during our sojourn: the World Cup, Christopher Street Day, and love parade. On our last day together, we celebrated in Restaurant Malche at Tegeler See in a more scenic, rural part of Berlin. We enjoyed fine food, drinks, and the musical and theatrical talents of several group members who sang, played the piano, and invented theatrical skits. Thanks to our two hard-working directors who organized the entire six weeks, thanks to the beautiful composition of our group, and -- last but not least -- thanks to the generosity of the NEH (whose representative, Ralph Carnevali, we had the opportunity to meet), this summer in Berlin will remain in our memories as an exciting and productive experience.

Brecht Centennial in Los Angeles

Daryl H. Miller

Though he'd been acclaimed across Europe, he was treated in Hollywood as just another hack writer — and he often found himself at odds with the studio mind-set. His screenplay *Boy Meets Girl, So What?* got nowhere. He called this “the city of merchandisable dreams,” and he left muttering about what a sewer it was.

Fifty years later, however, the city that spurned Bertolt Brecht was rallying to celebrate the 100th anniversary of his birth. Theater artists, musicians and others were collaborating on the West Coast Brecht Centennial Festival from February 5-10, 1998 with free events from Santa Monica to Claremont. Readings of Brecht's plays — from such early works as *Baal* and *Edward II* through such masterpieces as *Mother Courage* and *The Good Woman of Setzuan* — shared the schedule with performances of his songs (many of them written by Kurt Weill) and poems, as well as showings of films and Brecht-inspired visual art. Among those who participated were Eric Braeden (*Groundhog Day*) and Weba Garretson (one of the more avant-garde of Los Angeles' cabaret performers). What would the late German playwright think of Los Angeles paying tribute to him?

“I would like to think that Brecht would chuckle,” said David Catanzarite, who envisioned and organized the festival. With a hint of a chuckle Catanzarite added that “it's a little subversive” to flood a city where money talks with the words of this Marxist dialectician. In keeping with this ethic, Catanzarite tried to make the festival as egalitarian as possible. All events were free, and artists of various cultural backgrounds were adding their own distinctive perspectives to Brecht's works.

“I want to see Brecht done in as many different ways as possible, because there is no right way,” said Catanzarite, a visiting instructor who heads the directing program at Pomona College in Claremont.

Thus, his schedule included Tony Kushner's recent adaptation of *The Good Woman of Setzuan* (amended to *The Good Person of Setzuan*), read by a mostly Asian American cast, Thulani Davis' Creole-flavored adaptation of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, performed by African American actors; and a reading

of *Edward II* directed by Michael M. Michetti and performed by much of the multi-cultural cast from the award-winning, India-set production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. What festival-goers did not find, however, were a presentation of *Galileo*, one version of which received its world premiere in Los Angeles in 1947, starring Charles Laughton. The play just received a couple of high-profile readings in its anniversary year. Nor did festival-goers hear any formal discussion of the charges that put Brecht back in the headlines in recent years: the claims in John Fuegi's book *Brecht & Co.* that much of Brecht's work was written by others who had collaborated with him — three women in particular.

“I think it's great that Fuegi pointed out that Brecht was not some kind of communist saint,” Catanzarite said. “He was a rake, and he was fairly cynical, and he was also rather concerned with material comfort. I think it was very useful, and also to point out the important role that these women played in his work. However (Fuegi) just doesn't convince me — because there is a consistent style, a consistent language among the plays. And it's Brecht.”

Brecht believed in theater as a laboratory of social change, where pressing or troubling issues could be thought through. “Class justice was one of the main things,” Catanzarite said. “He was part of that movement in the first part of this century for equality and economic justice.”

Because Brecht felt that such issues should be considered objectively, he attempted to distance the audience by writing in a concentrated, heightened language. He trained actors to separate themselves from their characters, so that they, in effect, narrated their roles; and he orchestrated all staging elements — from music to set design — to comment on, contradict or provide additional context about the action. “He didn't want to get rid of emotions on the stage, he just wanted to replace emotional identification with other emotional experiences: the passion for inquiry, the passion for feeling outrage at an injustice that is taking place” clarified Catanzarite, who enlisted such groups as the Goethe-Institut and the Claremont colleges to fund the festival.

(*Los Angeles Times*, February 5, 1998)

La Sociedad Internacional Brecht De Teatro

Sara Joffré, Peru

Siegfried Mews, John Rouse y Marc Silberman, representantes de universidades norteamericanas y Florian Vaßen de la Universidad de Hannover conformaron el comité organizador del Décimo Simposio de la Sociedad Internacional Brecht, realizado en California, consiguiendo con su trabajo que la reunión se aprovechará al máximo.

El primer día fue dedicado a la recepción y registro, discurso de inauguración a cargo de Robert Brustein del American Repertory Theatre de Harvard University. A las 8 de la noche ya se pudo asistir a uno de los tres espectáculos del evento: *Happy Birthday Brecht*; *Nora*, adaptación de Ingmar Bergman de *Casa de Muñecas* de Ibsen y *Despertar de Primavera* de Frank Wedekind. El segundo día se abrió la exposición-venta de libros brechtianos iniciándose las sesiones paralelas a las 9 de la mañana, y el contenido de éstas versaba sobre teoría y práctica a cargo de los ponentes de Alemania (con la mayor cantidad de participantes), Brasil, Francia, Inglaterra, Perú y, naturalmente, los Estados Unidos.

Películas antiguas y modernas de las producciones brechtianas se alternaban con los videos y el café de la mañana y la tarde constituían una prolongación más coloquial para la confrontación de afinidades y desacuerdos. Hans-Thies Lehmann y Susanne Winnacker de la Universidad de Frankfurt ofrecieron videos para ponernos al día respecto a la actualidad de Brecht en Alemania. Finalmente, se presentó la película de Jutta Brückner "Amor, religión y otras aventuras," basada en la vida de Brecht y que propició un apasionado debate que sólo cortó la necesidad de continuar las actividades.

El tiempo naturalmente organizaba nuestras decisiones pues no se podía asistir a todo. Así tuve que optar entre *Nora* y *Happy Birthday Brecht*. *Happy Birthday Brecht*, dirigida por la inglesa Di Trevis, era una producción invitada de la Universidad de California. Constituida en su primera parte especialmente por poemas y canciones nos hizo conocer un trabajo muy reciente de una directora con una línea dura, con fuertes reminiscencias de lo que fue en América Latina "Brecht 1970."

El inicio sorprendentemente formal y lento podría avalar las tesis de quienes desenfadadamente afirman que Brecht es aburrido. Un intervalo de 15 minutos dio ocasión para mostrar otro ritmo y otra fuerza con la reproducción de los diálogos de Brecht, respondiendo al Comité de Actividades Antinorteamericanas. En la ejecución y preparación de la música los apoyaba en su calidad de pianista nada menos que el presidente saliente de la Sociedad Internacional Brecht (IBS) Michael Morley.

Al final de la puesta, que se dedicó los participantes del simposio, se realizó una conversación en donde la directora enfatizó su posición sobre la necesidad de un compromiso más allá de lo teatral para aquellos que ponen las obras y las ideas de Brecht en escena. Todo lo actuado dio ocasión a discutir y enterarse en una acelerada visión respecto a lo que ocurre con Brecht en el mundo.

El paseo por Santa Monica, refugio de intelectuales alemanes en la Segunda Guerra Mundial incluyendo a Brecht, nos permitió allí y en todo Los Angeles ver las casas, los ambientes, los fantasmas, los viejos estudios cinematográficos y sus recuerdos y, como diría Walter Benjamin, "el aura" de todo eso que significa Bertolt Brecht en el teatro, todo el teatro.

The West Coast Brecht Centennial Festival Flo Selfman

From the mountains to the sea, Los Angeles was treated to an ambitious six-day, all-free festival commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of poet and dramatist Bertolt Brecht, one of the greatest German writers of the modern era. From February 5 — 10, 1998, the West Coast Brecht Centennial Festival featured numerous play readings with professional actors and directors from Los Angeles's vast multicultural theatre community, and was highlighted by fine and performance art, and musical offerings from the Brecht repertoire. The Festival achieved extensive advance media coverage in the *Los Angeles Times* et al, and, despite unpredictable weather, every event was filled to capacity.

The Festival was conceived and created by its artistic director, David Catanzarite, a writer, director and dramaturg, and head of the Directing Program at Pomona College, Claremont. [note: Catanzarite joins the faculty of Towson University in Baltimore this fall as Assistant Professor of Acting and Directing.] Having produced and taught Brecht from Czechoslovakia to South Africa, as well as studying with Brecht protégé Carl Weber, among others, Catanzarite fulfilled a decade-long dream by creating and producing this Festival.

Catanzarite originally envisioned a day or two of readings at bookstores and other non-theatre spaces, to bring Brecht's theatre to new audiences. When the Goethe-Institut became a sponsor, Catanzarite was able to expand his concept. In particular, he worked with independent bookstores, who right now are struggling for survival against the corporate chains. He was able to secure all the venues for free, as one of his top priorities was to have money to pay his performers.

For artistic talent, Catanzarite approached people whose work he admires. These included German film director Percy Adlon, Odyssey Theatre Artistic Director Ron Sossi, actor Aled Davies, avant-garde cabaret artist Weba Garretson, and directors such as Judith Royer, Robert Goldsby, and Ovation Award winner Michael Michetti.

An opening night capacity audience was treated to an elegant reading of *Edward II*, directed by Michetti, in the grand salon of Villa Aurora, former home of Lion and Marta Feuchtwanger, high in the hills of Pacific Palisades. Dressed in black and seated in a long row of tall director's chairs, the cast of eleven, most essaying multiple parts, read so vividly that many in the audience remarked that they

felt they had experienced a fully produced play, rather than a reading.

The following evening, the Dr. Art Davis-Horace Tapscott Duo highlighted their Friday evening jazz performance at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) with "Speak Low" and



"September Song," two Kurt Weill standards.

On Saturday, driving rain didn't deter audiences from readings of *The Tutor* with members of the Actors Network at the Santa Monica Library, and *The Private Life of the Master Race*, directed by Judith Royer, at Skylight Books in the Los Feliz area. From late afternoon until far into the night, Beyond Baroque Arts Center in Venice hosted readings of *Baal* with members of the Actors Gang; "Go for Brecht" (a cabaret review), music and readings by singer Sharon Resnick and others; and a Brecht song recital by pianist Paul Humphreys and classical singer Cheryl Anne Roach. The evening finished with poetry readings by, among others, poet Rafael J. Alvarado; playwright Dorie Baizley; Ash Grove legend Ed Pearl; KPFK host Jay Kugelman reading from Brecht's appearance before the House Un-

American Activities Committee; and playwright/director Louis Fantasia.

The following day, a rainy Sunday, was the "Brecht-a-Thon," a marathon back-to-back reading of five plays at the Midnight Special Bookstore in Santa Monica: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* with a Caribbean adaptation by Thulani Davis, directed by Mary Thomas.; *Mr. Puntilla and His Man Matti* by the Mark Taper's Frank Dwyer and the Antaeus Company; *Antigone*, translated by Judith Malina after Brecht's adaptation, directed by Mona Heinze and featuring Leon Katz as Creon; *Mother Courage and Her Children*, directed by Robert W. Goldsby and featuring his wife, actress Angela Paton ("Groundhog Day," "E.R."). Goldsby also recruited special guest Joe Spano ("Hill Street Blues"). Judy Weng, who directed members of East/West Players in *The Good Person of Setzuan* (Tony Kushner translation), had never directed Brecht, but plunged in, giving herself a "crash course," with excellent results. Her cast included East West Players regulars Ben Lum and Alison Sie. Beginning at 8:00 a.m. on Monday was the Claremont Colleges' Brecht Fringe Festival. Events included: A Continental Brecht-fast--an exhibit of Brecht-inspired visual art by faculty and student designers, as well as professionals. Sculptor Erika Bosse created several pieces, including a bust of Brecht, specifically for the Festival. There were film screenings; Brecht scenes performed by advanced acting and dance students; "Brecht Schmeckt," a cabaret of readings and music; a second recital by Paul Humphreys and Cheryl Anne Roach; and a "Berlin 32" cabaret.

A highlight of the day was a talk by distinguished speaker Carl Weber, professor at Stanford University and co-editor of the *Brecht Yearbook*.

The Festival's grand finale was the Brecht Centennial Birthday Celebration, held in the beautiful 450-seat Mark Taper Auditorium at the Los Angeles Public Library's downtown Central Library. The standing-room-only house enjoyed a performance of *Brecht on Brecht*, directed by David Catanzarite and featuring a multicultural cast including Percy Adlon, Ron Sossi, Marilyn Tokuda, Jeanne Sakata, Alberto Isaac, and Ruth Olafsdottir. Interspersed throughout the evening were musical selections from Brecht, Weill, and Eisler, performed

by Weba Garretson and The Eastside Sinfonietta. Poured into a skin-tight, figure-revealing sheath, wearing high-heeled boots and with her steel-gray hair cropped short, vocalist Garretson brought down the house with her rich voice and unique new interpretations of songs from the Brecht canon. The evening concluded with a birthday *bundt* cake, made by Catanzarite's mother, and the singing of "Happy Birthday."

Garretson and the Eastside Sinfonietta subsequently received bookings for the opening of the Goethe-Institut Los Angeles's new offices, and for an expanded August 2 recital at the Central Library. Ron Sossi, Artistic Director of the Odyssey Theatre, was inspired by his participation in Catanzarite's reading to mount *Brecht on Brecht* at the Odyssey during the spring, and also mounted *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, featuring Beth Hogan, for a successful summer run.

Brecht in Oslo — A Late Discovery

International Brecht Conference in Oslo, Norway

Thomas Jung, Oslo

He never came to Norway himself; neither during the years of exile in Scandinavia nor thereafter. Now, about forty years after his death, he (re)emerges from a distant past, Bertolt Brecht. Considering the political history of Norway between 1933 and the late fifties, it is only understandable that Brecht never was particularly interested in visiting this country. Nevertheless, he wasn't really absent from or unknown to the Norwegian public. As in other western-European countries, the reception of his work began -- selectively though -- in the late 1960s. Soon, his texts (especially his dramatic work) were discussed in academic and theater circles, became available in translation at bookstores and libraries, and finally were included in school books as part of the canonical historic German literature.

As at a number of places around the globe, the 100th birthday served as the occasion for a revival of Bertolt Brecht as the person and his work in Norway. Several factors contributed to a development that

made an event like an International Bertolt Brecht Conference become reality: financial support from a variety of contributors, organizational commitment, and academic interest in a critical rereading of the dialectic and controversial Marxist thinker, drama writer, poet, and private person. All that brought a number of known Brecht experts together at the Norwegian Academy of Sciences in Oslo to spend a weekend discussing Brecht with the local audience. The German Department at the University of Oslo, in collaboration with the local Goethe-Institute, stood behind the organization of this event bearing the title "Musen Macht Männlichkeit." Following this motto, the papers presented dealt with a variety of questions such as: aesthetic inspiration, involvement with political power, and Brecht's -- not only since *Fuegi & Co.* -- much debated manliness, projected as well as lived. Despite this relatively wide spectrum of approaches and questions, audience and experts indulged in discussions which unfortunately could not always lead to ultimate agreement. But that's what dialectics and discussions are all about.

Let me share some of my impressions and comments on this event, before Brecht will be buried again -- and before another anniversary of a German writer will make Brecht vanish from the public discussion in Norway next year. Speaking of Brecht, one is always tempted to ask for the "Praxis." Let me therefore begin with some comments on those things that made the conference a cultural event.

The most important news for the Norwegian public was that Brecht made and himself appeared in films from the early twenties. The Goethe-Institute had made possible the screening of several films that have been unknown to the a larger audience so far, even to Brecht experts. Also with support of the Goethe-Institute, an exhibition on the life and work of Brecht was set up at the conference location. And, last but not least, on the same weekend a local off-theater company announced a production that necessarily caught the attention of the Norwegian public interested in Brecht. Under the title *FAUST/MASSNAHME*, a collage of two major German literary texts would be put on stage: Thomas Mann's novel *Dr. Faustus* and Bertolt Brecht's most controversial revolutionary play *Die Maßnahme*. Two typical German souls -- if not to say: stereotypical German personalities -- could reflect upon one

another, thereby complement or questioning the others thoughts and action. The execution of the young commissar in *Maßnahme* would function as contrast -- and simultaneously as complementary -- to the, metaphorically speaking, diabolic cancer of the world revolution. Yet, the actual production in many regards was rather disappointing. An absolutely unemotional reading of a drastically reduced text corpus -- interrupted by comic interludes that were difficult to relate to the text -- had, in my opinion, little or nothing to do with Brecht's concept of "epic theater." Although the idea as such was intriguing, the realization couldn't keep up with the expectations with which all too many sitting in the audience had come. Nevertheless, an experiment worth mentioning.

But back to the conference as such. A former student of Brecht, who began his career as dramaturg at the Berliner Ensemble in the fifties, opened the actual academic event with a presentation of private, sometimes anecdotal memories of his work for and collaboration with the Brecht theater. Wolfgang Pintzka, since 1984 residing and working in Norway, gave an intriguing survey of his life-long commitment to the Brechtian theater in theory and practice. His activity in the eighties can be seen as an essential driving force in the distribution of Brecht's theater concept not only in Norway but over all Scandinavia.

Pintzka's presentation was followed by three Brecht experts who also devoted their papers to practical issues of the Brechtian theater: Frank Hörnigk from Berlin presented connections between the theater concepts of Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Müller -- seen with the eyes of someone who was born later, a "Nachgeborener." Klaus Völker, also from Berlin, reevaluated the above mentioned Brecht play *Die Maßnahme* and concluded with a reading of this text based on consistent dramatic theory. In doing so, he transferred the text from traditional readings, which in most instances present political-ideological interpretations of a theater-historical dimension. Elin Nesje Vestli, from Halden (Norway), presented an interpretation of Brecht's *Lenz* adaptation in the light of a contemporary production in Oslo.

Crossing the borderline to more pragmatic issues, Carl Wege from Bremen occupied himself

with a survey of the historic situation at the Berliner Ensemble in the early fifties with regard to the discussion of the “who” and “what” of the monthly program. Also dealing with the fifties, Therese Hörnigk from the Berlin Literaturforum remembered the political activities of Bertolt Brecht in both PEN-West and PEN-East. In her presentation, Hörnigk made the audience familiar with Brecht’s double-play which aimed at the mediation between East and West at times when Cold War activities -- long forgotten nowadays -- determined not only world politics but also cultural (and theater) politics in both Germanys.

Two speakers, both of whom traveled from distant places, dealt with theoretical issues of Brecht’s work. Darko Suvin from Montreal came to Oslo to present latest research results on his behaviorist questions of Brecht’s drama theory; or as the title makes apparent: “Haltung (bearing) and Emotions: Brecht’s Refunctioning of a Conservative Metaphor for Agency.” From Tromsø University, which is located north of the polar circle, Peter Langemeyer came to Oslo presenting on a similar topic. The point of departure in his argument provided a historic review of the term “Verhalten” (behavior) within a theater-practical context.

The variety of topics was enlarged by three more speakers. Johannes Østbø from the hosting Oslo University traced the metaphoric use of nature vocabulary in a number of poems throughout the author’s work as a whole. Thomas Jung, also from Oslo, presented a survey on the collaboration between Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler in the field of music. In particular, he focused on the adaptation of Brecht texts for the “Deutsche Symphonie,” finished by Hanns Eisler only after Brecht’s death in the late 1950s. Last but not least, I want to mention a double-presentation by two graduate students from Oslo resp. Leipzig on Brecht’s early play *Baal*. From various angles, these two young Brecht experts discussed the moral stand (i.e. in dealing with the opposite sex) taken by the main character Baal as compared with the author’s own commentaries in diaries, letters, and other parts of his œuvre.

Those attending the conference enjoyed first of all the discussion. Of course, it never was the intention to celebrate an icon of German literature, but rather to question aspects of a controversial work,

written by one of the foremost German authors. It is difficult to tell whether this conference can claim to have initiated a Brecht-revival in and for Norway. (Doubts are always in place.) In any case, the most respected Norwegian theater is planning a Brecht-play for later this year. One is free to guess which play that will be... the *Dreigroschenoper* of course. Selling the bestseller again. We look forward to the results of this project.

Bertolt Brecht: entre théâtre et théorie A Report on the Conference

Patrick Greaney
Johns Hopkins University

What is the relation between Brecht’s theory and Brecht’s theater? This question was at the center of the international conference “Bertolt Brecht: entre théâtre et théorie,” which was held at the Maison Heinrich Heine in Paris, October 2 — 6. The conference was organized by Jean-Pierre Morel (Paris III), Nikolaus Müller-Scholl (Ecole normale supérieure), and Jean-Marie Valentin (Paris IV/IUF).

“Bertolt Brecht: entre théâtre et théorie” was part of a larger celebration of the Brecht centenary that included an exhibit of photographs of Eva Kemlein, a production of *Mahagonny* Songspiel by the Ensemble Weill from the Hanns Eisler Hochschule für Musik and a program of songs in homage to Hanns Eisler.

There were also two performances of *Mann ist Mann* in Thomas Ostermeier’s production of the Baracke of the Deutsches Theater. As in the conference’s title - “entre théâtre et théorie” - the question of a “between” is raised by the title *Mann ist Mann*: what is the relation between the first and the second “Mann”? For Walter Benjamin, the title refers to an openness: “*Mann ist Mann*, das ist nicht Treue zum eigenen Wesen, sondern die Bereitschaft, ein neues in sich selbst zu empfangen.” Between the first and the second “Mann,” a space is opened up for something new to emerge. The attention to this interval, to this moment of transformability and openness, is what made the papers delivered at the conference of such interest.

I cannot do justice to all twenty participants here, but I will try to sketch out a few connections between some of the papers. Jean Jourdeuil (Université de Paris X) opened his paper with a discussion of how Brecht considered his theoretical and literary texts to belong together and how the editorial decision made in the 1950's to separate them obscures the attempt made in the *Versuche* to confront different genres. Other papers followed Jourdeuil's indication and sought to show how Brecht's texts seek to indicate a space between genres and discourses. Beatrice Hanssen (Harvard) presented a paper on Benjamin's location between Carl Schmitt and Brecht and on the politics of gesture caught between left and right politics. Ulrike Haß (Freie Universität, Berlin) showed how Brecht adopts a political model of motility; for Haß, Brecht abandons the political model of "Ort" for a politics of "unterwegs" and of learning bodies. Gunter Heeg (Frankfurt), too, presented a theory of Brecht's corpo-reality in "Der Körper Brechts." For Heeg, Brecht's theater dramatizes an oscillation between two bodies, the discursive body and the material body; Heeg read Heiner Müller's production of *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* at the Berliner Ensemble as the attempt to bring forth the material body as an interruption in the "knirschen" of the discursive body.

In his paper "L'autre scène: entre(nt) Brecht et Artaud," Rainer Nägele (Johns Hopkins) investigated the relation between Brecht and Artaud by questioning the term "entre"; to understand Brecht and Artaud together is to rethink the meaning of "between," which can be neither a fusion nor an opposition. Instead, it must be thought of as "un croisement spécifique des singularités" in which the two authors would be understood in their specificity, in the way that they think both similarly and differently about the body, gestures, catharsis, and identification.

