

Brecht in Asia and Africa.

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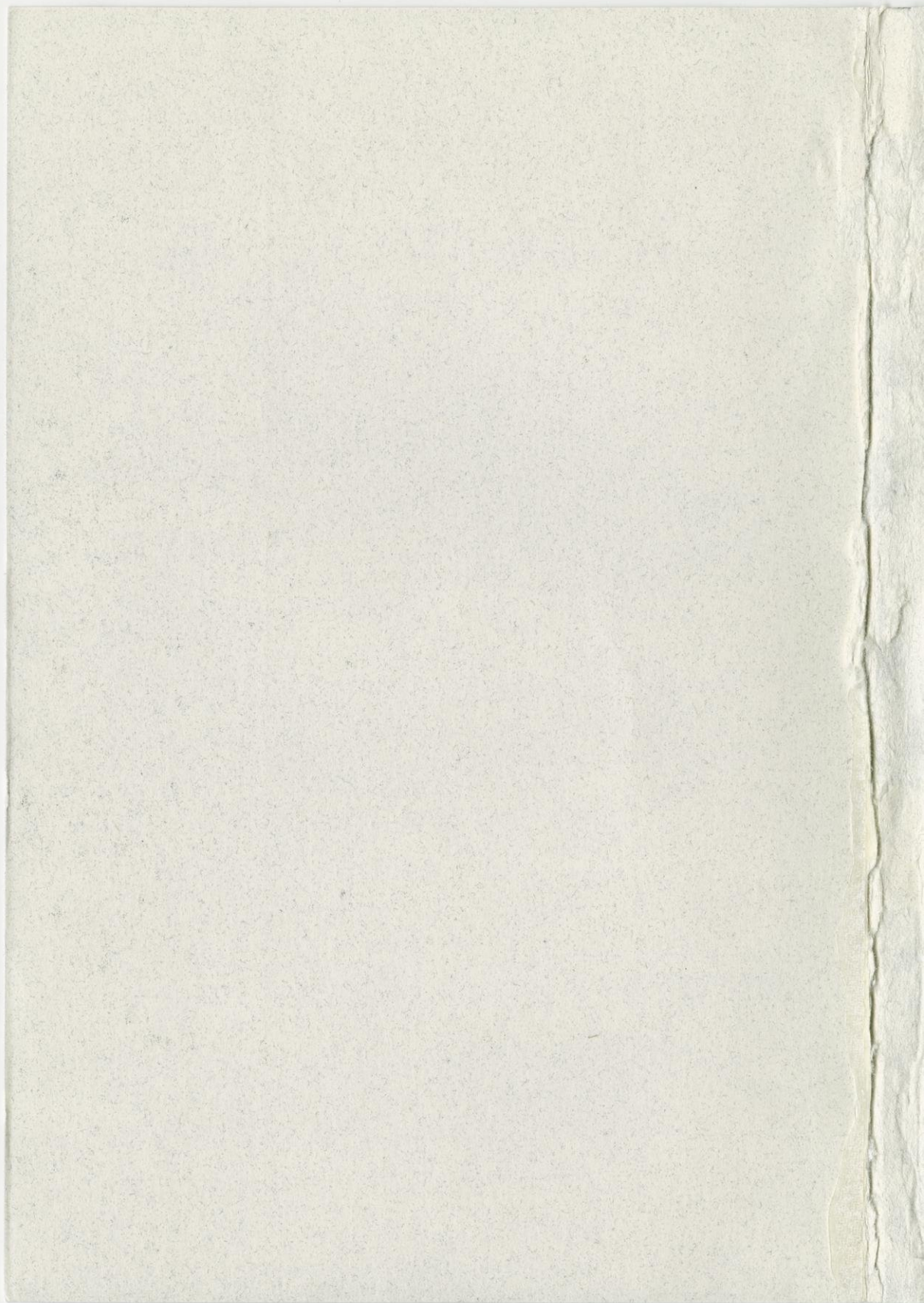
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Brecht in Asia and Africa

The Brecht Yearbook XIV





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Brecht in Asien und Afrika

Brecht in Asien und Afrika

Brecht-Jahrbuch XIV

Herausgeber: John Fuegi, Renate Voris, Carl
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Cover illustration: Schweyk makes a point to Bullinger in the People's Art Theatre production of *Schweyk in the Second World War*.