In his paper "La notion d' 'Einverständnis': Brecht entre Kafka et Carl Schmitt," Nikolaus Müller-Scholl presented Brecht's *Massemensch* as always already located in a medium that makes him different from himself and related to some "other" beyond every calculable relation. Brecht attempts to bring out this other dimension of language and politics in his appropriation of Schmitt's notion of

"Einverständnis," a free act that always exceeds itself and that is always also a relation to a different political possibility.

All the papers presented at the conference "Bertolt Brecht: entre théâtre et théorie" sought to address the "entre" of the conference title and, by means of many historical and theoretical methods, opened up new perspectives on Brecht's texts and theatre work. The publication of the papers in 1999 by Arche will allow these perspectives to be discussed beyond the limits of the conference.

Bentley on Brecht

Vera Stegmann, *Lehigh University*

On December 16, 1998, Eric Bentley introduced his new publication, *Bentley on Brecht* (Applause Books, 1998) to the public at the National Arts Club in New York City. This beautiful building near Gramercy Park (that also houses the Yeats Society) was filled with a capacity crowd, standing room only by 8pm. Eric Bentley read the 1998 preface to his new book and then performed songs and poetry: "The Song of Mandelay," "Bill's Dance Hall in Bilbao," "Surabaya Johnny," "The Cranes," and "The Ballad of Hanna Cash," among others. He was accompanied on the piano by Michael Rice, composer of the music to *The Good Woman*, a musical by Bentley based on Brecht's *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* that ran at Pulse Theatre earlier this year. Hazel Raymundo, who played the leading role in that piece, closed the evening's performance by singing two songs from *The Good Woman*. Following the "official" program, many members of the audience stood in line for a book signing by Eric Bentley and stayed for a reception sponsored by the German Wine Information Bureau. Thanks to the participation of many different groups — among others The National Arts Club, the Goethe Institute, Applause Books, *Dreigroschenheft* — the evening was enlightening and entertaining for all participants. The International Brecht Society also sent a representative and congratulated Eric Bentley with flowers.

Bentley on Brecht at the National Arts Club

December 16, 1998

<i>Donald Lyons</i>	<i>Introduction</i>
<i>Eric Bentley</i>	<i>Readings</i>
	<i>Musical Performance</i>
<i>Michael Rice</i>	<i>Musical Performance</i>
<i>Hazel Raymundo</i>	<i>Musical Performance</i>

Eric Bentley has been Bertolt Brecht's other, off-stage voice almost since the two met at UCLA in 1942. Bentley has been the Charles Eliot Norton Professor at Harvard, as well as drama critic at *The New Republic*. In addition to his many books, such as *The Pirandello Commentaries* (1985), *The Kleist Variations* (1982), and *The Brecht Memoir* (1986), The Florida Theatre Festival is named in his honor.

Booksigning of *Bentley on Brecht* (Applause Books, 1998) after the program.

About the book: "An Immensely valuable account of the interaction of two great personalities at a climactic period of history."

Martin Esslin

Michael Rice is currently assistant conductor on Peter Pan.

Hazel Raymundo has appeared in *Miss Saigon* and *The Good Woman of Szechwan*, among other productions.



To Eric Bentley for Brecht's hundredth birthday 1998 [M. ROSEFIELD]

**BRECHT-AUFFÜHRUNGEN
des Berliner Ensemble**

Vorstellungen im Dezember 1998:

**Ich kommandiere mein Herz — Brecht
TASCHENPOSTILLE**

...Es werden gegeben: Musik, Gedichte und frühe Tagebücher.

Regie: Nino Sandow.

Bertolt Brecht: **DIE MAßNAHME**

...Nach über vierzig Jahren ist das Stück jetzt wieder öffentlich zu sehen — und die Inszenierung am Berliner Ensemble ist eine Überraschung: ...Was der Regisseur Klaus Emmerich sichtbar macht, sind die Wurzeln der Brechtschen Dramatik, die Entstehung des marxistischen Lehrstücks aus dem Geist der Religion, des Schlayers und der Lehrstube. (FAZ)

Regie: Klaus Emmerich

Bertolt Brecht: **BAAL**

...Durch die herausragende Leistung dieses *Baal* entsteht tatsächlich eine überzeitliche, erschreckende wie faszinierende Gestalt. Vor allem das ganz junge Publikum wird diese Produktion mögen: (*Hamburger Rundschau*)

Regie: Sven-Eric Bechtolf

(Gastspiel des Thalia Theater Hamburg)

Bertolt Brecht: **LEBEN DES GALILEI**

Nichts abgeklärt Auftrumpfendes in dieser Brechtfigur eines Renaissance-Menschen. Bierbichler sprüht vor Witz, obwohl seine Botschaft allemals das grandiose Understatement bleibt. (TSP)

Regie: Tragelehn

Bertolt Brecht: **DER AUFHALTSAME
AUFSTIEG DES ARTURO UI**

Regie: Heiner Müller

Bertolt Brecht: **DIE RUNDKÖPFE UND DIE
SPITZKÖPFE**

Musik: Hanns Eisler

Regie: Klaus Emmerich



PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

DIE MASSNAHME

Berliner Ensemble in Co-production with
the Bayerische Staatsschauspiel
Munich & Berlin.

Jens Richard Giersdorf, Los Angeles.

The death of the Chinese communist as well as his consent to his own execution in the Berliner Ensemble's production of Bertolt Brecht's *Die Maßnahme* moved me. This shouldn't have happened. I, as a former citizen of the vanished German Democratic Republic, where Brecht radiated over the theatrical landscape, know that Brecht should teach me, educate me, and question my perception, but his pieces should never move me emotionally. Maybe, the Berliner Ensemble's staging of *Die Maßnahme* wanted to question precisely this part of my socialist theater history and GDR theater reality.

Surprisingly, the Berliner Ensemble commemorated the centenary of his founder's birthday with a piece that Brecht himself banned from the stage 41 years ago. Brecht premiered his Lehrstück ("educational piece," "learning play") *Die Maßnahme* (*The Measures Taken*) on December 13, 1930 at the Philharmonie in Berlin. The premiere received considerable attention and was discussed for its form as well as its content. Brecht summarized the plot as follows: "Four communist agitators face a party tribunal, played by the mass choir. While they had been distributing communist propaganda, the communists had to execute their youngest comrade. To prove the necessity for this measure to the tribunal, the young communists demonstrate how the young comrade reacted in various political situations." In the premier production four actors Ernst Busch, Alexander Granach, Helene Weigel and Anton Maria Topitz played all parts and sang the songs. Then three

workers choirs from Berlin were united for the *Kontrollchor* (supervision choir). Hanns Eisler created the music for the piece -- one of his major works and a choral form that was until the 1930's unknown to the workers singers' movement.

Although Brecht self-confidently categorized *Die Maßnahme* as the "theater of the future" (*Die Maßnahme - Kritische Ausgabe* [Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1972], 265), in 1956 he prohibited any further staging of the piece. Speculations about the reasons for this ban have been amplifying between the piece's frightening resemblance to practices of the Stalinist regime and Brecht's realization of the failure of the form in regard to his concept of estrangement. Brecht was dismayed that the staging of *Die Maßnahme* "caused among the audience nothing more than moral affects of an inferior quality" (258). Brecht denied repeatedly the piece's value for the spectator. He explained that *Die Maßnahme* was not written for an audience, but for the education of the participants. And Brecht, even stated that only the actor who played the young comrade could gain from the performance. Brecht demanded further that this actor should also play the part of one of the other communists and participate in the choir before playing his role as the young comrade (262).

Klaus Emmerich, who directed the re-staging of *Die Maßnahme* this September at the Berliner Ensemble, had Brecht's requirement obviously in mind when he did not assign the cast of the young comrade to only one actor, but distributed this part evenly between four young actors. This casting choice was suggested by Brecht and allowed all actors to gain from the different positions they inhabited over the course of a single performance.

As the curtain opened, water was dripping down with an annoying regularity in a projection on a screen that divided the down-stage from the upstage. Soon a bright red beam of light that expanded all over the stage replaced the water drop, thus anticipating the content of *Die Maßnahme*: red is the color of the proletariat as well as blood, thus metonymically signifying the lives given in class struggle. Three young men and one woman insecurely stumbled on to the front part of the stage in shirts, trousers, and skirts that were reminiscent of the uniform of East Germany's *Junge Pioniere*, a communist organization

for young teenagers modeled after the Soviet example.

Throughout the entire evening, the four actors performed a lack of confidence in their movement style as well as speech pattern. They fulfilled their assignments awkwardly and indecisively by stuttering, speaking in an insecure whispering voice or a naive propagandistic tone, and by executing the re-staging of the scenes of the young comrade's failure with stiff movement that barely deviated from poses. This great performance of insecurity by the four young communists was even surpassed by four older actors, who sat in couples on each side of the stage and announced, commented, and questioned with an ironic undertone the young actors' performance and re-narration. The dusty tradition of the Berliner Ensemble came to life in these four older actors and their non-emotional distance to the tale of revolutionary events gone by. There could not have been less enthusiasm and more unmistakable boredom in their voices when one of them read out loud how "nice it is to take the word in class struggle." Not only is "nice" certainly not a word to be used in connection with class struggle, but also the discrepancy between the text's meaning and the actor's delivery of the lines created a vivid contradiction of Brecht's revolutionary intention. At one point instead of following Brecht's original text using a famous quote by Lenin, one of the older actor's tongue slipped purposely. Brecht's text declared that someone is not smart, who does not make any mistakes, but someone who "improves" them. The older actor used instead first the word "forget," which sounds similar in German, but communicates a completely different message. After he corrected himself, the audience, of course dressed predominantly in black, laughed, well-behaved and slightly confused.

The audience's response to this scene brought *Die Maßnahme's* impact very much to the point. Or as a critic wrote ironically after the premiere: "The bourgeoisie finally possessed their Brecht entirely." (Paul Gerold: *Märkische Allgemeine* [09.16.1997]. No fat, no sugar, all natural Brecht - easy to digest. A Berlin spectator going to the Berliner Ensemble to see one of Brecht's works is hardly surprised by methods of estrangement and distancing. Rather, such an audience would be puzzled by emotions and

melancholy. The strong side of the re-staging of *Die Maßnahme* lay in its refusal, however, to fulfill the audiences expectations entirely. But, because this refusal was mostly constructed by the performance's reminiscing of GDR history, it was only partially successful. The piece's content was dated, but the audience was sitting in a theater on the territory of a socialist state's capital that was just seven years gone. This state, the GDR, built its ideology exactly with those kind of agit-prop-phrases that Brecht has written into the piece. Of course not all audience members would have been struck by this similarity. A former GDR citizen like myself surely would have evaluated this resemblance differently than most Western Germans in the audience, who might have heard the slogans, but never had to realize propaganda's impact on their lives.

Moreover, the director emphasized the conflict between the revolutionary, but irrational individual and the omnipresent communist party's ideological requests. Emmerich staged the supervision choir floating high above the stage and behind the screen that divided upstage from downstage. The apparatus of power was visible but not reachable; it was divided from all actions by the screen. As a result, the four narrating young communists could turn in which ever direction they wanted; they were observed from all sides -- by the choir, by the two couples of older actors, and by the audience in a frightening resurrection of the GDR's surveillance society. But, here again, this theatrical resurgence of the *Staatssicherheitsstaat* (secret service state) might not have been equally vivid and frightening to all audience members. And even Eisler's still contemporary sounding composition could recall with its songs the golden ages of Berlin's cabaret and ball scene in the late 1920s, that are now in high fashion among Berlin's middle-class youth. However, at the same time the choir numbers recalled that were often discredited and banned as formalistic. Consequently, all songs were interpreted by a slick tenor in a tuxedo, who looked like a caricature of a capitalist while he stated his lack of knowledge about the 'use value' and 'exchange value' of a man in the "Song of the Commodity."

The audience's division became most clear near the end of the piece. Brecht required the four young actors not only to ask themselves and the young

communist for a solution different from the demanded execution, but to interrogate the audience as well. After the young actors recite facing the audience, "You also think about a better solution now," (132) the manuscript calls for an "intermission" to provide the audience with time to think. Emmerich intensified this moment by lighting the auditorium and keeping the intermission five minutes long. Five minutes in a theater auditorium can be eternal and uncomfortable for an audience that is put on the spot. Early into this intermission, an audience member with an unmistakable Western German accent shouted impatiently toward the stage that there was no other solution. He obviously just wanted to get over with this moment and get back to the entertainment. For him, this piece did not have anything to do with his life. He could neither relate to the production's references to the GDR, nor could he decode the deviations from Brecht's theories.

Thus, for some spectators the piece might have been just a museum-like performance of a long-not-seen piece by Brecht; or the opportunity to enjoy the staging of Eisler's music in its entirety. I, as a former citizen of the GDR, was moved and drenched in melancholic reminiscing about the failure of socialism. Neither position would have pleased Brecht. But maybe I underestimated the Berliner Ensemble, and they did not want to obey Brecht. Maybe the Berliner Ensemble chose to stage *Die Maßnahme* with a wink of an eye as a birthday present to Bertolt Brecht.

HEINZ-UWE HAUS'S NEW APPROACH TO BRECHT'S OLD GANGSTER PLAY *ARTURO UI*

Charles H. Helmetag, Villanova University

In April and May 1998 the Professional Theatre Training Program of the University of Delaware presented a new staging (in English) of Brecht's *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*.

Since Heinz-Uwe Haus became affiliated with PTP, the program has played an increasingly important role in the reception of the work of Bertolt Brecht.

Prior to rehearsals, actors—as well as students in the stage management and technical production programs—study Brechtian acting and staging techniques with Haus. He encourages them to improvise and experiment during the rehearsal process, to see the play as “telling a story,” to recognize the contradictions in the characters’ behavior and in their surroundings, to trust one another and develop a teamwork approach. They learn to see the theatre as a “laboratory, a place for investigation [and] analysis,” as Carl Weber described Brecht’s own rehearsal process.¹

In *Arturo Ui* Brecht portrays the rise to power of a Chicago gangster who resembles both Al Capone and Adolf Hitler. He wrote the play in Helsinki in 1941 while he and his family, who had fled Nazi Germany immediately following the Reichstag fire in 1933, were waiting for visas to the U.S. Like many Europeans Brecht had long been interested in America. During the Weimar Republic German newspapers often carried articles about the U.S., including stories about American gangsters and political corruption. America was the setting for several of Brecht’s plays: *Im Dickicht der Städte*, *Der Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, and specifically Chicago served as the background for *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* and *Arturo Ui*. Brecht gleaned much of his conception of this period in Chicago from the American gangster films of the 20s and 30s, but he had probably also read books such as Fred Pasley’s *Al Capone. The Biography of a Self-Made Man*.² Although the play was not performed in Brecht’s lifetime, he wrote it with an American audience in mind to teach them about the dangers of fascism. Brecht himself called the play “an attempt to explain to the capitalistic world the rise of Hitler by placing him in a familiar milieu.”³ Therefore Haus’s staging foregrounded the gangster action and did not turn Ui into a caricature of Hitler. In the wrong hands, *Arturo Ui* can be strident, painfully didactic, heavy-handed and boring.

The play requires a genuine sense of ensemble, which Haus achieved in rehearsals and in the pre-rehearsal training. He invested it with an invigorating physicality. The actors used every inch of the playing area and much of the audience space from the moment they rushed on stage like an unruly mob or a pack of jackals. At Givola’s floral shop

several of the gangsters formed part of the scenery: reclining on the floor with bouquets in their mouths, they became flower baskets. The scene in which Old Dogsborough vowed to resist Ui “as long as I breathe” while Ui snaked his legs up Dogsborough’s body and wrapped his feet around his neck is another example of such physicalized performance (see cover) and also an example of the contradictions inherent in the play.

In keeping with Haus’s emphasis on the highly physicalized performance of the actors and Brecht’s non-representational theatre, William Browning’s set design was simple but highly effective. An extremely functional, raked platform measuring approximately 8’x22’ served as a stage for the barker in the prologue, Ui’s room at the Mammoth Hotel, Givola’s flower shop and a cemetery plot. It separated into two parts to form Dogsborough’s bar. Apart from a brown suit for Ui, Andrea Barrier’s costume designs stressed shades of gray and black.

Brecht conceived the play in the style of epic theatre as a series of independent scenes and separated the scenes by titles. For those familiar with German history of the 1930s, Old Dogsborough, Roma and Dullfeet represent Reichspräsident Hindenburg, S.A. leader Ernst Röhm and Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. For an American audience unfamiliar with events in Europe, Brecht in one draft of *Arturo Ui* added “chronologies” to the titles in order to provide connections between events portrayed in the play and contemporaneous events in Germany and Austria. Haus replaced the visual titles with songs developed by the actors during rehearsals through improvisation. He often encourages his actors to improvise during the rehearsal process and considers it especially important for young actors in theatre training programs. The actors in *Arturo Ui* were urged to develop songs and movements out of an American context, from their own personal experience. Thus the title “Dogsborough’s country house” was presented as a square dance; gospel singers performed “Ce-me-te-ry at Cicero” to the tune of “Amen”; a hard rock group sang and played “A garage at night.” With few exceptions the actors and actresses were dressed in drab topcoats and fedoras, the typical gangster “uniform,” and wore whiteface with their cheekbones highlighted in black, make-up that suggested Brechtian masks. The

episodic structure of the play, the titles, the music and the masks were alienation devices designed to discourage audience identification with the characters and stimulate critical reflection about the relevance of the events portrayed to the audience's own reality. Brecht also uses a contrast between form and content as an alienation device to provoke the critical reflection of the audience. The Barker promises a production "in the grand style." The brutal actions of Ui and his henchmen clash with their speeches in blank verse as well as passages and situations borrowed from *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*, *Faust* and *Wallenstein*. The allusions to dramas of Shakespeare and German Classicism are inserted in such a way as to relativize or deflate Ui's power and suggest to the audience that they have the power to stop such demagogues. The most striking alienation device in the production, however, was Haus's selection of a young woman to play the role of Arturo Ui. Carine Montbertrand appeared in the prologue as the Barker, dressed in a black skirt, white blouse and black tie resembling a parochial school uniform. She summarized highlights from the play and introduced the principal characters: Old Dogsborough, Roma, Givola, Giri. Finally, the actress put on a topcoat and fedora like the other actors and "became" Arturo Ui, Public Enemy Number One. From this point on, she spoke like a Brooklyn gangster in a Hollywood film (Capone was from Brooklyn, although Brecht has him coming from the Bronx) but adopted a German accent after Roma's murder. Her petiteness was accentuated in her scenes with the tall black actor who played Roma. Haus has said that a male actor might tend to impersonate Hitler. The casting of a woman in the role of Ui reminded the audience that, despite the parallels in the plot to 1920s Chicago and 1930s Germany, Brecht was not portraying either Capone or Hitler. There were echoes of Charlie Chaplin in *The Great Dictator* (a film which clearly influenced Brecht) in the scene in which a Shakespearean actor teaches Ui how to walk, stand and hold his arms while giving a speech. Otherwise, however, Montbertrand portrayed the essence of the "strong man" who gains power by offering "protection" in bad times, the essence of a fascist leader.

The fast-paced production in two acts held the audience's attention all evening and frequently made

them a part of the action. At the Hartshorn Theatre in Delaware the audience sits on folding chairs arranged on bleacher-like metal risers. In the final scene, at the convention hall in Chicago, Ui's supporters emerged from the audience and distributed red-and-black Ui flags. Ui himself entered from the rear of the bleachers, shaking hands with members of the audience before he took to the platform to claim victory. As balloons descended from the ceiling and Ui pledged to spread his protection to Washington, Philadelphia, Little Rock and New York, the audience had been transported to the middle of a grotesque political rally.

The first American production of *Arturo Ui* in 1963, directed by Tony Richardson and starring Christopher Plummer as Ui, closed after eight performances. Brecht himself never staged the play or revised it for publication. Ernst Schürer has noted that it was not until the Nixon era that the political and economic situation caused American theatres to take a renewed interest in the play.⁴ Considering the American setting of the play and recent manifestations of right-wing extremism both in the U.S. and Germany, *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* was an appropriate selection for an American production in the Brecht anniversary year. Thanks to Haus's fast-paced, innovative staging and the enthusiasm of a disciplined troupe of young actors, it was also surprisingly entertaining.

Notes

1. Carl Weber, "Brecht as Director," *Drama Review* 12.1 (1967): 101.
2. Ernst Schürer, "Revolution from the Right: Bertolt Brecht's American Gangster Play *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*" in *Critical Essays on Bertolt Brecht*, ed. Siegfried Mews (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1989), 142-147.
3. Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke in 20 Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), 17: 1176.
4. Schürer, p. 151.

Three Penny Opera, Chicago Illinois Warren Leming

The American Theater Company of Chicago (previously the American Blues Theater) is a thriving independent group with its own leased space, parking lot, and the energy and will to tackle Brecht in a city which the German writer considered the hallowed ground of capitalist exploitation in America. Brecht's *Three Penny Opera*, the company's current production, is the single most successful show in the group's history. They were founded and have been producing continuously since 1985. So here again is testament to Brecht/Weill's musical and its enduring appeal to audiences. My only problem with the show was Marc Blitzstein's lamentable reworking of Brecht's text into postwar jargon, a fact that may have first put the show across when it was successfully produced in New York in the 50's, but is now a liability.

There is sometimes the eerie feeling with American Brecht productions that the actors almost understand what it is that they are saying. Not always an easy task when you consider the wildly varying quality of so many of the Brecht translations. Add to this Brecht's penchant for writing dialogue which imitated, but did not duplicate real speech, and you can compound the problem. Stef Tovar's MacHeath is suitably slick, with more than a touch of Vegas and an underlying sociopathology which surfaces in his confrontations with Jenny, Lucy, and Polly.

Jennifer Kern's Polly is sitcom smarmy and chillingly rapacious. She is both a compelling singer and capable of locating her interpretations at that fine point between X'er whine and fawning ingratiation now pro forma for post-teen divas on prime time TV. Martie Sander's Jenny even suggests Lotte Lenya: Sander's perpetual pout the perfect counterpoint to a part composed of banzai sensuality and brazen "business-as-usual," sex-worker candor. Suzanne Petri's Mrs. Peachum begins as alcohol-infused bookend to Mr. Peachum and ends a proper Victorian lady with all the airs of a suburban matron hosting a theater fundraiser. John Mohrlein's Peachum, with his hangdog face and tortured sense of a sordid deal (just blown) seems a Victorian Willy Loman trapped in the midst of a family too inept to master the

opportunism necessary to tract home, mortgage and three-car garage.

Of the supporting group of players, Mackie's henchmen and Jenny's whores all seemed perfectly cast. Ed Kross's choreography, not easy with a cast this large, never got in the way and never upstaged any aspect of Mr. Russell's show.

A note on the singing. Brecht's emphasis on both *sprechstimme* and singers who could not "sing" in the conventional sense is worth considering here. Conventional singing has the distinct disadvantage of immediately requiring the performer to abandon the character in favor of someone's (director, musical director, etc.) idea of "good" singing. The unvarying sameness which this approach produces, and this *Three Penny* does not escape the problem, renders character void as soon as song is called for, delight in "mistakes," paradox, unconventional approaches, and individuation in performers is often smothered in training and the ad-driven *reductio ad absurdum* of professional entertainment.

Increasingly actors and directors, choreographers and musicians, back stage and up stage are university educated. This homogenization of approach and style has spawned a generation of performers as conformist as the television series and Hollywood films to which they aspire. Where's the fringe when its practioners are professional presenters or would be schills for corporate advertising and promotion? These are topics worth considering when next the *Three Penny*, with its emphasis on public relations, advertising, and on-going class antagonisms is staged.

Just opposite the theater, as the production ended, two people bedded down in a doorway. For the departing theatergoers they were immediate reminders of what they had just seen. Real life advertising for something just a bit beyond what corporate TV has in mind.

Warren Leming is a writer/critic who divides his time between Berlin and Chicago. His play, 'The Eight Hours,' will be published next year by Kerr Publishing.

When the Shark Bites

A Brecht/Weill Cabaret, Stanford Summer Theater
Robert Hurwitt

The thin, nasal, unmistakable voice of Bertolt Brecht singing "Moritat" on the grainy, old recording was just the right touch. It's Brecht's best-known song – not to mention the song from which the Stanford Summer Theater's Brecht/Weill Cabaret *When the Shark Bites* drew its title. And it was an apt way to close a centennial tribute to the great German playwright and poet.

The only Bay Area show marking Brecht's centenary, I might add. Oddly, given Brecht's overwhelming (and salutary) influence on the development of 20th century drama, not one of our principal or even mid-level theater companies was staging one of his plays. Not ACT, which hasn't done Brecht since 1974. Not the Berkeley Rep, which has more commitment to Brechtian theater. Not San Jose Rep, which replaced a planned production of *Happy End* (a play disowned by Brecht anyway) with another revival of its evergreen *Cole Porter* revue.

SST, the professional wing of Stanford's drama department, under the direction of Rush Rehm, was filling the void with *Shark* to open its season. Created by Polish National Theatre (Teatr Narodowy) veterans Aleksandra Wolska (the director) and Jarek Truszczyński, (who plays Brecht), it opened on July 17 with a four-week run, and then went on to the International Festival of Experimental Theater in Shanghai in October.

It was a show that grew on you during the course of its two hours. Which was fortunate, because it didn't start particularly well. Billed as *A Brecht/Weill Cabaret*, *Sharks* opened more like a recital. One actor after another made an appearance and attempted a dramatic rendition of one of the great songs from *Happy End* or *Threepenny Opera*. The voices were strong but the performers – mostly current or recent Stanford students – lacked the experience to fully explore the songs as drama. It was not until five songs had received similarly unsatisfactory treatment that Truszczyński's Brecht stepped in to stop the show – looking quite Brechtian in his rumpled black leather jacket, round glasses and very short hair (but no cigar). The device was a cliché, but the understated, focused intensity of Truszczyński's performance commanded attention. From that moment *Sharks* got increasingly interesting. Truszczyński and Wolska's principle device was a kind of dream play – Brecht falls asleep



on a pile of books – in which Brecht songs, poems and bits of plays were inter-cut with his interrogation by the House of Un-American Activities Committee on the eve of his return to Germany after his

American Exile during World War II.

Wolska and lightning designer Alex Brok carved the stage fog with intrusive searchlights as Rehm's none-too-bright HUAC Chairman and Jeffrey Schwartz's dogged interrogator badgered Brecht with accusatory "Are you now" questions. It got even better with Martuscello and Adam Susman's sharp, high-handed performances in a raucous, carnival-costumed (by Connie Strayer) adaptation of *The Elephant Calf* kangaroo-court skit from *A Man's a Man*. The treatment of the songs improved too, starting with Telory Williamson's sardonic, Salome-like "Solomon Song" from *Threepenny Opera*. Dave Richardson created some stunning ensemble arrangements, particularly of the "Benares Song" and "Oh Heavenly Salvation" from *Mahagonny*, and of the magnificent "Song in Praise of Learning" by Brecht and Hanns Eisler.

It was fitting, at least theoretically, for a Brecht tribute that the actors should be more effective as an ensemble than as individuals. It was even more fitting, though, that Trusczyński so vividly demonstrated the power of Brechtian acting principles in his performance. He never let you forget that he is an actor playing a role, but when he came to the emotional crux of an injustice, he invested the moment with searing power. And he brought that combination to bear unforgettably on "What Keeps Man Alive" and the vindictive "Forgiveness Song" (both from *Threepenny Opera*). Trusczyński didn't sound like a singer, and his vocal range was minuscule. But Brecht didn't write for trained voices, and Trusczyński sang the meaning with a vitality that proved Brecht's point. At the end, when he sang the opening of "Moritat" and dropped the needle on that old recording – saying, simply, "Brecht sings Brecht" – this Shark had a bite.

(*San Francisco Examiner*, July 20, 1998. Slightly edited)

The Berlin Circle in Chicago

Ben Brantley

The play in an East Berlin theater, a story of economic negotiation between Chinese peasants and American capitalists, has obviously pleased no one. The rich-looking blonde from America, who admits she prefers "warmth" in her dramas, politely chirps about the troupe, "Aren't they just different?" And the outraged East German cultural secretary fulminates: "I thought we were going to see a play by Brecht. I don't think this is it at all."

Well, no, it isn't quite Brecht, is it? And neither is the play to which this scene serves as a prologue, Charles L. Mee's *Berlin Circle*, performed here by the Steppenwolf Theater Company.

It's true that this bouncy, free-weeling production, directed by Tina Landau, does follow the basic plot outline of the same Chinese fable that inspired Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*. It is also worth noting that the introductory play within the play (itself a parody of the prologue in *Chalk Circle*) is presented as the work of the Berliner Ensemble, the troupe with which Brecht was long associated.

But if you remember your *Chalk Circle*, you'll know that the heroine who shelters an abandoned baby during a bloody revolution was a noble servant girl. Here, the woman left holding the infant (in this case, when the Berlin wall comes tumbling down) is that same socialite who asked only for warmth in the theater. She is called Pamela Dalrymple, but if you changed her last name to Harriman you wouldn't be wrong. What's this? The famous seduction artist, who made her name from liaisons, with high-powered capitalists, holding center stage in a work that takes its cues from the great alienation artist? And it is Mr. Mee's sly point that the mixed-up world of dissolving international boundaries and economic flux of recent years makes Brecht's instructional morality tale more than a little passe.

As a play, *The Berlin Circle* is a bit of a mess. But then so is the newly consolidated Germany that's portrayed here. And under the direction of Ms. Landau, a new member of Steppenwolf who is known in New York for her vivid stagings of works like *Floyd Collins*, this production gives off a giddy energy appropriate to a social landscape in a state of added transition. The maxims of socialist

propaganda simply don't stick anymore. In this world, when a character with the familiar name of Warren Buffet starts spouting his economic philosophy, people listen. Mr. Mee has said that he wanted his *Circle* to be, in part, a collage of materials, after the model of Ernst's series of pictures, and he incorporates passages from biographies and autobiographies of the real Mr. Buffet, Mrs. Harriman, Andy Warhol and Katharina Graham as well as such far-flung sources as Robert Darnton's *Berlin Journal* and *The Pillow-book*, the medieval Japanese diary. Ms. Landau, working with an ensemble of 20-some actors, stirs these ingredients into a bubbling stew that, while expressly satiric, is definitely more warm than cold. In this show, when the Berlin wall falls, the whole cast, which includes a man on stilts juggling rolls of toilet paper, sings "Y.M.C.A.," the perky Village People song, to herald the advent of a new era.

Like Brecht's *Circle*, the play is centered on a question of motherhood: Who has the right to bring up the infant who is discarded by his mother (Elizabeth Laidlaw), here the mistress of an East German party official, who gets out of Dodge when the political situation turns sticky? Pamela (Amy Morton) finds herself warming to the little fellow, but she isn't exactly well versed in child care, so she picks up an au pair, a drab local student named Dulle Griet (Mariann Mayberry). Fleeing from a pair of Keystone Kops-like soldiers (deliciously played by Ian Barford and Yasen Peyankov), the two women bound through a series of adventures that include crossing a perilous rope bridge suspended over the Steppenwolf audience (part of James Schuette's ingenious Pop-Meyerholdian setting).

Poor, dutiful (and aptly named) Dulle does the drudge work, changing the baby and pushing the motorless truck that is the only available form of transportation. But, while her stories of amusing dinner parties and glamorous romantic conquests scarcely seem appropriate to the situation, Pamela demonstrates plenty of spunk and stamina. Played with contagious effervescence by Ms. Morton, Pamela is the key to what makes this production so likable. Yes, she's a frivolous chatterbox in a Chanel-style suit, but neither Mr. Mee nor Mrs. Morton is willing to write her off as a mere airhead.

There's a strong-willed, dynamic quality about

Pamela, and if *The Berlin Circle* has a concrete message, it's that the strong and the dynamic will prevail in times of crisis. The fabled episode from which Brecht's play took its title, in which the claims to the baby are fought out in a chalk circle, here ends in a compromise. Compromise, after all, is what makes the contemporary world go round. Mr. Mee's play is best in its vaudevillian mode, which embraces such scenes as a wonderfully tacky drunken wedding party that is interrupted by the ever unflappable, logorrheic Mr. Buffet (hilariously embodied by Tim Grimm). The more earnest, lyrical passages, spoken by the hopeful Dulle and the morally conflicted Heiner Müller (named for the German playwright and director and portrayed by Matthew Sussman), tend to fall flat. Despite its tendency to long-windedness and its occasional dead spots, the sheer subversive bravado of this *Circle* goes a long way in maintaining its audience's affections. And how refreshing to come upon a political satire that refuses to peddle easy answers and agitprop.

Mr. Mee generously gives his play a happy ending. (You'll be delighted to know that Pamela and Warren, true soul mates, finally find each other.) But he also makes it abundantly clear that the knotty social problems with which this work deals aren't even close to being solved.

(*The New York Times*, November 10, 1998)

CDs and Booklets für Brecht-Einsteiger

Joachim Lucchesi, Berlin

Joachim "Hören Sie mal Brecht"! Mit dieser Aufforderung legte das Label BMG Berlin Musik GmbH rechtzeitig zum 100. Geburtstag die bislang umfangreichste Sprach- und Musikedition vor. Es handelt sich um zwanzig CDs nebst einem 83-seitigen Begleitheft in einer attraktiv gestalteten Box. Über zwanzig Stunden Spielzeit lassen die Hoffnung aufkeimen, daß manches Neue und frisch Entdeckte darunter sein möge. Doch um es gleich zu sagen: Erwartungen dieser Art werden nicht erfüllt, sämtliche Aufnahmen sind zwar zum überwiegenden Teil erstmalig auf CD erschienen, haben jedoch ihren

ursprünglichen Veröffentlichungsort in den Vinyl-LPs der nicht mehr existenten DDR-Labels Eterna, Nova und Litera. Dennoch wäre es falsch, den Wert dieser Ausgabe mit dem Hinweis auf ihre Zweitveröffentlichung zu schmälern. Die in den sechziger bis achtziger Jahren in vielen Plattengeschäften und Bibliotheken der DDR zu findenden Brecht-Aufnahmen sind heute Raritäten und kaum noch antiquarisch zu erwerben. Mit der nun vorliegenden CD-Edition ist eine erneute Auseinandersetzung mit der auditiven (und mittlerweile historischen) Seite der Brecht-Rezeption möglich, vor allem für diejenigen, welche aus verschiedensten Gründen keinen Zugang zum DDR-Plattenmarkt hatten. Und schließlich eröffnet auch das Medium CD eine größere Verbreitungs- und Abspielmöglichkeit, als der stark zurückgedrängte Plattenspieler.

Bertolt Brecht: Werke -- Eine Auswahl ist die CD-Edition benannt und verweist damit auch auf den Umstand, daß nicht alle damals in der DDR erschienenen Brecht-Platten in toto vorliegen. Somit könnte von Fall zu Fall ein Rückgriff auf die alten LPs notwendig werden. Aber dies scheint mir -- da ein Spezialfall -- nicht das Hauptproblem zu sein. Weitaus problematischer ist die mangelhafte Qualität des Booklets (Texte: Agnes Hüfner und Thomas Neumann). Zwar werden Titel, Zeitdauern und Tracks angegeben, werden auch die Interpreten namentlich aufgeführt (sowie als Anhang eine Brecht-Biographie), doch finden sich keine weiterführenden Angaben zu den einzelnen Aufnahmen. Beispielsweise wäre es von Interesse zu erfahren, daß die Musikaufnahme zu "Pauken und Trompeten" 1957, also zwei Jahre nach der Premiere am Berliner Ensemble unter Leitung des Komponisten entstanden ist, und demzufolge auch historische Authentizität besitzt. Hinweise dieser Art, die den informativen Wert einer historischen Aufnahme auch ausmachen, wird man kaum in dem optisch ansprechenden und mit zahlreichen Fotos versehenen Booklet finden. Der Schwerpunkt liegt (bei den Stücken) auf der werkgeschichtlichen Seite, bei den Interpreten auf den biographischen. So liest man im Booklet auf Seite 61 zur CD "Hanns Eisler singt Brecht" einen nachgedruckten Erinnerungstext Stephan Hermlins. Über das Exemplarische des Eislischen Vortrags eigener Kompositionen (auch

für heutige junge Interpreten) ist nichts gesagt. Es wird deutlich, daß das Fehlen eines spezialisierten Musikredakteurs bei der Textgestaltung von großem Nachteil war.

Die zwanzig CDs sind thematisch in fünf Abteilungen untergliedert. In der ersten Abteilung "Originalton" ist Brechts Stimme zu hören (singend, vorlesend, diskutierend) sowie der Mitschnitt von der HUAC-Anhörung. Die zweite Abteilung besteht aus Mitschnitten von Proben Brechts (*Kreidekreis*, *Galilei*), die in ihrer Textverständlichkeit nach wie vor Probleme bereiten.

In der dritten Abteilung (die mit zehn CDs das umfangreichste Material bereitstellt) sind Aufführungen des Berliner Ensembles dokumentiert. Vollständig: *Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar*, *Leben des Galilei und Mutter Courage*. In Auszügen: *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*, *Die Tage der Commune*, *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* sowie *Pauken und Trompeten*. Bühnenhistorisch ist diese Präsentation von großem Gewinn, wenngleich schnell deutlich wird, daß die auditive Seite eines Theaterabends eben nur das Fragment des weitaus komplexeren Gebildes "Theateraufführung" ist. Die vierte Abteilung ist Lesungen vorbehalten. Die "Flüchtlingsgespräche" und das von Helene Weigel und Ekkehard Schall vorgetragene "Lehrgedicht von der Natur des Menschen" sind ebenso zu finden wie Textrezitationen von Therese Giehse und Helene Weigel.

Schließlich folgt die letzte Abteilung mit Songs, Liedern und Gedichten. Die Interpreten sind Ernst Busch, Ekkehard Schall, Hilmar Thate, Hanns Eisler und Paul Dessau.

Der Wert dieser Edition liegt in ihrer Bereitstellung von historischem und bisher kaum greifbarem Material, weniger in einer angemessenen, sorgfältigen Kommentierung. Und ob die Zielgruppe der "Brecht-Einsteiger," die im Werbetext benannt ist, sich tatsächlich angesprochen fühlt, bleibt angesichts des Startpreises von DM 399,- abzuwarten.

Bertolt Brecht: *Werke. Eine Auswahl*. 20 CDs und Booklet. BMG 7432 1501942. DM 399,-

Caucasian Chalk Circle at Carleton College

James K. Lyon

In early May, 1998 I participated in a conference and series of programs at Carleton College connected with the 50th anniversary of the world premiere of Bertolt Brecht's play *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

I was not prepared for what I saw and heard. Skillfully arranging songs, poems, ballads, and excerpts from plays by Brecht, with music by Brecht's most prominent composer/collaborators into an evening's entertainment, the producer/director created a first-rate, fast-paced show. The talented actors/singers understood Brecht very well. Never allowing the production to lose his hard edge, even when his texts occasionally leaned to sentiment, they portrayed his anti-sentimental, "tough-guy" stance and the political activism present in many of his texts in a way that was at once entertaining and provocative. Besides being obviously gifted actors, their singing style reminded me of some of the great Brecht performers in the past 25 years, and I have seen nearly all of them.

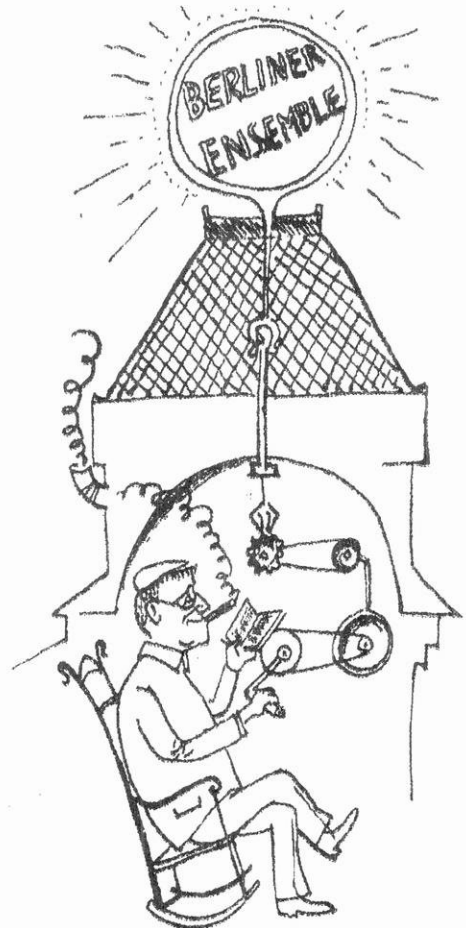
This show, I suspect, would play best to audiences under 40, or to politically sophisticated viewers of any age, i.e. to people who are not too comfortable with the world as it is. To me it came close to reproducing the cabaret atmosphere of German theater of the Weimar Republic. It was a first-rate entertainment, but entertainment which also challenges viewers to think and doesn't allow them a moment of complacency. As I watched it, I wished that anyone teaching or taking a course on the rise of Nazi Germany could have seen it.

To Those Who Come After: The Voice of Bertolt Brecht
Music by Hanns Eisler, Darius Milhaud, Kurt Weill, and Stefan Wolpe
English texts and lyrics by Eric Bentley
Performed by David Harris, Manon Gimlett, and Craig Johnson (piano).

Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti in Indonesia

An Indonesian version of one of Brecht's popular plays *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* has been performed in Jakarta, in July 1998, by the local ensemble at TIM (Taman Ismail Marzuki) Jakarta.

TIM is considered as an established Indonesian culture institution. The play was staged based on Brecht's theory of *Verfremdungseffekt*. According to the director, some of Brecht's theories also occur in traditional Indonesian theater, for example "Lenong" (a theater form from Betawi / Jakarta).



Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe von Brecht mit Eislers Musik im Berliner

Ensemble

Christoph Funke

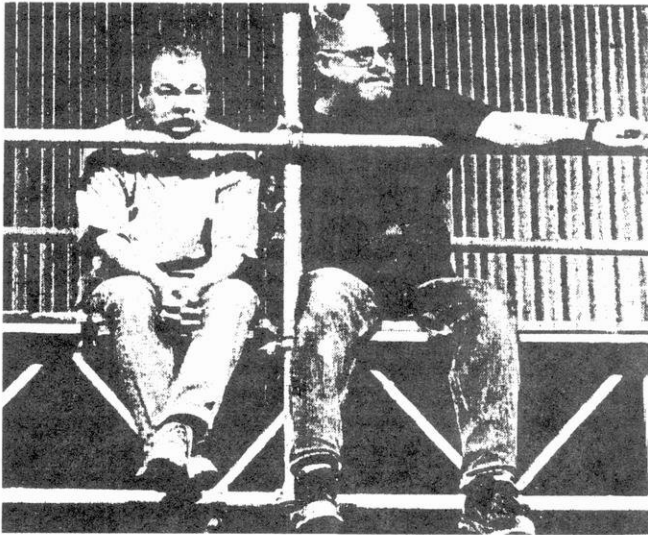
Eben mal schnell eine Geschichte zu erzählen, auf und unter dem Baugerüst, das könnte die Absicht sein. Es ist ja alles im Umbruch, ob in Berlin oder im Berliner Ensemble. Die Komödianten spielen nicht zuerst die Rolle, sondern sich selbst, wie der Programmzettel verkündet (Beispiel: Veit Schubert spielt Veit Schubert als Anwalt der Familie de Guzman). Ein paar Bretter und Leitern vor dem Eisernen genügen also, Kostüme braucht es eigentlich auch nicht, die Alltagskleidung, sparsam verfremdet, reicht durchaus. Und mit den paar Quadratmetern des Proszeniums kann man doch gut auskommen, dieser staubig-graue, schmale Streifen Bühnenland steht als einziger Ort für alle Orte. Die Spieler kommen einfach aus dem Zuschauerraum oder durch ein kleines Türchen in der Stahlwand, und wenn schon mal gesessen werden muß, reichen die Bretter des Gerüsts oder ein paar Getränkeboxen, aus Plastik. Auch an Personal wird gespart, und von ein paar hundert Seiten Textmaterial bleibt nur ein stenographisches Protokoll.

Der Kommunismus sei das Einfache, das schwer zu machen ist, hat Brecht gedichtet. Sein Greuelmärchen *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe* ist sehr schwer zu machen, aber Klaus Emmerich (Regie und Bühnenbild) will den Beweis antreten, daß es ein ganz einfaches Stück ist. Die Lasten der vielen Arbeitsstufen (1931 bis 1938) mit mehreren abgeschlossenen, selbständigen Fassungen, Varianten und Versuchen werden abgeworfen. Was Brecht in sein poetisches Material hineinzuzwingen versuchte — Revolution und Klassenkampf, politische Manipulation und Rassenlüge, Profitgier und Kriegslüsterheit —, ist bei der Aufführung im Berliner Ensemble buchstäblich nur noch "im Gerüst" vorhanden. Bärbel Jaksch, die brechterfahrene Dramaturgin, macht daraus, sagen wir es mal küchentechnisch, eine "Einbrenne." Der Vizekönig übergibt die Macht an einen Statthalter (von Shakespeares *Maß für Maß* ging Brechts Arbeit aus), damit der alle unangenehmen "Arbeiten" übernimmt, unter zeitweiliger Duldung der von ihm

erfundenen Lehre von den guten rundköpfigen Tschuchen und den bösen spitzköpfigen Tschichen. Ein Bauern-Aufstand wird, verbal nur, niedergeschlagen. Es bleibt dabei — reich geht vor arm, und reich bestimmt die Geschäfte. Auch Iberin, der Statthalter, muß sich arrangieren: Der Vizekönig, so plötzlich wieder da wie vorher verschwunden, zwingt den Eingesetzten, im nun "befriedeten" Staat die verhaßte Salzsteuer zu verkünden. Aber so schlüssig wird auf der Bühne nicht erzählt. Schauspielerinnen sagen die Szenen an, mit den aufgeschlagenen Textbüchern in der Hand, es ist, als finde eine Probe statt. Man arrangiert sich, man probiert, man kommt und geht. Der rote Faden, wenn es ihn denn gibt, verbindet nicht Glieder einer Handlung, sondern Lieder. Die Musik Hanns Eislers, zum ersten Mal in der anspruchsvollen Orchesterfassung gespielt, tritt beherrschend in den Mittelpunkt. Brechts *Rundköpfe* werden zum Vehikel, diese Folge von Kompositionen zu den lyrischen Einlagen in ihrer überraschenden Selbständigkeit zu behaupten. Das Lied von der Tünche, die Ballade vom Wasserrad und die vom Knopfwurf, das Kuppellied, der Rundgesang der Pachtherren, die Beichte der Prostituierten Nanna und das Lied eines Großen, aus der Handlung herausgenommen und doch auch in sie integriert, erweisen sich als reizvolle Möglichkeit zur übergreifenden Analyse menschlichen Seins und Verhaltens in politisch aufgeregten Zeiten. Eislers Musik hat einen treibenden Rhythmus, sie schluchzt und schmettert, sie hat den Schmelz und die herbe Süße tänzerischer Ekstase und die mit Ironie aufgenommene Wucht alter Choräle. Das Orchester unter Leitung von Jürgen Bruns: vorzüglich. Für die Darsteller waren die Brecht-Eisler-songs das Salz in der Suppe. Spöttischer, kurzangebundener Sarkasmus (Carmen Maja Antoni) stand dabei neben ingrimmig ungezügelter Kraftentladung (Catherine Stoyan), zu genießen war, im Liedgesang, die Eleganz kluger Argumentation (Götz Schulte) oder eine geradezu erschütternd biedere Naivität (Uwe Steinbruch). Der "Tausch" von Nonne in Freudenmädchen, unter der kundigen Leitung von Rutli Glöss als Kuppelmutter von Margarita Broich und Catherine Stoyan ausgeführt, wurde dabei zur eindrucksvollsten Szene des Abends. Das Aufblitzen von Lüsterheit bei der

Schamhaften, das Hineinfinden in kitschig romantisches Fühlen bei der Schamlosen, im Kleiderwechsel und der Übernahme des Liedes (Aller Tugenden schönste) zelebriert, hatten untergründigen Witz und ein ganz unschuldiges Vergnügen am komödiantischen Kunststück. Solche virtuos einlagen wurden auch sonst versucht, machten aber immer wieder auch auf die bröselnde, schleppende Handlung aufmerksam. Immerhin bemerkenswert waren Veit Schuberts ruckhaftes Denken als Anwalt, gepaart mit Stolpern, Stürzen, Akten-Explosionen, die breitlächelnde, hinreißend liebenswerte Blödigkeit des Pächters Callas von Uwe Steinbruch und die stoische Versteinerung des Pachtherrn de Guzman von Martin Seifert.

Oben, auf dem Gerüst, später in der rechten Rangloge, agierten die großen Politiker: der deftig fette, raffiniert verschlagene Vizekönig des Martin Spengler, der zurückhaltend, klug und spöttisch



beobachtende Staatsrat Missena des Dieter Montag —und der Angelo Iberin des Uwe Fischer. Das war nicht, wie in Alexander Langs *Rundköpfe*-Inszenierung am Deutschen Theater 1983, ein Biedermann auf dem Fahrrad, sondern ein schneidiger Agitator in Lederjacke und mit Koppelschloß, ein Fanatiker, der sich im Winde dreht, den die Herrschenden wehen lassen. “Der Senat von Berlin baut mit Mitteln des Bundes das

neue BE” verkündete ein weißes Stoffplakat am Gerüst, bevor das Spiel von den *Rundköpfen* und den *Spitzköpfen* begann. Warten wir ab, was aus der provokativen (Wahl)Verkündung wird — am Ende der Premiere gab es erst einmal sehr herzlichen Beifall.

(Der Tagesspiegel, 21 September, 1998)

Der gute Mensch von Sezuan Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin Hans Göpfert

Drei Götter kommen auf die Erde und brauchen barmherziges Quartier. Mit diesem Problem hat es heutzutage jeder Potsdamer Häftling in Prenzlauer Berg leichter als ein Himmlischer im übrigen Mitteleuropa. Das Trio ist auf der Suche nach einem guten Menschen. Und es findet: Katharina Thalbach. So geschehen am Maxim Gorki Theater.

Diese Bühne ist all die Jahrzehnte gegen Brecht immun geblieben. In gewissen Zeiten, da das Stanislawski-System hoch in kulturpolitischen Ehren stand, bildete das kleine Theater geradezu eine Festung gegen die abweichlerischen Versuchungen, für welche das Berliner Ensemble ins Feld zog. Niemand wird uns ernstlich weismachen können, unstillbares Verlangen habe die Gorkis jetzt dazu getrieben, kurz vor Toresschluß des Gedenkjahres schnell noch ein Stück des Heiligen Bertolt zu spielen.

Nachdem Katharina Thalbach mit und als *Hauptmann von Köpenick* unschlagbar bewiesen hatte, daß selbst ein Harald Juhnke nicht unersetzbar ist, mußte sich jede einigermaßen auf Publikumswirkung zielende Intendanz auf die Suche nach jenem Rollenfutter machen, das dem Zuschauerliebling weitere Gelegenheit gibt, an einem Abend als Frau und als Mann zu glänzen. Das zu solchem Zwecke geeignete Stück trägt den Titel *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*.

Als menschen- und götterfreundliche Hure Shen Te ist Thalbach eine Augenweide.

Pummelig. Blaue Haare. Tolle Busen-Montierung. Ihr verliebt strahlender Blick in den Armen des verhinderten Postfliegers Yang Sun (sanfte Filmmusik im Hintergrund) hat es ebenso in sich wie die tiefe Jammerniene im neu eröffneten Tabakskiosk, als ihre Gutherzigkeit sie, inzwischen erblondet, an den geschäftlichen Abgrund führt.

Nun aber, als sie in Sakko und Rolle des Business-tüchtigen Veters Shui Ta Zuflucht sucht, will Brechts antikapitalistische Parabel nicht so recht klappen. Dieser kleine lispelnde Kobold mit enormem Überbiß stammt geradewegs aus *Hase Hase*, nicht aber aus dem eiskalten Musterbuch abgefemter Arbeitgeber-Monster. Kein Ausbeuter. Nur ein kleiner putziger Kasper. Thalbach kräht. Es ist die gute alte Kathie-Tour. Sie ist immer in Fahrt. Aber das Stück tritt auf der Stelle.

Dabei fängt alles so vielversprechend an. Im Bühnenbild von Johannes Leiacker wandeln die Götter tatsächlich senkrecht eine Straße vom Himmel hinab zur Erde. Und dort unten wölbt sich eine mächtige Asphaltwelle, die immer wieder bewältigt sein will. Ein paar Peitschenmasten stehen am Rande. Uwe Eric Laufenberg lokalisiert *Sezuan* irgendwo in Berlin. Die Obdach- und Rücksichtslosen, das in der Mülltonne krabbelnde Kind, die Leute, die wegsehen, wo Gewalt passiert -- diese Bühnen-Figuren sind irgendwie mit der Alltagswirklichkeit verwandt. Der freundliche treuherzige Teppichhändler und seine Frau mutieren hier gar politisch korrekt zu lieben Türken. Nur bleiben sie kostümierte Staffage. Am Grips-Theater werden solche Typen seit Jahren treffender beobachtet.

Laufenberg inszeniert nicht Brecht-gläubig. Keine Unterrichtsstunde mit lehrreichen Sprüchen. Kein Märchen. Kein praktikables Gleichnis. Aber was dann? Beispielsweise die hübsche Love-Story. Nur hat der softe Pilot (Rainer Wöss) auch so seine Schwierigkeit mit der verkappten Identität. Es ist was los in *Sezuan*. Alles verpoppt und verpeppt. Paul Dessau -- war da was?

Der Wasserverkäufer (Harald Schrott) hat bereits vorneweg prima gewirbelt und macht aus Mao Tse Tung einen richtigen Seat-Rap-Mix. Thalbach schmeißt zur Abwechslung schon mal

Schrippen ins Parkett. Ausgiebig Regen. Und am Ende gehen die Götter mit dem Tabakfabrikanten Shui Ta als Sheriffs in Marlboro-Country ins Gericht. Da sind gut dreieinhalb Stunden um. Die ersten drei Reihen bleiben wach, weil kräftig mit Wasser gepitschert wird. Weiter hinten blickt man auf die Uhr. Schon in Reihe sechs hat jemand vernehmlich geschnarcht. Es war nicht die Inszenierung, die ihn wieder weckte.

(Berliner Morgenpost, 24. November, 1998)





Good Woman of Szechwan at Santa Clara

Gudrun Tabbert-Jones

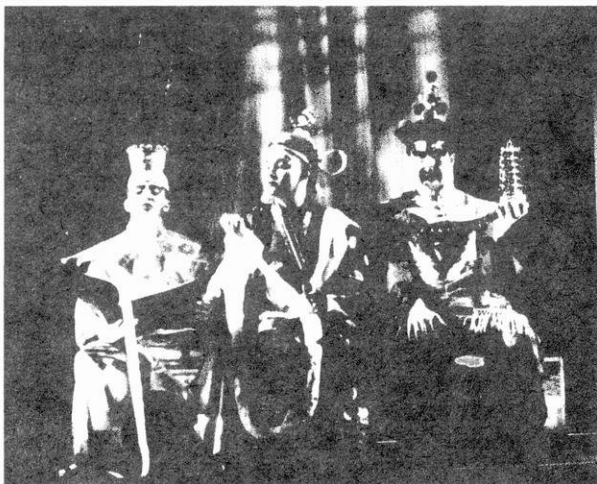
The production of *Good Woman of Szechwan* by the department of Theatre and Dance at Santa Clara University was one of the last in a series of Brecht events in the Bay Area this year, and a good one at that. Praise goes to Fred Tollini who directed this 3 hour long production with an all student cast. The setting was simple yet effective. White cloth panels dropping from the ceiling served at times as stage dividers, at times as part of the scenery or as a curtain, depending on what was needed in different episodes. Upstage the water seller's culvert formed part of a tall "Chinese wall."

The play opened with the water seller (David Philips) bent under the burden of his yoke waiting for the arrival of the Gods. The visual contrast between this humble figure -- he was dressed as a Kuli with baseball cap and tennis shoes -- and the Gods in Peking Opera glitter and gold was striking. I took it as the first of the many examples of the *estrangement effect* realized throughout the production. In this scene, the contrast called attention to wealth as a prerequisite to leading "godly" lives, i.e. to live by the tenets set forth by religion. Tollini's depiction of the Gods as a bickering threesome consisting of a statuesque male, an imposing female, and a small clownish figure tagging

along, elicited some laughter from the audience. The Gods represented the trinity: knowledge, revenge and compassion, however I saw it as an ironic hint at the modish concept of God as a gendered entity.

Jennifer Zensen portrayed Shen Teh as a very sincere and gentle character. Highlights of her performance were Shen Teh's encounter with Sun and her chat with her unborn son. But Jennifer was equally convincing as Shui Ta. She gave a wonderful imitation of a man intentionally exaggerating male bearing. Brechtian *Zeigegestus* certainly served as a model here.

Changing into "evil" Shui Ta -- whenever "good" Shen Teh no longer could cope -- for example evicting the "poor" from her store -- made it clear to the audience that being tough in hard times is the only recourse there is to survive. Being "good" is presented as a weakness, as not being able to defend oneself against exploitation and abuse. Shen Teh's occasional lapse into the role "evil" Shui Ta was therefore perceived as a measure the audience wholeheartedly approved of. Shen Teh's inner conflict, her desire to be "good" as demanded by religion and the necessity to be "evil" in order to be able to survive demonstrated to the audience Brecht's idea that in today's world the old values set forth by religion do more harm than good and need to be replaced by new principles. As if to test this contention we observed where goodness may lead. Watching Shen Teh allowing herself to be cheated



again and again the audience could not help but approve of Shui Ta's mode of dealing with the world. Episodes like these were intended to change the audience's view of traditional values. This was one of Brecht's goals.

Other characters in this production were equally convincing. Dressed as an airman from the thirties, Rob Tepper played cold and opportunistic Sun. Shen Teh's feelings for this unsympathetic and cynical man called attention to the dangers of romantic love. In scenes where Shen Teh interacted with Sun she seemed to be particularly vulnerable. Marc Serra was a youthful Shu Fu. Cartwheeling across the stage, hitting and kicking furniture around, he demonstrated his prowess in martial arts and also his propensity for meanness. Shen Teh's rejection of this healthy and well-to-do suitor in favor of penniless and frail-looking Sun was an example of how love weakens a person, a warning against the entrapments of unconditional "love." Like "goodness" love is to be viewed as an emotion that puts survival at risk, a view that Brecht presented in other plays as well. Last but not least Mrs. Shin, Shen Teh's nosy confidante, should be mentioned. She was played by Betsy Moore who brought much zest and vitality to this character. Scenes in which she appeared were particularly lively. Overall, it was a good production. In view of the short time the students had for rehearsals they did a splendid job.

I should like to mention some other fine points of this production. For example, much attention was given to clothing. While some characters wore clothes reminiscent of the thirties, others appeared in modern outfits. By way of contrast the guard wore the uniform of a medieval mercenary and the Gods sported gilded gowns and golden make-up. This Brechtian use of scenic detail demonstrated the distance between human reality and religious myth.

Costumes served as a clue as to the Gods' experiences on earth. Their appearance on stage -- they were limping, their cloths in tatters -- sent a



message to the audience that the world had not treated them as well as they had expected. One God had a broken arm, the other a broken leg and the third had a black eye. As they came face to face with Shen Teh who stood before them in the courtroom -- stripped down to her slip shift with a protruding belly -- they seemed to be too tired to re-evaluate their position and search for new answers. Indulging in windy rhetoric about the value of being good they stepped on a big blue cloud which was

being lifted off from the stage while people were gathering below.

An image of utter helplessness Shen Teh curled up on a platform in a fetal position, crying out for help. Onlookers no longer gazed up in search for heavenly answers. On the contrary, some of them extended a helping hand to Shen Teh. This was Brecht's message to the audience. The answers do not lie with the Gods but with man. In the end a young man from the cast, dressed in street clothes stepped forth and appealed to the audience to seek new solutions to the question about how to lead a good life and yet survive.

The text that was used in this production was John Willett's translation of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*. However, Tollini translated Brecht's lyrics, set to original music by Joe O'Keefe. The "Song of the Smoke" evoked the cabaret style of the 30's and the "Holy Nevercomeday" was a parody of gospel music. According to the program Tollini's purpose was to present the parable in its biblical style, i.e. provoking the questions of the conflict of virtue and self-interest but putting the responsibility of formulating a solution in man.

(Dreigroschenheft 1/1999)

ARTICLES

**Remembering Bertolt Brecht:
The End of the Commemorative Year**

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The Brecht year 1998 commemorates the 100th birthday of the playwright, poet, thinker, and theater director Bertolt Brecht. Approaching the end of the centenary, it is the right time to pause for a moment to consider how we have commemorated Bertolt Brecht. Brecht himself was not inexperienced in the practice of remembering, exemplified in the poem "Erinnerung an die Marie A.":

Und fragst du mich, was mit der Liebe sei?
So sag ich dir: Ich kann mich nicht erinnern.
Und doch, gewiß, ich weiß schon, was du meinst,
Doch ihr Gesicht, das weiß ich wirklich nimmer,
Ich weiß nur mehr: Ich küßte es dereinst.¹

This memorializing gesture describes the ambiguity of forgetting and remembering to which Brecht is subject as well. His poetic strategy — generalizable and applicable for our commemoration — connects the vanishing memory of the observed object with great distance. Controlled by a movement of distancing, the process renders the object strange, so that its artificiality and its own historicity (in this case: Brecht's) becomes apparent. This is a method of reduction and isolation that recalls Fatzer's "Testament":

Behaltet von allem, was an mir ist
Nur das euch nützliche
Der rest ist fatzer.²

Another of Brecht's suggestions concerning the practice of remembering is found in the last lines of his poem "An die Nachgeborenen," written in 1938 in exile.³ It bids us: "Gedenkt unsrer / Mit Nachsicht." Now it is time, once again. We are those born after, the *Nachgeborene*, who commemorate him. It is not the first, nor — in all likelihood — will it be the last time that Brecht will be needed for specific purposes and occasions. This has happened frequently, even during Brecht's lifetime. I am thinking, for example, of the first GDR

newsreel images of Brecht which show a parade honoring the newly founded GDR with the "festive" float of the Berliner Ensemble; Brecht and Weigel are waving happily. I remember too the first special issue of the journal *Sinn und Form*, produced by the German Academy of Arts in 1949, in honor of Bertolt Brecht. While some politicians distrusted and envied him, he was also occasionally trotted out as a prestigious state object for GDR politics. After the Berliner Ensemble achieved international recognition with the first prize for its production of *Mutter Courage* at the Paris Festival "Théâtre de la Nation" (a production that had been attacked in East Berlin as being formalistic); after Brecht accepted the Stalin Peace Prize in Moscow; after he was appointed Vice-President of the Academy of Arts, his use value was relatively high. Yet only after his death did the celebrations — and with that the forgetting — really begin: with the official state ceremony in the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm the day after the funeral, where (among others) open Brecht critics such as the SED party leader Walter Ulbricht, the cultural functionary Paul Wandel, and the philosopher Georg Lukács eulogized him in the highest terms.

I do not want to be misunderstood. Brecht is not responsible for the way he was instrumentalized in the GDR. In a different context, in the 1932 study *Der Dreigroschenprozeß: Ein soziologisches Experiment*, he states the following:⁴

. . . nur wer die Augen schließt vor der ungeheuerlichen Gewalt jenes revolutionären Prozesses, der alle Dinge dieser Welt in die Warenzirkulation reißt, ohne jede Ausnahme und ohne jede Verzögerung, kann annehmen, daß Kunstwerke irgendeiner Gattung sich hier ausschließen könnten. Denn der tiefere Sinn des Prozesses besteht ja darin, kein Ding ohne Beziehung zum andern zu lassen, sondern alle zu verknüpfen, wie er auch alle Menschen (in Form von Waren) allen Menschen ausliefert, es ist eben der Prozeß der Kommunikation schlechthin.

Brecht is referring here to film, which is subordinated to the capitalist process of commodity circulation; however, he recognizes the revolutionary

energy of the process as entirely positive, since through it human beings are linked to one another, and these interpersonal relationships become visible and material. Without entering into the discussion of whether the planned economy of the early GDR transformed the ownership relations into a state capitalistic, a post capitalistic, or socialistic economic system, I do want to insist that Brecht himself — understood as focused creative energy — quickly assumed this above-described commodity form, and consequently wound up in the “enormous power of that revolutionary “process of communication itself.” I also do not doubt that Brecht, the tactician, already knew prior to his death how to estimate and exercise his commodity value in the GDR as well as elsewhere. Finally, it should be mentioned, for enough contemporaries have confirmed it, that precisely Brecht’s instrumentalization in the fifties was for many a welcome or even indispensable counter balance to the conservative stuffiness of the projected socialist culture of the German nation. In fact, as a politically valuable prestige object the effect of Brecht was like a breath of fresh air.

The commodity “Brecht” lost this explosive force, and the ensuing commemorations became increasingly pompous, while those practiced in forgetting made it easier and easier for themselves. It is hard to escape the impression that, like *Fatzer*, not the useful, but the rest of Brecht was kept. In 1958, the first of the GDR’s new ocean fleet was christened Bertolt Brecht — a bottle of champagne smashed on its stern. Similarly, in the following years, schools, factories, and cultural centers were all honored with the name of Brecht. In 1963, for his sixty-fifth birthday, the parking lot next to the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm was named Bertolt Brecht Place — years later even a lawn was sown there. For his seventieth birthday, on February 9, 1978, the Weigel-Brecht apartments and the Brecht Center in the reconstructed “Brecht House” in (East) Berlin’s Chausseestrasse were dedicated with appropriate festivities, paid for by the State. With reference to Brecht — “discussion is one of the highest stages of artistic pleasure that society can accomplish” (1939) — this institution, with its newly founded journal *Notate*, dedicated itself to dialogue. Under the sign of conversation an annual Brecht

conference was staged, held each year in February. The eightieth birthday in 1973 was celebrated with particular opulence under the title “Art and Politics: International Brecht-Dialogue,” and it became even more extravagant in 1988 for his ninetieth birthday when guests from the entire world festively received the first volume of the new collaborative East-West Brecht edition and admired the Fritz Cremer’s Brecht monument erected on the Bertolt Brecht Place in front of the Brecht Theater.

In the West, too, Brecht was remembered and forgotten, but in a world sundered by the Cold War, this development necessarily took a different course. Esteemed or even venerated by a select few in the fifties — and this actually more often in Western European countries like Italy, France, and England than in the former Federal Republic — and condemned and boycotted by others, only with the generational shift of the sixties did a “dignified” reception of Brecht set in, and then — even while clearly aimed against the petrified tradition in the GDR — it was no less commodified. For some Brecht became the springboard to an alternative, critical form of thinking, for others, a weapon in the left’s factional battles. He was no less commemorated either: for example, in the late sixties the International Brecht Society was founded with its seat in North America, a scholarly organization with a *Yearbook* that perceived itself as a late incarnation of Brecht’s Diderot Society. In the West, too, special journal issues on Brecht began to appear — for example, in two issues of the journal *Text & Kritik* (1972 and 1974) or in the British journal *Screen* (1975). In his native town Augsburg an extensive Brecht collection was established in the state library, and an authentic Brecht house was opened by the city’s Brecht-Kreis.

No wonder, then, that a full-blown case of Brecht weariness set in. The stagnation of global as well as German-German political relations in the eighties could not leave such an eminently political poet and thinker like Brecht untouched. The ritualized celebrations and hagiography continued; the Brecht philologists focused their attention more or less within the circle of specialists on their object of interest, comparable to other privileged writers who had achieved the status of “poets and thinkers” in the German pantheon, comparable to Goethe and

Schiller through Kafka and Thomas Mann, even if Brecht did belong to the more uncomfortable ones such as Heine and Trakl. This broad Brecht reception has in the meantime constituted its own history, and this history is especially marked by instrumentalization. Embedded in a context of competing and contradictory discourses, a Siamese image of Brecht flourished among the East-West tensions. A sometimes aggressive rhetoric of accusations and self-righteousness, with reproaches for the incorrect image emerging on both sides, marked the opponents: on the one side the political Brecht, on the other the poet Brecht; here the rebel Brecht, there the Stalinist Brecht; here the antiquated Brecht in the museum, there the totalizing critique of the status quo.

After the end of the Cold War, interest in new Brecht images revived, even while it once again brought forth falsifying assessments: Brecht the chauvinist, who bought text for sex, the totalitarian Brecht, Brecht the anti-Semite. It is unnecessary to stress that this has nothing to do with the person Brecht, but rather he has become a projection screen. Brecht passed away long ago and does not need to be protected like a relic in a shrine. Whether or not he turns over in his grave owing to some outrageous statement is no longer of any importance for the scholarly community or the ongoing Brecht reception. Yet even if sometimes difficult to bear, these discussions are not unwelcome in my view because they do provide a counter balance to the banning of Brecht to a yet larger and more costly complete edition, to a yet better organized and more accessible archive, to a yet even better reconstructed birthplace as national museum. . . More relevant, however, is the insight that knowledge free of power structures does not exist. Knowledge is implemented more or less covertly according to political and cultural premises. For me this means that understanding Brecht involves the understanding of my own time as well as the conditions of origin of my own knowledge. Since Brecht's writings are oriented toward operative thinking, consent, and dialectical experiment, they have always already been exposed to the pressures of political instrumentalization. I do not believe that has changed today, rather the context of our reception has become different.

It is all the more surprising, then, that the Brecht commemorative year has brought forth such a degree of hyperactivity, even excess. Whom does it serve? What use value does it suggest?

It is easy to mock the worldwide explosion of Brecht events. Brecht is simply being hawked: by theaters with their potpourris of Brecht songs, Brecht cabarets, Brecht evenings, Brecht collages, Brecht lectures, Brecht acting workshops, and Brechtathons; by publishers with their Brecht special editions, Brecht photo albums, Brecht handbooks, Brecht centenary editions, and Brecht reprints as well as Brecht cassettes, CD's, and CD-roms; by the media with extensive Brecht television series and evening specials, on the radio with Brecht features and Brecht interviews, in the cinemas with Brechtian film retrospectives and with new films about Brecht, and in the concert halls with Brecht oldies and Brecht hits; by educational institutions with Brecht professorships and seminars, Brecht book and poster exhibits, and Brecht lecture series; by the Berlin and Augsburg tourist offices with their Brecht brochures, Brecht city tours, Brecht exhibits, and Brecht weekends at all-inclusive, comprehensive prices. Not to forget: Brecht cigars, Brecht t-shirts, Brecht matchbooks, a Brecht commemorative stamp issued by the German federal postal service, a commemorative speech by the German President Roman Herzog on his birthday, and a Brecht literary prize. Finally, conferences, workshops, symposia, and panel discussions around the world: Milan, several in Berlin alone, Oslo, Moscow, Johannesburg, Dublin, San Diego, Pisa, Rio de Janeiro, Seoul, and Paris . . . and all of this is noted and archived on the Brecht homepage in the internet.

Do we simply capitulate in view of this culture of events, when confronted by the proliferation of Brecht memorializations? Opportunism, trivialization, commercialization, repressive tolerance, sentimentalization, cooptation, culture industry: this sort of conceptualization, by which a conversation is quickly strangled, is familiar and certainly not entirely inappropriate. From this perspective the media are responsible for the transformation of the public sphere and art into consumable entertainment, supposedly a process of reduction, which accelerates the colonization of all creative energies. Rituals of cultural transmission

are accordingly the undesired Doppelgänger of memory. This describes in other words a model of integration and diminishment, one which with enormous power forces Brecht into the process “that draws all things in this world into commodity circulation.” As previously mentioned, Brecht considered this process to be revolutionary, precisely because the model also needs the explosive power of the commodity in order to function properly, in order to link people to one another. I ask myself, then, whether we can recognize something else in the commemorations. Is a different attitude (*Haltung*) possible — and I consciously use here Brecht’s word — which would acknowledge the mechanisms for the circulation of cultural capital and yet utilize their function differently?

Commemorating, remembering, and honoring require that we place ourselves in relation to history. The absent is connected with the present and consequently brought into the present. In short, it is not about Brecht, but rather about an image, our mediated, constructed image of Brecht. That precisely this established image can still provoke us, contributes to its quality. What provokes? In a post industrial world, governed by media and technologized communication, the voice of Brecht sounds strangely old-fashioned. Suggestions, pedagogy, teaching / learning, reason, consent, etc.: these central terms of Brechtian practice and aesthetics are all based on firm conviction. Our society, however, is no longer in a position to believe. Where new technologies contribute to the derealization of life, the fact that someone has convictions and defends them passionately is really quite remarkable. When I become cynical, the entire commemorative circus around Brecht seems to me like a quiet rehearsal for the anticipated role of intellectuals in the third millennium: we market convictions and only the media spectacle surrounding them still counts. The content is no longer important (according to Foucault all content is in any case only a strategy for exercising power), but the performance is everything. When I become less cynical, then another side of Brecht’s convictions strike me as important, the way he consistently understood how to be “sand in the gears.”

In my estimation Brecht is a particularly relevant example for the public intellectual today.

He lived at a time when the self-image of the artist and thinker as a socially and politically engaged person corresponded to the expectations of the public; today, however, the autonomy and self-preservation of artists and thinkers seems more important. In a historical situation that denies public intellectuals any forum and strategy of critique, we need models of oppositional voices, lest we forget the necessity of protest. For me Brecht is such a model. Partisan without being bound to a party, independent of official institutions yet experienced at surviving within institutions, again and again prepared to entertain risks and undertake unconventional experiments: this was how Brecht accommodated a world which he envisioned as changeable. In our times, when media consciousness shapes the values of public opinion in a major way, attempts and strategies to throw “sand in the gears” of the media apparatus become quite useful, even if the global media culture has already long since forgotten the plays and poems of a Brecht.

In a world of simulations, where everything is communicated through codes, and where social life is characterized by dispersion and stress, tools are useful that can strengthen insight, render visible human relations, and destabilize habits of seeing. For we are witnesses to how new technologies displace familiar securities and identities, for example, epistemological differentiations between the self and the other, man and woman, thinkers and doers, fact and fiction, chaos and order, nature and art, individual and collective. Here aporias and new feelings of insecurity emerge, which in turn necessitate new strategies of distanciation, that is, methods of un-learning in order to learn anew. Brecht’s antagonistic worldview was dominated by fragmented appearances but also fed on crisis, which found its most productive, creative impulse in the escalation of contradictions. For this he constantly invented new poetic and aesthetic forms that still seem dynamic. Even in the late poems, for example, in the collection the *Buckower Elegien*, which thematizes retreat into the private sphere and absence of utopia, the epigrammatic form with its jumps and silent moments is full of an energy that creates this dynamic movement in thought. To maintain this attitude, even when stagnation, paralysis, reaction, and regression are the order of the day, is no small

feat.

What then is the “reasonable” attitude toward Brecht at which we can arrive at the end of this commemorative year? Were he — as ghost — to overhear these comments, then he would have to notice that we are not even talking about him, but about me, about my capacity to talk about him, to remember him. He would probably shake his head and maybe even make a clever remark about the ongoing progress of “Tuismus.” Out of discomfort vis-à-vis this ghostly scene it must be possible to arrive at an acceptable attitude: a confrontation with one’s own in-capacity to communicate over the differences of times and places. For me that would be an adequate result of the year-long Brecht commemoration. 2006 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Brecht’s death. I am waiting.

(Translated from German by Tina Gerhardt and Marc Silberman)

1. Brecht, *Werke* (Berlin and Frankfurt/Main: Aufbau and Suhrkamp, 1988), 11: 92. English translation in Bertolt Brecht Poems 1913-1956. Ed. by John Willett and Ralph Manheim (New York and London: Methuen, 1979), 35-36.

And if you ask, how does that love seem now?

I must admit: I really can’t remember

And yet I know what you are trying to say.

But what her face was like I know no longer

I only know: I kissed it on that day.

2. Brecht, *Werke*, 10.1: 495. In English translation (by M.S.):

Of all that I am keep

Only what is useful to you

The rest is fätzer.

3. Brecht, *Werke*, 12: 87. English translation in Bertolt Brecht Poems 1913-1956, p. 318-20.

Think of us

With forbearance.

4. Brecht, *Werke*, 21: 474-75. In English translation (by M.S.)

Only those who blind themselves to the enormous power of the revolutionary process that drags all things of this world into the circulation of commodities, without exception and without delay, can assume that works of art in any genre could be excluded. For the deeper sense of this process means that nothing is outside the relations to everything else, but rather everything is linked, just as all people are linked to each other (in the form of commodities). It is the process of communication itself.

Brecht heute: seine Bedeutung auf den Bühnen Japans

Tatsuji Iwabuchi

Schon vor dem Krieg war Brecht in Japan nicht unbekannt. Die erste Übersetzung von *Trommeln in der Nacht* erschien schon 1927. 1932 kam *Die Dreigroschenoper* auf die Bühne. Mein Theatermeister Senda Koreya (1904-94), der lange in Berlin gelebt, Theaterleben der 20er Jahre dort erlebt, bei Piscator und mit dem Arbeitertheaterbund gespielt hatte, kam 1931 nach Japan zurück und gründete die Theatertruppe TES. Er hatte sich die Uraufführung der *Dreigroschenoper* im Theater am Schiffbauerdamm angesehen und wollte das Stück nun aufführen, hatte aber keinen Originaltext und war daher gezwungen, nach dem Drehbuch von Pabsts Film ein Stück zusammenzusetzen. Das Stück wurde in die japanische Situation versetzt, aber die Musik von Kurt Weill wurde schon benutzt. Die Bilder dieser Aufführung werden, wohl wegen der Kuriosität der japanischen Kostüme, oft in die deutschen Brecht-Materialienbände aufgenommen.

Im gleichen Jahr wurde die Schuloper *Der Jasager* von Brecht/Weill, ganz originalgetreu, sogar auf deutsch aufgeführt. Ich nehme an, daß es die Uraufführung dieses Lehrstücks außerhalb des deutschen Sprachraums war. Diese unglaublich frühe Aufführung verdanken wir dem deutschen Musikprofessor Klaus Pringsheim, dem Schwager von Thomas Mann und dem Zwillingbruder von Katja Mann, der als Professor an das Konservatorium in Tokio berufen worden und auch weiter bis zum Ende des Kriegs in Japan tätig war. Dann folgte *Der Lindbergflug*. Kurt Weill im Rahmen des konservativen Konservatoriums zu spielen, war damals vielleicht nur in Japan möglich. Kurz danach ergriff aber in Deutschland Hitler die Macht, und Japan begann mit den Streitigkeiten in China. Der Name Brecht verschwand aus Japan, obwohl einige Germanisten von der Emigrantenzeitschrift *Das Wort* Brechts Wirken verfolgten.

Das moderne Theater in Japan war von Anfang an ziemlich links orientiert. 1940 unterdrückte das militaristische Regime in Japan das moderne Theater, und fast alle Theatergruppen wurden aufgelöst. In Japan wie in Deutschland lebte man während des Krieges in einer kulturellen Isolation

und wußte überhaupt nicht, was im Theater draußen vorging. Deswegen war nach dem Krieg in beiden Ländern der Nachholbedarf so groß, daß man die neuen Dramen aus Frankreich, England und nicht zuletzt aus Amerika gierig spielte und die Stücke der eigenen Länder ziemlich vernachlässigte. Auf den Spielplänen der beiden Länder standen damals praktisch die gleichen Autoren: Giraudoux, Annouilh, Camus, Sartre, Fry, Eliott, Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller usw. Die neuen Bücher aus Deutschland wurden erst nach 1950 in Japan eingeführt. Das einzige Nachkriegsstück, das in Japan Resonanz fand, war das Heimkehrerstück *Draußen vor der Tür* von Wolfgang Borchert.

Mein Meister Senda spielte jetzt eine Pionierrolle, was das Brecht-Theater in Japan betraf. Er begann sofort mit der Übersetzung seiner Dramen und Theorien. Brechts Theorien wirkten zuerst in Japan verblüffend, weil bisher die Methode des Russen Stanislawski als kanonisch galt, und die Schauspieler auf dieses System geradezu geeicht wurden. Übrigens ist es ein interessantes Phänomen, daß gerade in Japan und den USA fanatische Anhänger von Stanislawski existieren (in Westeuropa kaum). Unter den japanischen linken Theaterensembles war damals der sogenannte sozialistische Realismus maßgebend. 1952 inszenierte Senda *Furcht und Elend des dritten Reiches* anläßlich der Abschlußvorstellung seiner Schauspielschule. Das war die erste Aufführung von Brechts Dramen nach dem Krieg. Das Stück war nicht so brechtisch, daß Brechts Feind Georg Lukács es als realistisch einschätzen konnte. Aber gerade deswegen paßte das Stück für die Einführung Brechts in Japan. Er hat 22 Bilder an einem Abend gespielt. Einige Szenen wie "Der Spitzel" oder "Das Kreidekreuz" wurden als normale Einakter aufgenommen und kamen gut an. Reibungen mit den kommunistischen Theaterleuten entstanden erst nach der Übersetzung des *Kleinen Organon für das Theater*. Brecht lehnte ja bekanntlich das Einfühlen in die Rolle ab und legte Wert darauf, daß der Schauspieler nicht seine Rolle "sein," sondern seine Rolle "zeigen" sollte. Da es sich bei Brecht auch um einen repräsentativen sozialistischen Dramatiker handelte, konnte man ihn nicht außer acht lassen. Es stellte sich heraus, daß Brechts Theater viel

zukunftsträchtiger und interessanter war. Daher begannen schon in den 50er Jahren einige Theaterleute und Gruppen, die sich mit Brecht beschäftigten.

Damals erstand ich die *Theaterarbeit*, Brechts ausführliche Dokumente der 6 Aufführungen des Berliner Ensemble. Da ich vorher einige Dramen von J.M.R.Lenz gekannt hatte, interessierte mich die Bearbeitung Brechts von Lenzen *Hofmeister*. So habe ich den *Hofmeister* Brechts mit seinen Anmerkungen übersetzt und Herrn Senda vorgelegt. Er fand das Stück für die noch nicht an Brecht gewöhnten Schauspieler geeignet und nahm meine Übersetzung an. Er inszenierte das Stück 1955 mit einem jungen Ensemble, das aus den Absolventen seiner Schauspielschule bestand. Der Grund für die Wahl seines nicht so repräsentativen Stücks liegt darin, daß wir noch nicht so weit waren, die Stücke mit vielen Songs von Eisler und Dessau spielen zu können. Für die Praxis konnte man von den Anmerkungen Brechts zu dem Stück viel lernen, etwa wie man den Verfremdungseffekt auf der Bühne zur Geltung kommen lassen kann. Ich bekam durch Senda einen engeren Kontakt mit der Theaterwelt.

Zwei Jahre später habe ich im Residenztheater in München beim ersten Besuch den *Hofmeister* gesehen, wenn auch nicht die brechtsche Bearbeitung, sondern das Original. Aber für mich, einen Neuling im deutschen Theater, war es eine günstige Gelegenheit, das mir bekannte Stück auf Deutsch zu hören. Im allgemeinen wurde behauptet, daß Brecht in den 50er Jahren in der Bundesrepublik boykottiert wurde wegen seines Verhaltens am 17.6.1953. Aber das stimmt nicht ganz. In München habe ich das Lehrstück *Die Ausnahme und die Regel* als Abschlußvorstellung der Otto Falkenberg-Schule, *Happy End* in der kleinen Freiheit und *Leben Eduard des II.* im Residenztheater gesehen.

Während meines Studienaufenthaltes in Deutschland brachte Senda *Leben des Galilei* auf die Tokioter Bühne und ging damit auf Tournee durch ganz Japan. Das bedeutete einen Markstein der Brecht-Rezeption in Japan, eröffnete einen neuen Horizont und gab den Nachwuchsdramatikern sehr viele Anregungen. Interessant war dabei, daß die Allergie gegen diese neue Richtung gerade bei den ultrarechten und ultralinken Theaterleuten evident

war. Die jungen Dramatiker, die bisher nach dem sozialistischen Realismus nur musterhafte sozialistische Helden behandelt hatten, waren fasziniert von der Galilei-Figur als Antihelden. Nun zeigten sie in ihren Stücken ebenfalls einige widerspruchsvolle Figuren. Das war damals gegen die Richtlinie der KPJ. Außerdem erweckte das Stück bei uns ein Sonderinteresse, nicht das Problem der Atombomben, eher der Widerruf Galileis, in dem Brecht in der ersten Fassung eine strategische Möglichkeit des Widerstandes angedeutet hat. Da es in dem Inselland Japan während des Krieges keine Möglichkeit zu emigrieren gab, mußten sich viele linke Intellektuelle (darunter viele Theaterleute) verstellen und erklären, ihren linken Standpunkt aufzugeben. Diese Art von getarnter Bekehrung (auf japanisch "Gisou-Tenkou") blieb lange bei den "Bekehrten" ein Gewissenstrauma. Es gab immerhin unter den Kommunisten einige Unbekehrte, die bis zum Ende des Krieges ihr linkes Bekenntnis nicht aufgaben und im Kerker blieben. Brechts *Galilei* zeigt eine andere Art des Widerstandes und stellt gleichzeitig ein bloß heldenhaftes Verhalten in Frage, obwohl Brecht letzten Endes Galileis Widerruf als Ursünde verdammt.

Ende der 50er Jahre lebte ich in Berlin und besuchte so oft die Vorstellungen des Berliner Ensembles. Brechts Inszenierungen standen noch im Spielplan, und einige Neuinszenierungen seiner Kollegen wie Erich Engel, und seiner Schüler wie Palitzsch, Besson und Wekwerth waren auch so perfekt im brechtschen Sinne. Solche heute fast klassischen Vorstellungen haben mich so stark beeindruckt, daß es mir danach lange sehr schwerfiel, den Bann dieser Musteraufführungen zu überwinden. Vielleicht bin ich immer noch klassisch und nostalgisch im Bezug auf Brecht.

Als ich 1960 nach Japan zurückkam, war das politische Klima ganz anders als in Deutschland. Die japanische Studentenbewegung hat die deutsche von 1968 vorweggenommen. Im Zeichen des kalten Krieges waren die Studenten in Berlin sehr skeptisch gegenüber dem Ulbricht-Regime. Ich hatte auch in Ostberlin viel erlebt und wußte genau, daß die damalige DDR kein idealer sozialistischer Staat war. In Japan gab es damals so wenige, die im Ausland gewesen waren, und der Traum der sozialistischen

Staaten war bei uns noch nicht enttäuscht worden. Im Sommer 1960 gab es eine große Demonstration bis ins bürgerliche Lager hinein anläßlich der Protestaktion gegen die Verlängerung des Sicherheitspakts mit den USA (Anpotôsô). In diesem Jahr wurden von Brechts Stücken *Die Mutter* nach Gorki und *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* u.a. gespielt. In den folgenden Jahren brachte man nach und nach die wichtigen Stücke Brechts auf die Bühne. 1962 wurde sogar das Stück *Die Tage der Kommune*, das noch nie in Frankreich gespielt worden war, aufgeführt, und das Haus war ganz voll von jugendlichen Zuschauern. In dieser ersten Periode der Brecht-Rezeption legte man Gewicht auf die politische, antikapitalistische und anti-kriegerische Richtung. Als Technik hat der Verfremdungseffekt in Japan Wurzeln gefaßt. Auch die Stücke deutscher Autoren nach Brecht, meistens sehr politische, wurden relativ viel gespielt. 1964 inszenierte ich *In der Sache Robert Oppenheimer* von Kipphardt, das die Thematik Macht und Wissenschaft im *Galilei*-Stück entwickelt hat. Auch die Stücke des dokumentarischen Theaters wurden oft und viel gespielt.

Politisch geschah in den 60er Jahren etwas Neues im linken Lager: die Abspaltungen innerhalb der linken Parteien. Es begann nach der Niederlage des politischen Kampfes gegen den Sicherheitspakt. Die radikalen Studenten gehörten bis 1960 zu einer nahezu monolithisch geprägten Organisation. Jetzt lösten sie sich in mehrere Sekten auf (viel früher als in Deutschland). In diesem Klima fand die Jugend diese Problematik in Brechts Lehrstück *Die Maßnahme* (Individuum und die Partei) vorweggenommen. Obwohl die Aufführung der *Maßnahme* von Brecht selber verboten worden war, hat man es wahrscheinlich oft schwarz gespielt. Der Zerfall der Blöcke hat in Japan unbegreiflicherweise zum ersten Mal den festen Begriff des Individuums mit sich gebracht. Das Theater Brechts war für das moderne japanische Theater besonders von Bedeutung. Es hat statt des Emotionellen, dessen Überbleibsel auch im modernen Theater noch überall hängengeblieben waren, das rationale Denken hineingebracht. In diesem Sinne hat Brecht in Japan den Kern der undinglichen "Moderne", um einen Ausdruck von Jürgen Habermas abzuwandeln, statuiert.

Ab Mitte der 60er Jahre entstand eine neue Art des Theaters, welches kraß dem modernen Theater entgegenstand. Man nannte es das Angura-Theater, die japanische Verkürzung von "Underground Theatre." Es wurde nicht nur im Keller gespielt, sondern auch im Freien und im Zelt. Die Richtungen waren verschieden, mal politisch, mal absurd, mal esoterisch, mal bizarr. Gemeinsam ist ihnen aber die irrationale, emotionelle Tendenz. Meiner Ansicht nach könnte man alle irgendwie als die Vorläufer der Postmoderne im Theater bezeichnen. Das moderne Theater in Japan wollte lange diese Moderne in die von alters her emotionelle japanische Theaterwelt einführen. Durch Brecht schien das endlich möglich geworden zu sein. Dann kam diese Welle der Reemotionalisierung, eher wohl als Rückkehr der Prämoderne zu bezeichnen.

1966 versuchten Senda und ich *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* getreu nach Modellbuch aufzuführen. Eigentlich wollte ich keine Kopie einer ausländischen Inszenierung herstellen. Aber das Modellbuch von Brecht ist zu schade nur für die Lektüre. Es war eine fast genußvolle Arbeit, alle Details nach den Hinweisen des Modellbuchs zu gestalten. Alles ist so klug ausgedacht, und immer wieder trifft man auf neue Entdeckungen und neue Einfälle. Wenn wir noch etwas hätten hinzufügen wollen, hätten wir Schwierigkeiten gehabt. Und die Musik von Paul Dessau war so untrennbar mit dem Stück verbunden. Heute benutzt man auch in Deutschland die Musik von Dessau immer seltener. Aber ich benutzte danach immer die Originalmusik von Dessau bzw. von Eisler. Was ich von dieser Praxis gelernt habe, verwendete ich für die Regiekonzeption der anderen Dramatiker. Die brechtsche Lesart ist meiner Meinung nach auch bei Dramen von Tschechow anwendbar, obwohl Brecht Tschechow gar nicht gemocht zu haben scheint. Die Inszenierung der *Drei Schwestern* von Thomas Langhoff fand ich z.B. sehr brechtisch.

Die Stücke von Brecht und seinen Nachfolgern wurde in den 70er Jahren weiter aufgeführt. Dann kam jedoch, ähnlich wie in Deutschland, die Theaterwende zur Verinnerlichung. Wie in Deutschland nach 1968 hat die japanische Jugend immer mehr das Interesse an der Politik verloren. Im Zeichen der Entpolitisierung wandte man sich dem Privaten zu. Immerhin sind die deutschen

Nachwuchsdramatiker der 70er Jahre wie Martin Sperr, F. X. Kroetz, R. W. Fassbinder u.a., die Repräsentanten des neuen Volksstücks, die sich mit sozialen Problemen befassen, einigermaßen in Japan bekannt geworden. Was Brecht betrifft, könnte man von einer zweiten Periode der Rezeption sprechen. Anfang der 70er Jahre begann man, an die frühen Stücke Brechts heranzugehen, während seine Meisterwerke, um mit Max Frisch zu sprechen, "die durchschlagende Wirkungslosigkeit des Klassikers" bezeugten. Im Rahmen des Kommerztheaters gab es 1977 im Imperialtheater in Tokio eine pompöse Aufführung der *Dreigroschenoper*.

1978 war im Brecht-Dialog in Ostberlin von der "Brecht-Müdigkeit" die Rede. Um diese Zeit habe ich mich mit den frühen Stücken Brechts beschäftigt. Dort stand ich nicht im Bann des Modellbuches und konnte freier arbeiten. Ein Beispiel meiner verrückten Regiekonzeption war *Im Dickicht der Städte*. Ich habe das Stück als Gegenentwurf zu Thomas Manns *Tod in Venedig* konzipiert. Natürlich hat diese Hypothese keine Begründung. Der alte Malaie Shlink mit dicker, gegerbter Haut scheint mir aber fast eine Gegenfigur von Aschenbach zu sein, der es durch Fleiß zu seinem Ruhm als Schriftsteller gebracht hat. Seine korrekte Lebensweise gerät aber plötzlich ins Wanken, als er der verführerischen Sehnsucht nach Süden folgend, nach Venedig reist und dort den schönen jungen Tazio trifft. Shlink aus *Dickicht* ist ein *self-made man* des niedrigen Niveaus. Er hat es durch harte Arbeit zum Kontrolleur des Holzhandels in Chicago gebracht. In einer unmenschlichen Gesellschaft hat er die unmenschliche Härte dermaßen verinnerlicht, daß seine Haut gegerbt ist. Seine hartgesottene Lebensweise kommt ins Schwanken, als er irgendwo irgendwann den weißen jungen Garga sieht, obwohl im Stück diese fatale Begegnung nicht geschildert ist. Dann beginnt der Kampf zwischen Shlink und Garga. Aber der Kampf Shlinks bedeutet eigentlich eine Kommunikationssuche in einer entfremdeten Welt. Shlink wird sozusagen vom Amoklauf der menschlichen Liebe überfallen. Sein Gegner Garga ist im Gegensatz zu der Figur des Tazio ein echter Antagonist. Am Anfang ist er ein Naturbursche, der sich mitten in der Großstadt nach dem Naturleben in Tahiti sehnt. Aber durch den Prozeß des Kampfes

mit Shlink wird er immer härter und unmenschlicher. Die Wege der beiden (unmenschlich — menschlich, menschlich — unmenschlich) kreuzen sich in der vorletzten Szene, wo Shlink so menschlich weich wird, daß er seine Liebe zu Garga gesteht, während Garga ganz kaltherzig den Kampf aufgibt und Shlink der lynchenden Bande überläßt. Im letzten Bild erscheint Garga als verhärteter Mann, der nun auch der unmenschlichen Gesellschaft gewachsen ist. Sein nächstes Ziel ist nicht mehr Tahiti, sondern die Großstadt der Großstädte: New York. Diese Abwandlung habe ich visuell auf der Bühne gezeigt, indem Shlink vor seinem Selbstmord die gegebte Haut abreißt, während Garga schon eine gegebte Haut hat, als er aus dem Gefängnis zurückkommt. Meine Regieweise, ein Konzept illustrativ zu zeigen, wirkt heute vielleicht altmodisch.

1977 hat Heiner Müller an Steinberg, der mit dem neuen Projekt der brechtschen Lehrstücke beschäftigt war, einen Artikel geschickt, in dem Müller den Abschied von den Lehrstücken "bis zum nächsten Erdbeben" nahm. Im gleichen Jahr veröffentlichte Müller *Die Hamletmaschine*, die auch formal eine ganz neue Art Theater ankündigte. Anlässlich der Regie der *Hamletmaschine* durch Robert Wilson äußerte Müller sich in einem Gespräch wie folgt: "Es gibt einen falschen Begriff, eine falsche Tradition von Aufklärung. Wenn ich einen poetischen Text lese, dann will ich den zunächst mal nicht verstehen. Ich will ihn irgendwie aufnehmen, aber mehr als eine sinnliche Tätigkeit denn als eine begriffliche. Und es gibt so eine Tradition von Rationalismus, die verhindert zum Beispiel die sinnliche Wahrnehmung von Texten. Erst wenn man einen Text sinnlich wahrnehmen kann, kann man ihn später auch verstehen. Das Verstehen ist ein Prozeß und kann nicht eine erste Annäherung sein."

Ich fürchte, daß ich wohl immer noch in einer falschen Tradition stehe. Bei Brecht habe ich immer eher eine begriffliche Annäherung versucht als eine sinnliche. Ich weiß nicht, ob Müllers Satz auch für Brechts Stücke gälte. Müllers letzte eindrucksvolle Inszenierung des *Arturo Ui* sieht etwas anders aus. Aber viele Regisseure benutzen überall Brecht als Vehikel zur eigenen Schau. Bei uns gab es neulich eine solche Vorstellung *Des guten Menschen von Sezuan* durch einen rumänischen Regisseur. Die

jüngeren Zuschauer von heute, die Brecht nicht mehr gut kennen, verstanden überhaupt nicht, worum es sich bei dem Stück handelt. Wenn man das *Sezuan*-Stück ohne Extravaganza inszeniert, versteht man trotz des offenen Schlusses ohne weiteres. Unser Publikum ist dank Brecht so weit, Brecht-Stücke zu verstehen. Ich habe das selber bestätigt durch meine Inszenierung des *Sezuan*-Stücks und das Stück noch ausreichend aktuell gefunden. Da habe ich den Inhalt des Textes möglichst genau mitgeteilt. Nur die letzte Zeile habe ich nicht geändert, sondern einfach gestrichen: "Es muß ein guter (Schluß) dasein, muß, muß, muß!".

Ich muß ehrlich sein. den Schluß weiß ich selber auch nicht. Aber die vorletzte Zeile: "Verehrtes Publikum. los, such dir selbst den Schluß!" kann heute noch zum Nachdenken anregen. Aber wenn man diese Funktion als aufklärerisch und rational verwirft, dann ist Brecht tot im Theater.

Zum Schluß möchte ich noch etwas von Brecht in Bezug auf Japan sagen. Neulich wurde ich gefragt, ob die Affinität in Japan auch davon käme, daß Brecht eine Vorliebe für die asiatische Kultur gezeigt hat. Bekanntlich hat Brecht für sein Lehrstück *Der Jasager* ein Noh-Spiel zur Vorlage genommen. Von dieser Bearbeitung, die mit dem Thema der *Maßnahme* etwas zu tun hat, wurde schon viel gesprochen, und ich habe dazu eine Stellungnahme abgegeben. Im letzten Dezember brachte das Berliner Ensemble eine Bearbeitung eines anderen japanischen Stückes *Die Judith in Shimoda* in einer Uraufführung heraus. Über diese Bearbeitung wußte ich schon lange durch eine kurze Synopsis für den Film. Aber der Band 10 der kritischen Ausgabe, der im letzten Herbst erschien, enthält eine Anzahl der Szenenentwürfe. Der Autor des Originaldramas *Elegie eines Weibsbildes oder die Ausländerhure Okichi* war Yüzô Yamamoto, geboren 1887, gestorben 1974. Er war von Haus aus Germanist und übersetzte Strindberg und Schnitzler, aber er hatte kein Interesse an Brecht. Das Original ist ein sentimentales Stück, aber gerade deswegen kam es einst im Kommerztheater gut an. Brecht hat die englische Übersetzung des Stückes im Exil in Finnland von der Schriftstellerin Hella Wuolijoki geliehen bekommen. Ich wußte nicht, warum sich Brecht für dieses kitschige Stück

interessiert hatte. Jetzt weiß ich ungefähr, warum er diese Bearbeitung versuchte. Das Stück hat die Struktur des "Theaters im Theater" wie etwa die Literaturkomödie *Der gestiefelte Kater* von Ludwig Tieck.

1853 kommt die amerikanische Flotte nach Japan und zwingt Japan einen Handelsvertrag zu schließen. OKichi, verheiratet mit einem Schiffsbauer im Hafen Shimoda, mußte auf Befehl von oben Konkubine des ersten amerikanischen Konsuls Harris werden. Sie wird als Ausländerhure beschimpft. Nachdem Harris sie verlassen hat, verkommt sie immer mehr. Brechts Interesse lag wahrscheinlich darin, diese sich aufopfernde japanische Judith relativierend zu zeigen. Nach der Synopsis soll die verkommene Heldin das Stück über ihren eigenen Lebenswandel im Theater sehen. Eine ähnliche Idee verwendete Brecht in seiner früheren Kurzgeschichte "Die Bestie." Der Dramenentwurf hat eine andere Rahmenstruktur. Ein reicher japanischer Zeitungsdirektor lädt in seinen Palast eine amerikanische Journalistin und einen englischen Sinologen ein. Er bestellt extra eine Theatertruppe zur Aufführung des OKichi-Stücks nach Hause, um den beiden das Stück zu zeigen und nach jeder Szene mit ihnen darüber zu diskutieren. Am Schluß kommt der Dramatiker selber noch hinzu. Leider hat Brecht die Bearbeitung und diesen kommentierenden Teil aufgegeben, deswegen kann man schwer sagen, wie Brecht den Diskurs weiterführen würde. Brecht scheint die Art der Aufopferung des Japaners generell interessiert zu haben. Der japanisch-chinesische Krieg war schon ausgebrochen. Brecht bewahrte einen Zeitungsartikel auf, in dem stand, daß ein japanischer Vater sich erhängt habe, damit sein einberufener Sohn ohne Rücksicht auf ihn für das Vaterland kämpfen kann. Für uns heutige Japaner ist dieser Artikel peinlich, aber damals war es so.

Soweit ich informiert bin, hat das Berliner Ensemble diese interessante Rahmenhandlung einfach gestrichen. In dieser Weise wird wohl die Struktur des Stücks völlig zerstört. Vielleicht wird dann eine oberflächlich-sinnliche Japoneske à la *Madame Butterfly* daraus. Es heißt, diese Aufführung sei eine italienische Koproduktion. Hier wird Brecht als Vehikel für die Schau benutzt. Man

merkt hier die trendmäßige Vernachlässigung des Textes. Natürlich könnte man heute *Judith in Shimoda* spielen. Aber dieses Fragment müßte man dann als Fragment textgetreu aufführen. Zum Zweck einer Schaustellung ist Brecht zu schade. Solcher Umgang mit Brecht nützt seiner Rettung nichts. Yüzô Yamamoto hatte keine Ahnung, daß Brecht sein Stück zu bearbeiten versuchte. Er war Jahrgang 1887 und zeigte überhaupt kein Interesse, obwohl Brecht in Japan vor seinem Tod schon in der Theaterwelt ein fester Begriff war. Nennt man so was eine Ironie der Geschichte?

Am 10. Februar 1998 verlieh der Dekan der philosophischen Fakultät für Geschichts- und Kunstwissenschaften der Universität München die Ehrendoktorwürde an Tatsuji Iwabuchi, Professor am Deutschen Seminar der Gakushuin Universität Tokio. Professor Iwabuch war 1958 als DAAD Stipendiat zum Studium der Theaterwissenschaft und Germanistik nach München gekommen, und hatte dort auch noch den legendären Arthur Kutscher kennengelernt. In seiner Festrede sprach er der Universität seinen Dank aus.

Tatsuji Iwabuchis Studien über Brecht haben in Japan bahnbrechend gewirkt. Leider habe ich mich hier darauf beschränken müssen, jenen Teil der Rede wiederzugeben, in dem Professor Iwabuchi über Brecht-Rezeption in Japan referierte.

Das Alte und das Neue. Zu Bertolt Brechts einhundertstem Geburtstag

Robert Cohen, New York University

Die Frage, die ich beantworten soll, lautet, ob es 'neue' Wege zum 'alten' Brecht gebe. Das Adjektiv 'alt' in der Formel vom "alten Brecht" meint offensichtlich veraltet, vorbei, überholt usw. Es wird wohl von mir erwartet, daß ich mich gegen diese Charakterisierung wehre. Statt dessen möchte ich zunächst auf die positiven Konnotationen hinweisen, die das Wort 'alt' bei Brecht oft annimmt. So hat er zum Beispiel viele seiner Briefe mit "Ihr alter Brecht" unterschrieben, womit er sich als einen loyalen und dem Adressaten zugeneigten Freund darstellt, der sich nicht geändert hat. In den

Briefen an die geliebte Mitarbeiterin Margarete Steffin findet sich häufig die Anrede "Liebe alte Grete". Hier drückt 'alt' den Wunsch aus, die *Empfängerin* möge unverändert und dem Briefeschreiber weiterhin nahe sein. Herr Keuner allerdings, Brechts Figur des Denkenden, erleicht, als man ihm sagt, er habe sich nicht verändert. Da enthüllt die Vorstellung, daß jemand ganz der Alte geblieben sei, ihre Dialektik. Radikal zurückgewiesen wird das Alte schließlich in Brechts Expressionismusstreit mit Georg Lukács, Ende der dreißiger Jahre. Lukács beharrt darauf, daß die sozialistischen Schriftsteller bei Balzac und Tolstoi lernen müßten. Dagegen setzt Brecht eine seiner eingängigen, zitierbaren Formulierungen: "Es wird nicht angeknüpft an das gute Alte sondern an das schlechte Neue" (22.1, 457)¹. Die Parole erinnert daran, daß das Alte, auch wenn es gut ist, doch das Alte ist und seine Zeit gehabt hat. Brecht will seine Zeitgenossen ermutigen, eigene Formen zu entwickeln, sich nicht von der Tradition einengen zu lassen.

Soll das auch heute und hier gelten? Und wenn ja, bedeutet das, daß auch an Brecht nicht anzuknüpfen sei, da doch sein Werk inzwischen selbst zum 'guten Alten' zu gehören scheint? Ich frage. Und daran möchte ich die weitere Frage knüpfen, für wen denn Brechts Werk heute zum guten Alten gehört? Und weiter möchte ich fragen, welche Diskurse durchgesetzt und welche verhindert werden, wenn Brecht zum guten Alten gerechnet wird? Vielleicht ist die Frage, ob es 'neue' Wege zum 'alten' Brecht gebe, nicht ganz ernst gemeint, denn die Beiwörter 'alt' und 'neu' sind in Anführungszeichen gesetzt. Ein postmodernes Spiel vielleicht, worin die Entgegensetzung von 'altem' Brecht und 'neuen' Wegen ernst genommen und zugleich als unernstes Klischee entlarvt werden soll.

Daß über Brecht mit einem gewissen Uernst diskutiert wird, dagegen ist nichts einzuwenden. Brecht selbst hat gelegentlich zu Walter Benjamin gesagt, daß es ihm eigentlich nicht ganz ernst sei. Ihm, also Brecht, sei das Ästhetische zu wichtig. Der Aspekt des nicht ganz Ernsten entsteht offenbar durch die Ästhetik, durch das Spielerische der Kunst, Brecht nennt es auch das Artistische. Das Artistische von Brechts Werk muß heute noch immer gerettet werden. Einerseits vor denen, die es in reine

Inhalts- und Ideologiediskussionen auflösen. Andererseits vor denen, die es als allein von Bedeutung behandeln. Das Artistische ist das Wesen von Brechts Werk, welches vom Kampf um die Veränderung der Gesellschaft handelt. Darin liegt ein Widerspruch nur für die, welche die Sphäre der Literatur säuberlich trennen möchten von der Sphäre der gesellschaftlichen Vorgänge. Das Artistische, das Künstlerische von Brechts Werk wird hier einleitend betont, weil es im Folgenden etwas zu kurz kommt. Es sollte aber stets mitgedacht werden bei meinem Versuch, über die 'neuen' Wege zum 'alten' Brecht etwas Angemessenes zu sagen.

Ich versuche, die an mich gestellte Frage umzukehren und frage: gibt es vielleicht den 'alten' Brecht gar nicht mehr, hat er sich vielleicht seit seinem Tod stark verändert, und wir haben es noch kaum bemerkt? Verhindern also die *alten* Wege den Zugang zum *neuen* Brecht? Diese alten Wege sind in den letzten zwölf Monaten, aus Anlaß von Brechts hundertstem Geburtstag, zum Teil neu asphaltiert und mit Blumen geschmückt worden. Es sind aber immer noch die alten Wege. Hier einige Beispiele: Brechts Stücke seien politisch naiv, in ihnen herrsche eine öde Didaktik, sie seien deformiert durch Brechts Bemühen, sich der Parteilinie anzupassen, für seine brillante Theatertheorie sei der Marxismus eigentlich gar nicht notwendig, das vormarxistische Werk sei vorzuziehen; aber auch Feststellungen wie die, Brecht sei in den Kommunismus verstrickt gewesen. (Hat man je sagen hören, ein Schriftsteller sei in den Kapitalismus verstrickt?) In solchen Reden erscheint Brechts Werk als einer der letzten Schauplätze des kalten Krieges. Das ist auch an der Brecht-Konferenz in San Diego vom Mai dieses Jahres deutlich geworden. Eine Anzahl Beiträge enthielten Passagen, worin die Vortragenden sich von Brechts Weltanschauung, also seinem Marxismus und Kommunismus distanzieren. Die Pauschalität dieser Distanzierungen ließ den Eindruck aufkommen, daß solche Gesten irgendwie erwartet würden. Dieses emphatische Abstandnehmen hat eine denunziatorische Wirkung. Man muß annehmen, daß Brecht ein stalinistischer Dogmatiker gewesen sei. Selbstverständlich bleibt die Frage, auf welche Weise Brecht das Denken von Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Korsch und auch Stalin rezipiert hat, Gegenstand von Untersuchungen. Das Problem

mit den alten Wegen aber ist, sie verhindern gerade die Untersuchungen, die sie scheinbar provozieren möchten.

Wie verhält es sich nun mit der Frage nach den 'neuen' Wegen? Sind damit die neueren philosophischen Theorien gemeint, der Poststrukturalismus, die Dekonstruktion usw.? Da würde, wie ich meine, ein weiterer falscher Gegensatz konstruiert. Die alten, bornierten Wege zu Brecht werden durch die neuen Theorien weder verhindert noch gefördert. Die Konstruktion eines pauschalen Gegensatzes zwischen den neuen Theorien und den alten — was ist eigentlich gemeint mit den 'alten' Theorien? — ist selber borniert. Derrida jedenfalls hat dadurch, daß er 1993, also nach dem Ende der sozialistischen Systeme, ein Buch über Marx erscheinen ließ, ein deutliches Zeichen gesetzt.² Ein großer Teil der Brecht-Gemeinde, Akademiker wie Theaterleute, hat dieses Zeichen offenbar noch nicht entziffert.

Gestatten Sie, daß ich meinen Gedankengang unterbreche. Ich spreche zu Ihnen in Brasilien. Diese Tatsache kann ich nicht als nebensächlich ansehen, als Zufall der Konferenzgeographie und ohne Folgen für das, was ich hier sage. Alles, was ich in den vergangenen Wochen, im Hinblick auf diese Veranstaltung, über Brecht habe denken und schreiben können, stand unter dem Eindruck der Wirklichkeit Brasiliens. Einer Wirklichkeit, an der die Kategorien zu zerbrechen scheinen, in denen menschliches Denken sich organisiert. Wer hätte, um ein Beispiel zu geben, gedacht, daß die Aufteilung der Erdoberfläche in Wasser und Land außer Geltung geraten könnte? Am Rio Negro, dem Oberlauf des Amazonas, ist mir diese Gewißheit, die mich ein Leben lang begleitet hat, abhanden gekommen. In einer Landschaft, in der sechs Monate im Jahr die Fische durch die Baumkronen schwimmen, sind bei mir ebenso viele binäre Oppositionen zusammengebrochen, wie bei der Lektüre Brechts. — Brasília, die Ende der fünfziger Jahre erbaute Hauptstadt, kann ich nur noch mit dem ägyptischen Karnak und den Pyramiden vergleichen, die ich ebenfalls gesehen habe. In Brasília habe ich mit meinem Denken über das Zusammenleben der Menschen nochmals von vorne anfangen müssen. Der Architekt von Brasília, Oscar Niemeyer, lebt übrigens heute noch in dieser Stadt Rio de Janeiro, in

der ich zu Ihnen spreche. Er ist mehr als neunzig Jahre alt. Ich kann Niemeyer sowenig aus meinen Überlegungen zu Brecht heraushalten, wie Luis Carlos Prestes, der in Brasilien zwischen 1924 und 1927 mit seiner Rebellenkolonne zu Fuß und zu Pferd mehr als fünfundzwanzigtausend Kilometer zurückgelegt hat. Ein Geschehen, das in den Bereich des Mythos zu gehören scheint, wie so vieles in diesem Land. Etwa die Vorgänge um den bizarren Sektenführer Antônio Conselheiro und seine Anhänger, ein verlumptes und verkommenes Landproletariat. Gegen dreißigtausend, wurden sie am Ende des vergangenen Jahrhunderts in dem Flecken Canudos von der Armee ausgehungert und vernichtet. In dieser Aktion ist der modernen Vernichtungskrieg vorweggenommen, etwa die Belagerung von Leningrad. Die Lektüre des Buches von Euclides da Cunha, worin diese militärische Kampagne beschrieben wird, gehört zu den großen Erfahrungen meines Lebens.³ — Ich will, da ich offenbar mein Thema nur auf Umwegen angehen kann, noch Olga Benario nennen, die deutsche Jüdin und Kommunistin, Gefährtin von Prestes. Sie war auf manche Weise der Mann in dieser Zweierbeziehung, die Pilotin und Fallschirmspringerin, die von der Komintern als Leibwächterin von Prestes bestellt worden war. 1937 wurde sie von der brasilianischen Polizei auf Weisung von Getúlio Vargas nach Deutschland zurückgeschickt. Schwanger fuhr sie von Rio de Janeiro in den sicheren Tod. Er hat sie in Ravensbrück ereilt.²

Brecht, um endlich wieder auf ihn zurückzukommen, hat sich zur Judenvernichtung nicht geäußert. Sowenig wie die meisten seiner marxistischen deutschen Genossen, auch die jüdischen. Es gab damals, trotz einiger wichtiger Ansätze, wenig Nennenswertes über Auschwitz. (Als einer der ersten hat Peter Weiss das geändert, mit seinem Auschwitzstück *Die Ermittlung*.) Ein großer Teil der marxistischen und kommunistischen Intellektuellen hat den Stellenwert und die Funktion des Antisemitismus im Nazismus allzulang gering geachtet. Sechs Millionen ermordete Juden sind nach 1945 nicht zu einem zentralen Thema geworden. Das wird hier ohne Besserwisserei gesagt, wir sind da weiter. Aber der neue Weg zu Brecht, der hier gesucht wird, führt auch auf die Schauplätze seiner Irrtümer. Nicht um sie zu

denunzieren, sondern um aus ihnen zu lernen. Was mußte schief laufen, so meine Frage, damit das Denken von Brecht Ausschwitz verpassen konnte? Welche ideologischen Positionen, welche durch den Kalten Krieg bedingten Taktiken haben ihm die Sicht verstellt? Und daran schließe ich die Frage, welche ungeheuerlichen Vorgänge wir Heutigen nicht sehen können und warum? Haben wir die falsche Ideologie? oder die falsche Theorie? Haben wir vielleicht die falsche Ästhetik? Lesen wir die falschen Zeitungen? Verkehren wir mit den falschen Menschen? Oder können wir das Unrecht nicht sehen, weil wir die Lösung nicht sehen? Ich frage.

Die neuen Wege zu Brecht können nur in der Auseinandersetzung mit den alten gefunden werden. Ein weiteres Beispiel für die alten Wege ist jenes männliche Zerrbild feministischer Kritik, das Brecht als rücksichtslosen Ausbeuter seiner Geliebten vermarktet. Bei dieser Konstruktion wird fast alles übersehen, was zum Thema gehört. Etwa, daß Brecht dasselbe Arbeitsverhältnis auch zu zahlreichen Männern unterhielt, zu Schriftstellern wie Lion Feuchtwanger, zu Musikern wie Hanns Eisler, zu marxistischen Theoretikern wie Karl Korsch, zu Regisseuren wie Slatan Dudow und Erich Engel, zu Schauspielern wie Peter Lorre und Charles Laughton usw. Daß ferner Brechts Mitarbeiterinnen, besonders Elisabeth Hauptmann und Margarete Steffin, selber bedeutende Persönlichkeiten waren, auf die das Bild vom hilflosen Opfer nicht recht passen will. Auffallend selten fällt übrigens der pseudofeministische Blick auf die bedeutendste künstlerische Persönlichkeit unter den Frauen in Brechts Leben, auf Helene Weigel. Auf sie paßt das Klischee vom hilflosen Opfer am allerwenigsten. Dabei kann kein Zweifel darüber bestehen, daß Brecht gerade sie oft schäbig und ausbeuterisch behandelt hat. Ich sage das ohne Triumphalismus. Wenn ich mich an dieser Veranstaltung umblicke, frage ich mich, ob wir da überhaupt weiter gekommen sind. Unter den vorgesehenen Rednern ist keine einzige Frau. Die Forderung nach Gleichberechtigung der Frauen, so lerne ich bei progressiven Feministinnen, meint nicht, daß die Frauen gleich sein sollen wie die Männer. Das liefe, in unserer Gegenwart, auf eine Art Verdoppelung des weltweiten Kapitalismus hinaus. Das Ziel kann nicht sein, daß auch Frauen

Soldaten oder Börsenspekulanten werden können, sondern daß die Anwesenheit von Frauen diese Institutionen verändert oder gar, ich hoffe es, aufhebt. Die Gleichberechtigung der Frauen wird die Männergesellschaft, und damit die Männer selbst verändern. Ohne diese Veränderung sind alle anderen gesellschaftlichen Veränderungen ausgeschlossen.

Der enge Fokus auf zwei oder drei von Brechts Mitarbeiterinnen verstellt den Blick auf den entscheidenden Aspekt von Brechts kollektiver Arbeitsweise. Das schöpferische Kollektiv, mit dem Brecht experimentierte, war seiner Zeit so weit voraus, daß es auch heute nur als Utopie wahrgenommen werden kann. In den kapitalistischen Ökonomien sind Künstlerinnen und Künstler gezwungen, sich als eindeutige Schöpfer ihrer Werke darzustellen. Die bürgerliche *Ästhetik* verschleiert diesen Mechanismus. Er erscheint hier als Vorstellung vom einsamen Schöpfer, dessen Werk auf enigmatische, rational nicht erklärbare Weise entsteht. Werke, die im Kollektiv und damit rational und planmäßig zustande kommen, passen nicht in dieses Konzept. Mit anderen Worten: die bürgerliche Ästhetik schließt das aus, was sich im Kapitalismus ohnehin nicht vermarkten läßt. Daß es Brecht dennoch gelang, wenigstens zeitweise ein künstlerisches Kollektiv zu unterhalten, muß aus der Zeit heraus verstanden werden. Die nachgeholt Industrialisierung der Weimarer Republik produzierte Vermassung und Anonymisierung. Der Bereich der Kunst blieb davon nicht unberührt. Brecht war weit davon entfernt, sich dieser Entwicklung zu widersetzen. Im *Dreigroschenprozeß*, einer seiner wichtigsten theoretischen Schriften, hat er sich zu Beginn der 30er Jahre dazu geäußert. Es geht in dieser Schrift um die neuen Medien Film und Radio, und zwar in ihrer spezifischen Eigenschaft als *Massenmedien*. Masse, Publikum, Kollektiv bilden die Kategorien, die Brechts Denken leiten. Das Entstehen eines Massenpublikums hat Folgen für die Kunst. Die traditionellen Vorstellungen vom isoliert schaffenden künstlerischen Individuum können nicht länger aufrecht erhalten werden. Auf das neue, anonyme Massenpublikum antwortet die Kunst, so argumentiert Brecht, mit der Schaffung des anonymen künstlerischen Kollektivs. — So konnte in

der Weimarer Republik ein neuer Typus künstlerischer Produktion entstehen. Ein Typus, der nicht mehr ausschließlich von den Marktbedingungen des Kapitalismus bestimmt war. Ein Typus, dessen Leitbild nicht mehr das einsam schaffende künstlerische Genie war. In diesem Kollektiv entstanden Brechts innovativste Werke, darunter *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, *Die Massnahme* und *Die Mutter*. Die günstige Konstellation dauerte allerdings nur wenige Jahre. Mit dem Beginn des Exils wurde der Zusammenhang mit den arbeitenden Massen zerrissen.

Brecht hat für den Rest seines Lebens an der Vorstellung festgehalten, daß wirkliche Fortschritte, nicht nur in der Kunst, sondern in der Gesellschaft überhaupt, nur in Verbindung mit den arbeitenden Massen möglich sind. In einem Gedicht aus den *Buckower Elegien* von 1953 kommt das nochmals zum Ausdruck. Brecht schrieb diese Gedichte in der desillusionierten Stimmung der Wochen nach dem 17. Juni, also nach dem niedergeschlagenen Arbeiteraufstand in der DDR. Das kurze Gedicht lautet wie folgt:

Ich habe gewußt, daß Städte gebaut wurden
 Ich bin nicht hingefahren.
 Das gehört in die Statistik, dachte ich
 Nicht in die Geschichte.
 Was sind schon Städte, gebaut
 Ohne die Weisheit des Volkes? (12, 311)

Die Weisheit des Volkes. Man wird diese Formel heute nicht fraglos akzeptieren. Wir kennen die historischen Vorgänge in diesem Jahrhundert, an denen die Weisheit des Volkes keinen Anstand nahm. Trotzdem möchte ich mit Brecht fragen: Was sind schon Städte, gebaut ohne die Weisheit des Volkes? Die Frage, das läßt sich in dem Land, in dem ich zu Ihnen spreche, nicht vermeiden, weist auf Brasilia. Lassen Sie mich wiederholen, daß ich die von Lúcio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, Roberto Burle Marx und anderen erschaffene Hauptstadt Brasiliens für ein Jahrtausendwerk halte, an Bedeutung den Pyramiden vergleichbar, aber zu menschlicheren Zwecken und nach menschlicheren Gesichtspunkten erbaut. Trotzdem kann man sich fragen, ob hier mit der Weisheit des Volkes, oder auch nur zum Wohle des Volkes gebaut wurde. In Brechts berühmtem Gedicht "Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters" wird gefragt: "Wohin gingen an dem Abend, wo die

chinesische Mauer fertig war / Die Maurer?" (12, 29). Die Antwort ist bis heute die gleiche geblieben. Die Arbeiter von Brasilia gingen, als die Stadt fertig war, in die Favelas, in die Slums der Vorstädte, und da leben sie heute noch. Auf diese Tatsache angesprochen, pflegt Niemeyer zu sagen, die Architektur könne nicht Probleme lösen, die nur von der Gesellschaft als Ganzes zu lösen seien. Er hat natürlich recht. Und auf die Frage, ob er Brasilia für die Stadt der Zukunft halte, hat Niemeyer geantwortet, "Brasilia ist nicht die Stadt der Zukunft, denn unsere Gesellschaft ist noch die der Vergangenheit."⁵ Da ist auf luzide Art der Grundwiderspruch formuliert, der in diese Stadt im wörtlichen Sinn einbetonierte ist. Man könnte sagen, die Zukunft ist in Brasilia latent vorhanden. Brasilia ist, mit einem Wort von Marx, der "Traum von einer Sache."³ Was — dies meine Frage — haben wir zu tun, damit dieser Traum wirklich wird?

Die Frage, ob es neue Wege zum alten Brecht gebe, unterstellt, daß diese neuen Wege, falls sie gefunden werden, für alle gelten. Die Annahme, daß die neuen Wege für alle gelten, setzt ihrerseits voraus, daß alle die gleichen oder jedenfalls ähnliche Fragen an Brechts Werk haben. Das wiederum setzt voraus, daß wir alle in vergleichbaren Situationen leben, in ähnlichen kulturellen, wirtschaftlichen und politischen Umständen, und uns also im wesentlichen gleich sind. Eine solche Vorstellung, so scheint mir, kann nur in der sogenannten ersten Welt aufkommen. Die Welt ist kein Dorf, auch kein elektronisches, das Schwinden der Distanzen führt nicht zu einem Verschwinden der Unterschiede. Die Unterschiede zwischen den Menschen, und hier meine ich vor allem die ökonomischen, wachsen ununterbrochen. Das verstärkt die Ungleichzeitigkeit. Die Bewohner der Erde leben gleichzeitig, aber sie leben nicht in der gleichen Zeit. Die Fragen, die man in der Schweiz, wo ich herkomme, in Deutschland, mit dem ich mich beruflich beschäftige, und in den Vereinigten Staaten, wo ich lebe und arbeite, an Brecht hat, sind nicht die, die man in Brasilien haben mag. Die Fragen, die man in der Schweiz, in Deutschland und in den Vereinigten Staaten an Brechts Werk stellt, falls man überhaupt Fragen stellt, sehen von den gesellschaftlichen Intentionen dieses Werks weitgehend ab oder stehen ihnen ablehnend gegenüber. Es geht den Menschen

in diesen Ländern alles in allem gut, so wie die Dinge sind, sollen sie bleiben, auch wenn da und dort Verbesserungen gewünscht werden. Die Fragen, die diese Menschen an Brechts Werk haben, und die Theorien, mit denen diese Fragen formuliert werden, zielen auf anderes und produzieren anderes. Die Schweizer, die Deutschen und die Einwohner der Vereinigten Staaten gleichen jenen Menschen, von denen in Brechts Gedicht "Gleichnis des Buddha vom brennenden Haus" die Rede ist. Von ihnen sagt der Buddha: "Wem der Boden noch nicht so heiß ist, dass er ihn lieber / Mit jedem anderen vertauschte, als daß er da bliebe, dem / Habe ich nichts zu sagen" (12, 37).

Es gibt am Ende dieses Jahrhunderts weiterhin unzählige Menschen, denen der Boden unter den Füßen brennt. Ich meine das nicht nur metaphorisch. Im brasilianischen Regenwald brennt jedes Jahr der Boden, es brennt der Wald, es brennt die Welt. Die Umweltschützer aus dem reichen Norden, zu denen ich gehöre, beklagen das. Sie wollen die Natur erhalten. Sie wollen auch die Menschen erhalten, die in dieser Natur leben. Sie kommen damit reichlich spät. Die Ureinwohner sind schon Jahrzehnte vor dem systematischen Niederbrennen der Amazonaswälder fast völlig ausgerottet worden. *Traurige Tropen*, das Buch von Claude Lévi-Strauss hat seinen Titel zurecht. Die heutigen Opfer, wenn am Amazonas die Welt brennt, sind die Kautschuksammler und andere Menschen, die im und vom Wald leben. In den siebziger und achtziger Jahren hat Chico Mendes diese Waldarbeiterinnen und Waldarbeiter gewerkschaftlich organisiert. Der Wald sollte gemeinsam ausgebeutet, aber nicht zerstört werden. Im reichen Norden, aus dem ich komme, wurde Chico Mendes, bei seinen Besuchen in Washington, zurecht als Umweltschützer gefeiert. Es hat ihm nichts genützt. Ende 1988 ist er, man weiß es, in Xapuri, im Teilstaat Acre, im Interesse der Großgrundbesitzer ermordet worden.⁷ Chico Mendes, der Waldbewohner vom Ende der Welt, hat übrigens seine erste politische Bildung von einem Mann namens Euclides Távora erhalten. Távora hatte sich nach langem Gefängnisaufenthalt in die fernste Ecke Brasiliens verkrochen. Ins Gefängnis war er gekommen, weil er 1935 an einem von Luis Carlos Prestes geführten Aufstand teilgenommen hatte. So finden die zusammen, denen der Boden

unter den Füßen brennt. — Am Amazonas brennt die Welt noch immer. Im reichen Norden bedauert man das weiterhin. Aber dort ist der Boden noch nicht so heiß, daß man sich ernsthaft fragt, was denn geschehen muß, damit der Weltbrand aufhört. Hier in Brasilien ist in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten Brechts Stück *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* wiederholt inszeniert worden. Wenn man von mir wissen will, welches Publikum Brecht heute noch erreichen kann, möchte ich umgekehrt fragen, wie lange es denn in diesem Land — und in den meisten Ländern der Welt — noch notwendig sein wird, den *Kaukasischen Kreidekreis* zu spielen?

Die gleiche Frage möchte ich auch im Blick auf eines der in Brasilien meistgespielten Stücke Brechts stellen: Wie lange muß man hier — und in so vielen Ländern der Welt — noch *Furcht und Elend des III. Reiches* spielen? Brechts Szenenfolge zeigt das Leben unter der Hitlerdiktatur. Das wichtigste dramatische Element in diesen Szenen ist der *Gestus*; das Stück ist, nach Brechts eigenen Worten, "eine große Sammlung von Gesten" (22.2, 799). Es sind Gesten des Verstummens, des Sich-Umblickens und Erschreckens, Gesten der Vorsicht, der Abwehr, aber auch der Auflehnung. Es sind Gesten des Verschleierns und Verheimlichens von Familien-, Freundschafts- und Liebesbeziehungen, von Klassen- und politischen Zugehörigkeiten, bis hin zu Gesten des Auslöschens von Namen und Identität. Wieviele Menschen in wievielen Ländern der Welt empfinden bei dieser Liste heute noch einen Schauer des Erkennens?

Das Verhalten der Figuren in *Furcht und Elend des III. Reiches* wird nicht von ihrer Ideologie bestimmt. Die Figuren finden nicht zum Widerstand, weil sie die 'richtige' Ideologie haben, schon gar nicht, weil sie der 'richtigen' Partei angehören. Nicht der Antifaschismus in den Köpfen bringt den Widerstand hervor, sondern der Faschismus auf der Straße. Nicht das Denken bestimmt das Verhalten, sondern das Verhalten bestimmt das Denken. Das ist es, was man bei Brecht lernen kann und nicht irgendwelche kommunistischen Dogmen, wie auf den ausgetretenen alten Wegen immer noch verbreitet wird. Damit das gelernt werden kann, hat Brecht das Konzept des *Gestus* erarbeitet. Mit dem *Gestus* kann auf dem Theater gezeigt werden, wie das persönliche, individuelle und instinkthafte

Verhalten der Menschen mit ihrer gesellschaftlichen Situation und besonders mit ihrer Klassenlage zusammenhängt. In Ländern, wo das Verhalten der Menschen durch das Leben unter einer Diktatur deformiert ist, kann der *Gestus* ihre wirkliche Lage sichtbar machen. In Brasilien ist *Furcht und Elend des III. Reiches* vor allem in den Jahren zwischen 1964 und 1985 gespielt worden, also während der Diktatur.

Wenn die Unterdrückung unerträglich wird, auch das zeigen die Szenen aus *Furcht und Elend des III. Reiches*, erzeugt sie Widerstand. Die Systeme der Ausbeutung und des Terrors produzieren ihre eigenen Widersprüche und damit die Möglichkeit ihrer Überwindung. Das dialektische Prinzip, das sich hier ausdrückt, hat Brecht zu Beginn der dreißiger Jahre formuliert. Es steht als Motto über der bereits erwähnten Untersuchung *Der Dreigroschenprozess*. Das Motto lautet: "Die Widersprüche sind die Hoffnungen!" (21, 448).

Die Widersprüche sind die Hoffnungen.

(Vortrag gehalten auf einer Brecht-Tagung in Rio de Janeiro, August 1998, veranstaltet vom Goethe Institut.)

1. Die im Text in Klammern nachgewiesenen Brechtzitate beziehen sich auf: Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei, Klaus-Detlef Müller (Hg.), *Bertolt Brecht Werke. Grosse kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, Berlin und Weimar: Suhrkamp und Aufbau, 1988 ff. (Bandnummer, Seitenzahl)
2. Vgl. Jacques Derrida, *Marx' Gespenster*, [*Spectres de Marx*, 1993], übers. Susanne Lüdemann, überarbeitete Ausgabe, Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1996.
3. Vgl. Euclides da Cunha, *Krieg im Sertão [Os Sertões. Campanha de Canudos, 1902]*, aus d. brasilianischen Portugiesisch von Berthold Zilly, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1994.
4. Zu Olga Benario, vgl. Ruth Werner, *Olga Benario. Die Geschichte eines tapferen Lebens*, Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1962.
5. Edouard Bailby, *Niemeyer par lui-même. L'architecte de Brasília parle a Edouard Bailby*, Paris: Éditions Balland, 1993.
6. MEW 1, 346.
7. Zu Chico Mendes, vgl. Andrew Revkin, *The Burning Season: The Murder of Chico Mendes and the Fight for the Amazon Rain Forest*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

CLASS AND CLASSROOM: TEACHING BRECHT IN NORTH AMERICA

David A. Blostein

Teaching Brecht is, in the terminology of the tenth Symposium of the IBS, a cultural and political phenomenon. Cultural and political phenomena take peculiar forms in university settings. A proper introduction to this topic might thus be heavy with statistics on some of the following: When and where was Brecht first an academic subject in North American universities? Where did Brecht break into the curriculum — in German studies? in theatre studies? in Great Books? Which universities today have courses dedicated to Brecht's works; which include him in special areas or periods; in which is he represented by relatively uncontroversial works; which universities still exclude him altogether?

I shall not attempt to answer most of these questions directly. Rather, I intend to proceed by way of a sort of egotistical sublime, taking my own experience as someone who is now facing the alarming fact that I have taught or written on Brecht for close to forty years. So I am of the generation of teachers who are teaching something they were not themselves taught (like the professors with whom I studied T.S. Eliot), who wrote their theses not on Brecht but on, say, Schiller, or in my case renaissance English comedy. In a real way, then, for the question "What do we teach when we teach Brecht?" the answer is: we teach ourselves. This must be read in two senses. The obvious one is that we learn on the job; the other is that we cannot help imparting something of ourselves, of our personal experience with the subject, when we teach it.

But any teacher needs to learn two maxims early in his or her career: (I) It is not subjects that are taught, but people, and those people live within a culture and a political and economic system. (II) Teaching is not inculcation but the art of enabling others to learn. Accordingly, though the analogy between teaching and theatre, particularly Brechtian theatre, can be facile and misleading, there is a supplementary answer to "What do we teach when we teach Brecht?": "We help people learn how Brecht helps people to learn."

I began to learn Brecht before I realized it. In late August of 1956, I had just arrived in London,

England after a five-week study tour of Spain and Germany. The Berliner Ensemble was in London, only a couple of weeks after Brecht had died, and I was bowled over by performances of *Trumpets and Drums* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Some fool had told me I wouldn't get much out of *Mother Courage*, so I missed it, but then I had never heard of the Berliners nor, I thought, of Bertolt Brecht. That is why I say I began to learn Brecht before I realized it. For, several years before, when I was about thirteen, I had read a book called *Hollywood on Trial*, and after absorbing all those courageous, defiant performances by the Hollywood Ten before the House Un-American Activities Committee, I was puzzled by the apparently weak, accommodating replies to the sleazy prosecutors by an obscure German who was thanked on his way out for his co-operativeness.¹ Of course, I was later to learn that the obscure German was the same Bertolt Brecht who had just been rehearsing his *Galileo* with Charles Laughton. I was to learn much more in such piecemeal and deceptive fashion.

In 1962, after five years of graduate work at Oxford and Toronto, I arrived in London, Ontario for my first teaching position at Huron College, an Anglican institution at the University of Western Ontario. "Teaching Brecht in North America" has been for me teaching in Canada, and teaching for the most part in English. I shall touch on the issue of translation later, but the Canadian context is worth mentioning. There is bound to be a difference when teaching any subject with a political component between doing it in a country like the United States in which socialism is generally a suspect word to say the least, and doing it in a country like Canada, in which half of the provinces and territories have within the past twenty years elected social-democratic governments. In some ways it should be easier, in other perhaps harder. Still, when I arrived at Huron College, the students seemed richer than any I'd ever met, there was a thriving sports-car club, and there were plentiful reminders that "London-Ont", the centre of Canada's insurance industry, was the millionaire capital of the country. As "a drama man" I was assigned the drama club, and in September the first play I innocently suggested for their reading circle was Bentley's translation of *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. The enthusiasm after that

reading was something of a pleasant shock to me; the students decided to make that play their annual production, scheduled for February. And as their advisor I had to direct it. I had never directed before. The usual disasters took place on opening night, for instance the gods showing up without masks because they weren't comfortable, scene changes that seemed to last longer than many one-acters, but the results were satisfactory, and confirm one's hunch that producing a play is the best way to teach it.

Indeed, recently Paul Thompson, one of Canada's most important theatrical figures since the 1970s told a class of Canadian theatre history students that that production, in which he played Wang the waterseller, had changed his view of theatre and had led to his turning the Theatre Passeur-Muraille into a socially committed company. One other cast member, William Webster, is worth mentioning here. He was already an apprentice at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival and went on to a distinguished career as a professional actor, but his participation relates closely to our topic, for besides playing the Third God, he played the Unemployed Man. But what was an unemployed man in 1962 in London, Canada? Here was a city of tall trees and spacious brick houses, with two hundred thousand prosperous citizens. Little did he know (nor did I until I got to discover well-marginalized Hamilton Road, in the south-east corner of the city), that there were plenty of examples of poverty and exploitation to be discovered even in that place and at that time. And in Toronto in the 1990s no-one has to look in out-of-the-way corners. If a middle-class student at the University of Toronto were, by sheer effort, not able to see the beggars that dot Bloor Street, there is a good chance that he or she would be aware of a father, an aunt, a cousin who had just been "down-sized" or "re-structured" out of a job.

Which brings me back to my title: "Class and Classroom." In the space that remains, I shall deal with these first in terms of curriculum, then of method, then with what I believe are key matters (including class) that must be dealt with in teaching Brecht.

At the University of Toronto, Modern Drama is taught in the English Department; it is one of the few English courses in which translated works are allowed. The course is some twenty-six weeks long

and covers a minimum of two dozen plays. In my section we begin with Ibsen and Strindberg, deal with various aspects of realism and naturalism, move on to aestheticism and expressionism, touch on the Irish phenomenon, and arrive at the Christmas break with *Saintsmanship*: a comparison of Shaw's *St Joan*, Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, sometimes Claudel's *l'Annonce faite à Marie*, Brecht's *Good Person of Szechwan* (or *Good Woman of Setzuan*). Students have by then had an ample opportunity to absorb pre-Brechtian ideas of theatre, and are thus sent off to think for a while after having those ideas challenged.

The course breaks naturally around World War II, and early in the second term we read *Mother Courage* and sometimes *Galileo*. I say sometimes, because one of the facts of teaching Brecht in North America is the availability of texts, particularly since anthologies come and go. One of the books most consistently in print, first in the U.S. editions and then in Penguin, is Bentley's twinned edition of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, with the title *Parables for the Theatre*, and doubtless that is one reason why they are put on reading lists. (Thus are a good many canons established.) But in any case, some of the most useful material in teaching Brecht's plays doesn't come from the plays at all — in part from the biography (the Un-American Activities Committee is an example, followed as it is by the Swiss account and Austrian citizenship), but mostly from the poems.

As a short aside, I must acknowledge that there is at first sight a good case for starting with the theatrical theory, since Brecht wrote so much of it. With such convenient schemas as the one in the *Short Organum*, on epic theatre versus Aristotelian theatre, it is seductive to both students and teachers to regard Brecht's theories as clear-cut doctrines, and then in the face of the much less cut-and-dried embodiment of those "doctrines" in the plays to become either disappointed, cynical, bewildered, or rationalizing. I certainly must plead guilty of such an approach in my early teaching of Brecht: doctrine is, after all, easy for all concerned to remember. But I have found it advisable to caution students that throughout his life, Brecht's theorizing was (a) polemical and (b) pragmatic, and that in part the

polemic was a rationalizing of the pragmatic. Which is not to say that his theorizing was dishonest, but only to say that it was the thinking aloud of a craftsman who needed to surround himself with convinced collaborators and an audience to convert from old assumptions about what should give them pleasure. And so with the theories my students and I proceed with caution, checking theories constantly by applying them to specific instances in the plays.

On the other hand, for teaching purposes, the poems work the way props and other kinds of *gestus* work in theatre productions: as concentrated versions of the oeuvre, a sort of Brecht plasma. There are a half dozen poems that do this work well, and Brechtians and their students keep returning to them — for good reason, for they keep yielding new insights. "Von armen B.B.", for instance, with its ironic self-put-down, its evident cynicism, also should catch the eye of North Americans, immigrants or the descendants of immigrants, when they read that somewhere inside him the cold of the abandoned home that will remain in him till he dies. The kid from Augsburg begins as an emigrant, shifting first to the big city and then from country to country. He is always the outsider, coming to new situations and settling in to change them. He doesn't write exclusively about cities as such, but of cities as centres of community, where people have inherited a way relating to others that prevents them from living more fully. Thus it is a surprisingly short step, though over fifteen years are between them, from "Von armen B.B." to "An die Nachgeborenen", where Brecht describes himself arriving in the cities — to a place and a people — from somewhere else.

There is a line of connection, as well, to be drawn between "Von armen B.B.", "Die Maske des Bösen", and "An die Nachgeborenen": it is the constant of empathy, of identification rather than distancing. The comical self-identification in the first of these with the "ganz besonders riechende Tiere", the peculiarly smelly animals, is still self-identification, and when he observes the straining face of the evil demon, he does so "[m]itfühlend", sympathetically. He is always aware that ordinary people don't like being angry or cruel, because it is a strain, or "[m]acht die Stimme heiser", makes the voice hoarse. Anger and cruelty make ugliness, but may be temporarily necessary. The ultimate object,

though, is to create a world in which “man is a helper/friend to man.” But that state cannot obtain without universal economic security. Here such diverse characters agree as Brecht’s Mackie Messer (“Erst kommt das Fressen”), Shaw’s Major Barbara (who must give up the bribe of bread before she can be sure she has truly captured men’s spirits), and the real Lord Raglan, who never missed an opportunity to proclaim, “Only the man of independent means can have an independent mind.” We are speaking of a kind of enfranchisement here, the right to be fully human, and I think that is essentially what the issue of class involves in Brecht’s work.

In “An die Nachgeborenen,” one of the best poetic *gestuses* for teaching purposes, my Canadian classes, in all the decades, often register bewilderment or skepticism when I get to the statement, “Gingen wir doch ... Durch die Kriege der Klassen...” (For we went, through the Wars of the Classes, [for the Class War]). They have heard of classes, which they more or less equate with social strata, and the brighter among them might say: I don’t get it, it’s 1939, there are racist and imperialist tyrannies all over the world, a real military World War is about to break out, and the central fact to him is some sort of metaphorical war between the richer and the poorer! How to answer such a student? At least in part by placing Brecht’s working view of class within an ancient tradition of comedy, what in classical comedy took the form of the war between the generations, of the desire of the young to be fertile, of the old to block them. We might say that the struggle to change the world, to humanize it, is the “class war”, between those in whose interest it is to accept the world as it is (the gods, Anna Fierling) and those who wish something better. This struggle makes up the moment-to-moment texture of Brecht’s works, which are informed with the necessity and possibility of changing human society in order for it to be less difficult to live as a good person. It seems to me entirely legitimate, therefore, to draw at times on the analogies offered by present-day North American students’ greater familiarity with the two other members of the topos triad — gender and race.²

On the question of change itself, the ability of man and his world to change, there could seem to be a contradiction, for most of Brecht’s characters do

not essentially change at all. They are like Ben Jonson’s characters rather than Shakespeare’s; they live out their essential natures. In his twisting and turning Galileo simply defines himself, but he doesn’t change. The same with Mother Courage, Grusha, Regine. They are what they are, and the plot gives them the opportunity to epitomize their essences within a *gestus*: dropping a coin back in a purse; risking death by beating a drum to save the children; marrying without love to protect love. The noticeable changes are grotesque theatricalizations to the extent that they are plausible at all: Puntilla drunk and sober, Shen Te / Shui Ta. In the face of this, bourgeois “dramatic” theatre shows people changing all the time, from Oedipus the King to Oedipus at Colonus, from Lear through Christy Mahon. To see this as a contraversion of Brecht’s art is to misunderstand it, however. Brecht’s art — his theatrical art particularly — is fundamentally parabolic. But a parable is not a prescription, a “Go thou and do likewise.”

What we receive from these plays is a paradigm of what the world is like and why the world as it has been for centuries and is now prevents people from being human. They show us what needs to be changed, and encourage us to wish to change it. But rarely do they show us how. That is why the epilogue to *Der gute Mensch* is so honest as well as exasperating. There is little doubt that the play that the actors have just presented to us prompts us to answer the question “should the world be changed?” with a “yes.” But beyond that, we are almost on our own. Almost, but not quite. For if a distancing has obtained throughout the play, in the form of the disjunctive scenes, the songs, the masks, that distancing breaks down spectacularly when the actor, acting the role of an actor out of his role, ends the play. The question of teaching plays in translation is particularly pertinent here, where the two most frequently used translations, the British idiom of John Willett and the American of Eric Bentley, both attempt to combine reasonable accuracy with theatrically vitality. Bentley wrote at least two versions, aware perhaps that to make Brecht’s spokesman ask how one can be both good and rich was taking rather too much liberty with the original, but perhaps even more so because his first version weakened the power of the last line.³

You will recall how the actor apologizes for the way the “golden legend” went awry, and states that he and his colleagues are disappointed too. Then he asks the audience what the solution might be, and puts it squarely in terms of change — a new man, a new world, other Gods, no Gods? Of course the terms in which he puts these questions tend toward the comic, since in such ironic terms there are no real “answers”, even though the question is the central one for Brecht: how to make the world fit for good people to live in it. (Remember Shaw’s St Joan, asking the Lord when the world will be ready to receive its saints — but by implication asking when will the world be fit for people to be good in it and survive.) The audience is amused and rational as it is asked this question, but the language suddenly and utterly changes. There is that remarkable, urgent, committed, passionate appeal for the need, shared between artists and audiences as co-citizens, to find its fulfilment in a solution, an appeal loaded into the repeated word *muß*. Bentley’s first version misses fire:

There must, there must, be some end that would fit.

Ladies and gentlemen, help us look for it!

The later version is closer:

You write the happy ending to the play!

There must, there must, there’s got to be a way!

With an odd tribute to an Americanism in the second-last line, Willett catches the urgency in the last by following Brecht to the point of problematic English idiom:

Ladies and gentlemen, in you we trust:

There must be happy endings, must, must, must!

But nothing can match the power of the original, in which it would seem Brecht loses his cool:

Verehrtes Publikum, los, such dir selbst den Schluß!

Es muß ein guter da sein, muß, muß, muß!

The general rule in wake-up rhetoric is for sympathy to be undercut by distancing. Here, in a rarer but fully characteristic Brechtian reversal, distance is demolished by emotion. In making the suggestion that students consider the significance of the play’s turning up the heat rather than lowering it for the departing audience, we might help them to see how

Brecht has a great many ways to reinforce the continuum between art and life, and in a small way we might help them learn how Brecht helps people to learn.

1. Gordon Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial: the story of the ten who were indicted*, Foreword by Thomas Mann (New York: Boni & Gaer, 1948).
2. The disappointment felt by many in the audience of “Happy Birthday, Brecht” during the IBS Colloquium in May 1998 is, I believe, a direct result of the failure of the accomplished director Di Trevis to make the adjustment from a European idea of class to an American one. The student actors from the University of California at Davis dutifully marched around with grim faces and loud voices, but, as one of them said during the question period that followed, they regarded it as a matter of presenting problems from another time and place. Yet it was soon to be clear from further exchanges that there were members of the cast whose personal experience with social injustice could, if tapped, have made their theatrical embodiment of Brecht’s dialogue and lyrics far more immediate for themselves and for the audience.
3. Bentley’s first version was published in *Parables for the Theatre: two plays by Bertolt Brecht: The Good Woman of Setzuan and The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, original English versions by Eric Bentley and Maja Apelman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948); the most recent version is *Parables for the Theatre: two plays by Bertolt Brecht: The Good Woman of Setzuan and The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, [revised English versions by Eric Bentley] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966). Willett’s version is: Bertolt Brecht, *The Good Person of Szechwan* (London: Methuen, 1965).

(Lecture presented at the IBS Symposium in San Diego, California, in May 1998)

Brecht’s Alienation (Effect) in the Brave New (Postsocialist) World

Charles E. Gannon

Although the political entities and initiatives that Brecht worked with, through, and for are now in terminal disarray, certain of his narrative strategies may be poised to attain even greater significance. In a world that seems eager to return to political, ideological, and cultural complacency, Brecht’s emphasis on narrative dislocation as a means of producing conscious, cognitively sharpened insights

may represent an important opportunity for ideological and aesthetic challenge and balance. Specifically, in an era when centralization of both physical and discursive resources threatens to narrow creative avenues, the alienation effect holds out enormous potential for challenging the soporific status quo generated by a deluge of mass cultural images and discourses.

Ironically, it may be that Brecht's strategies of marrying aesthetic interest with political commentary is more crucial for our post-socialist democracies than for the socialist polities to which Brecht allied himself. Indeed, the adoption of one of Brecht's most fundamental contributions to the arts is not something that needs to be urged or exhorted; it has already occurred.

In its original incarnation, *Three Penny Opera* was noteworthy for its radical disruption of the traditional theatrical space and conventions. Although one of the most often remarked-upon aspects of the piece is Brecht's use of the narrator/commentator, the most provocative examples of the alienation effect may be in its staging strategies. Placards that disrupted the sequentiality of narrative progression framed the proscenium, banners flew in from the wings or overhead, and the normally "sacrosanct" limits of the stage space were violated repeatedly and unpredictably by the performers. The greatest testimony to Brecht's influence upon theater may be that, today, few of these staging devices would strike a modern audience as particularly surprising. However, the one device that still does attract notice -- and often, sharp criticism -- is the irruption of non-diegetic, overtly political banners and slogans into the stage's "fictional space." For instance, D. J. R. Bruckner's generally favorable *New York Times* review (27 November, 1997) of the Irondale Ensemble's Project's recent restaging of *The Mother* takes on a tone of exasperation when confronting the production's ostensibly inchoate political semiology, complaining that numerous scenic and performed statements relate to issues and ideas that are "never mentioned in the play." While director Jim Niesen clearly understands and revitalizes Brecht, and reviewer Bruckner clearly understands that he does, it is equally evident that contemporary attempts to update the bold dialectic challenges that Brecht wove into his productions are

problematic and often counterproductive.

Is it that an extraordinary artistic gift is needed to create a sense of productive alienation without antagonizing or frustrating the audience past the point of receptivity? Or is it that contemporary audiences are simultaneously more jaded and less intellectually energetic than those for which Brecht was writing? I do not suggest that human nature has changed in the span of a single generation, but certainly, our culturescape has -- and the non-stop deluge of commercial agitprop and political hucksterism has exposed all of us to almost every conceivable rhetorical ploy. Whereas a traditional audience-member half a century ago might be surprised, puzzled, and therefore, intrigued by placards that intermittently violated the stage space, contemporary theater-goers may see only a trick: another calculated attempt to snap them out of the disinterested daze of media overload. Consequently, for many, Brecht's staging techniques may no longer seem daring and innovative, but didactic and obvious.

However, there is one medium in which Brecht's staging strategies still make frequent and popular appearances. If we trace Eisenstein's cinematic employment of Brechtian dislocation (such as the techniques used in *Potemkin*) through to the current day, we find a similar commitment to rhetorical immediacy and radicality behind some of the most effective and arresting editing techniques employed in the past two decades. This includes the smash-cut *cinéma vérité* styles employed by fringe journalists and counter-culture directors, as well as the deliberately self-revealing, self-deconstructing, and even self-incriminating narrative juxtapositions and transgressions that are the defining hallmark of dystopian cult classics as diverse as *The Man Who Fell To Earth* and *The Prisoner*. However, it is in rock films and videos that these techniques are combined most frequently, most popularly, and often, most haphazardly. Rock films and MTV are, for the most part, far more indebted to the dadaistic surrealism of Luis Bunuel's *Un Chien Andalou* than they are to Brecht. However, in many of the more thoughtful, politically-motivated productions, the discursive strains of *Three Penny Opera* can be heard echoing down from an earlier, and simpler, time.

One of the best examples of this is Pink

Floyd's film *The Wall*: a hallucinatory, overly anti-fascist rock opera. Jarringly disruptive narrative digressions characterize the narrative, wherein animated nightmares of neo-nazi brutality and militarism are juxtaposed with concerts that evolve into Nuremburgesque rallies populated by porcine-masked rock cultists. The story's troubling a-syncopatic rhythms produce audience uncertainty, uneasiness, and – significantly -- attention, as the film navigates a tortuous slalom through opposed poles of realism and symbolism, personal confession and political commentary. Although the music, the methods, and the media have all undergone change, *The Wall* nevertheless echoes *Three Penny Opera*'s own narrative strategy in the way it both disrupts narrative flow and calls attention to the conventionalized processes of narrative itself -- thereby providing opportunities for exploding and analyzing the assumptions inherent in both the form and content of the presentation.

There is, however, a subtle limitation upon the alienation-effect as carried out through film and video; even the most arresting images and jarring juxtapositions become familiar after a time. In their turn, *cinéma vérité*, gritty hand-held camerawork, and even smash cut editing -- complete with glitches and distortions -- all caught, held, and then lost the attention of viewers. It seems, then, that no form, no stylistic, structural, or visual invention is so inherently disruptive that it will not, eventually, become an accustomed rather than an arresting mode of presentation.

Perhaps therefore, it is in innovative and dislocating content, rather than form, that we might find our best chances for an enduring and effective realization of the alienation-effect. As evidence of this claim, I present this simultaneously compelling and dislocating first line of a famous, socially provocative narrative:

When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin. He was lying on his back ... and when he lifted his head a little, he saw his ... many legs ... were waving helplessly before his eyes. "What's happened to me?" he thought.

(Kafka, 1)

It is in the realm of fantastic narratives -- the very

domain of the utopian tale itself -- that the most robust and resilient of all the applications of Brecht's alienation effect may be found. Darko Suvin's landmark analytic typology of science and utopian fiction, *Metamorphoses in Science Fiction*, explicitly invokes Brecht's alienation effect as the defining narrative element of these forms of fiction. Alienation, which Suvin retranslates as "estrangement," is the essential criterion for distinguishing epistemologically responsible utopian speculation from other forms of fantastic literature: it is, to cite Suvin, "distinguished by the narrative dominance ... of a fictional 'novum' (novelty, innovation) validated by cognitive logic ... a totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality (Suvin, 63).

However, this novum must be accountable to the dictates of empirical epistemology: it must be "postulated on and validated ... scientific method ... a 'mental experiment' following accepted scientific ... logic" (Suvin 62-64). Suvin, following Brecht, asserts that it is this adherence to logic and empirical process that allows such narratives a meaningful place in the socialist project: these are not simply fantasies, but *Gedankenexperimente*, thought-experiments that inquire into human dynamics -- both individual and social -- often with as much care, and with as much at stake, as the utopian constructs of Fourier, Chernychevsky, Hegel, and Marx. This suggests, of course, that, in addition to conforming to the standards of empirical rectitude, such narratives must also be meaningfully sited within the flow of history. Consequently, truly scientific utopian (and dystopian) narratives must also reflect an appreciation for the dialectic underpinnings of any society: Suvin once again echoes Brecht's own evaluative criteria when he emphasizes that responsible utopian fiction always sees -- "the norms of any age, including emphatically its own, as unique ... It does not ask about The Man or The World, but which man? in which kind of world? and why such a man in such a kind of world? (Suvin, 7)

Is Suvin inventing a new meaning for Brecht's theories, or is he simply extending their logic forward into the narrative future? There is no reason to imagine that such an extension is repugnant to the basic theoretical or ideological underpinnings of the

alienation (or should that be “estrangement”?) effect. Brecht’s own narratives move about in time to dislocate the audience and thereby bring a sharper light to bear upon modern issues. This is particularly evident in Brecht’s post-Hiroshima revisions of *Galileo*, which, as Eric Bentley observes in his suggestively titled essay, “The Science Fiction of Bertolt Brecht,” was not history, but historic apocrypha restructured into a comment on then contemporary events. The facts of the past are not Brecht’s primary concern; rather, as Bentley observes, “What is it that the historical dramatist finds in the earlier period? In Brecht’s terminology, it is the alienation of the subject” (14). And Brecht’s subject was indeed of the highest contemporary urgency; in a statement cited by Bentley, Brecht explained: “Galileo’s crime can be regarded as the original sin of modern physical science ... The atom bomb, both as a technical and as a social phenomenon, is the classical end product of his contribution to science and his failure to society” (23).

But in addition to highlighting the perilous disjuncture that can exist between scientific innovation and responsibility, Brecht was also calling attention to another issue of the moment: the increasing pace, and therefore power, with which modern science was changing the world, its values, its structures, and its social relationships. One passage from the pre-atomic, pre-Laughton text of *Galileo* enunciates this with startling directness: “(T)here is still much for new generations to do. The old teachings, believed for a thousand years, are on the point of collapsing” (Bentley, 31). This passage not only invokes history and ideational dislocation in a single gesture, but does so at a metatextual level: the central dramatic event of the play -- the ultimate victory of Galileo’s new cosmological model, despite his denunciation of it -- illustrates the possibility, and political significance, of mounting challenges to whole “constellations of thought” (as George Steiner puts it in *Real Presences*). Brecht’s text encourages the critique of those epistemological and ontological assumptions that undergird an entire society or political elite (or, to follow Foucault, of a “community of discourse”), and thereby serve as an anticipatory paraphrase of Thomas Kuhn’s assertions on paradigm shift. These affinities between Brecht’s

play and Kuhn’s image of science progressing by dislocating revolutions rather than controlled evolution provide readers with yet another perspective from which to assess the role of technology, epistemology, and ontology in the creation/reproduction of culture. However, whereas Brecht takes us back in time to show us the present and how we arrived here, authors who show us the present through a possible future -- particularly an undesirable one -- address the possible pitfalls of actions yet to be taken. Indeed, the most powerful dystopian narratives operate by immediate estrangement, by suddenly dropping the reader into a environment where a hideous Brave New World is not approaching, but has already arrived.

Consider the opening lines of some of the best known, and most influential, dystopias: introductions so radically at odds with our expectations that their very boldness, their brash, insistent contravention of convention, generates an immediate, profound, and above all, socially purposeful sense of estrangement:

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith ... slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions ... It was no use trying the lift, ... (A)t present the electric current was cut off... in preparation for Hate Week.... On each landing ... the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran. (Orwell, 5)

Orwell’s anti-autocratic portrayal of the world in 1984 succeeds precisely because its estrangement is not fantastic but cognitive, and therefore, its parallels with modern political experience are disturbingly clear despite the mostly unfamiliar setting. Similar concerns -- about the abuse of power, the abuse of discourse, the dangerous and inevitable linkages between the two -- continue to emerge in contemporary narratives which deal with issues much closer to home, much closer in time, and therefore, much more fearsome. This is the razor’s edge anxiety of possibility that Margaret Atwood employs when she drops us into the all-too-believable near-future world of *The Handmaid’s Tale*:

We slept in what had once been the

gymnasium.... in the army cots that had been set up, in rows, with spaces between so we could not talk. We had flannelette sheets, like children's, and army-issue blankets, old ones that still said U. S... Aunt Sara and Aunt Elizabeth patrolled; they had electric cattle prods slung on thongs from their leather belts.... No guns though, even they could not be trusted with guns. (Atwood, 3-4)

These dystopian possibilities not only dislocate and disturb us in their opening lines, but, by combining cognitive estrangement and contemporary relevance, can clarify vague fears into realized -- and definitively rejectable -- outcomes. Consequently, this may be the most appropriate, and necessary, Brechtian device in our increasingly technocentric, socially volatile, and easily jaded, media-saturated age. Indeed, if Brecht's *Galileo* performs the essential groundwork of reclaiming history to, and within, a dialectical perspective, utopian and dystopian writers attempt to claim and acquire a rational future through a similarly dialectical application of forethought.

Whether conceptualized as film and video techniques that mix updated Eisensteinian montage theories with jarring thematic juxtapositions, or as Suvin's theory of cognitive estrangement and cultural dislocation in truly scientific utopian/dystopian literature, the seminal Brechtian idea of confronting audiences with conflicting ideas and objects seems to be enjoying greater vigor and longevity in Western democracies than it did in the political milieus in which it was conceived. The failure of socialist/Marxist states to accept dystopic criticism was, in hindsight, richly predictive of their ultimate failure as polities. Accordingly, an openness to this species of social critique may be equally, or even more, crucial for capitalist regimes. It encourages a particularly incisive form of critical thought that may be an essential prophylaxis against the creeping cooptation-become-collaboration that multinational conglomerates seem determined -- and able -- to promote in lieu of genuine democratic process and pluralism. Raymond Williams's warnings of an ever-expanding and yet, increasingly nebulous, global hegemonic culture grow in pertinence, newly underscored by warnings such as those in Penley and Ross's *Technoculture*. As Fredric Jameson observes

in *Marxism and Form*, we live in an era when political elites are as much at the mercy of the intricate information-age political juggernaut as were the less privileged classes under earlier forms of technocracy. In his words, our world is one in which "the power elite" seems "as much a pawn as a master of the enormous forces at its disposition" (107).

In this environment, and from a socialist standpoint, it is increasingly important to find robust and versatile ways to step back from and critique the sociopolitical monoliths within which we exist. Brecht's narratological strategy of estrangement is, therefore, an increasingly valuable resource, partially because it already has a presence in our popular media, but, more importantly, because it enhances the political pertinence, and therefore power, of scientific dystopias. Therefore, even if the twenty-somethings of Generation X and the avid readers of near-future cautionary tales have never heard of Bertolt Brecht, it is no less true that they, along with the rest of us, may owe him a debt that increases with the passing of time.

1. Suvin takes issue with John Willett's largely unchallenged translation of *Verfremdung* as "alienation" and renders it, instead, as "estrangement." This is consistent with Ernst Bloch's own translational distinction, as per his essay, "Entfremdung, Verfremdung: Alienation, Estrangement," included in the collection simply entitled *Brecht*, edited by Erika Munk (1972).

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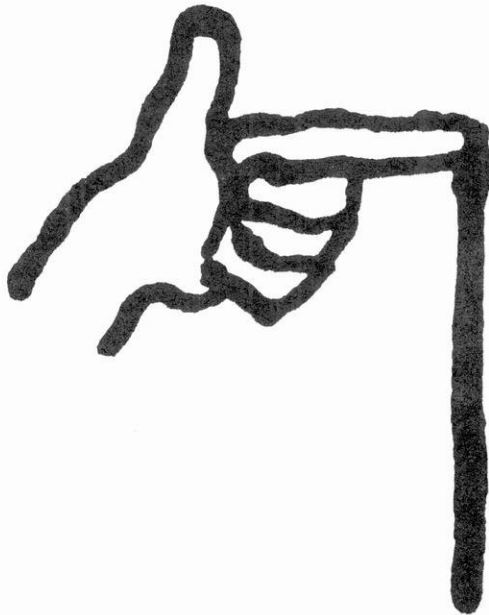
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read Brecht
usez Brecht
lest Brecht

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