The International Brecht Society

The International Brecht Society has been formed as a corresponding society on the model of Brecht's own unrealized plan for the Diderot Society. Through its publications and regular international symposia, the Society encourages the discussion of any and all views on the relationship of the arts and the contemporary world. The Society is open to new members in any field and in any country and welcomes suggestions and/or contributions (in German, English, Spanish or French) for future symposia and for the published volumes of its deliberations.

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Manuscripts submitted to *The Brecht Yearbook* should be sent in triplicate, cleanly typed and double spaced throughout to the Managing Editor, Marc Silberman

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Introduction

The delay in publishing this fourteenth volume of *The Brecht Yearbook* has been caused by an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances which are unlikely to recur. The volume has been re-edited in the Department of Comparative Literature of the University of Hong Kong, and I must take responsibility for its final appearance. I am grateful to Dr. Tak-wai Wong for advice and assistance.

Marc Silberman has now been appointed Managing Editor and will take full responsibility from volume 16 onwards.

Our *Seventh International Symposium*, the first in Asia, held in Hong Kong in December 1986, was made possible by help from many individuals and organisations: above all by the practical generosity of the Hong Kong Arts Centre and its General Manager, Nick James, by financial assistance from the Hong Kong Institute for the Promotion of Chinese Culture, and by the Urban Council which donated the use of its theatres.

All but two of the papers in this volume were presented at this Symposium which was designed to strike a balance between performance and theoretical work. To this end we invited some of the most vigorous performers of Brecht in East Asia and, in numerical terms, an equal number of academics, including over thirty directors. There was participation from twenty-five countries. One abiding memory was the impact of the East Asian performances on Western critics and theoreticians. Some could not shed their condescension, being too dismissively willing to concede Brecht's efficacy in the economically disadvantaged and hence culturally backward Third World. There he might indeed prosper, though he had little to say to the rest. Other Westerners were astonished by the quality and originality of some performances, which challenged their preconceptions, upsetting expectations, rearranging the dynamics, forcing a reappraisal of long unquestioned presuppositions, offering ways of rethinking the priorities of Brecht's theatre.

This record of those events can necessarily only suggest the quality of their invigoration. To capture the stimulus of the visible, we would need an appraisal that specifically set these questions - the misunderstandings as well as the opportunities for perceptual breakthrough - within a pictorial record of the productions. This is, perhaps, a separate task worth attempting.

Fortunately, however, one account in this volume does give a lively sense of the quality of some of the work. Carl Weber has a sharp and discerning eye and his evaluative descriptions deserve particular attention, they are more than ephemeral depiction. Prof. Iwabuchi, writing in German, has also taken advantage of the event and crafted his material

accordingly; his presentation of Japanese reaction to Brecht measures it against the response in the other cultures which he witnessed in Hong Kong.

Much of what appears in this volume will be read with particular interest, in view of the recent happenings in China. It is not yet easy to see clearly what consequences will flow from the events of May and June 1989. Whatever may accrue, the evidence in this volume of a stage in the development of cultural thought has particular documentary value.

And the wit of this volume lies in the variety and richness of its detail. Some papers deal in wide-ranging terms with the changing contexts of Brecht's work, suggesting fundamental reappraisals; others locate parallels and analogies in different cultural traditions. Some contributions from China contain passionate and courageous sub-texts, messages whose force is palpable, which should not be restricted to the deflected impulses of their origins. Though grounded in the particularity of their own experiences, they reach beyond them, speaking to us all.

Antony Tatlow
President, IBS
Hong Kong
October 1989

The present volume, *Brecht in Asia and Africa*, is based upon the December 1986 Hong Kong Symposium organised by Antony Tatlow. Though papers were offered on a variety of topics, the editors have decided to present here only those that bear directly either on Asia or Africa and on actual theatrical performance. Some copy-editing has taken place, but we sought to preserve something of the flavor of the Hong Kong meeting. This is the first volume of *The Brecht Yearbook* to use desk-top publishing techniques. The multilingual synopses were prepared by Maria H. Lima and Silvia Cwilich (Spanish), Yvan Bamps and Marie-Magdeleine Chirol (French), Andreas Ryschka (German and English) in College Park, and Jonathan Hall (French and Spanish) and Antony Tatlow (English and German) in Hong Kong.

Clarification:

Our previous volume [13]: *Brecht: Performance, Brecht: Aufführung* extended our linguistic range to include a large Spanish contribution. This could not have been done without the assistance of Maria H. Lima who translated the entire Spanish text into English so that I, a non-Spanish speaker, could have a detailed sense of what we would be publishing and, because of the unusual length of the Spanish

text and the fact that it was appearing in a new context, what sections could be left out.

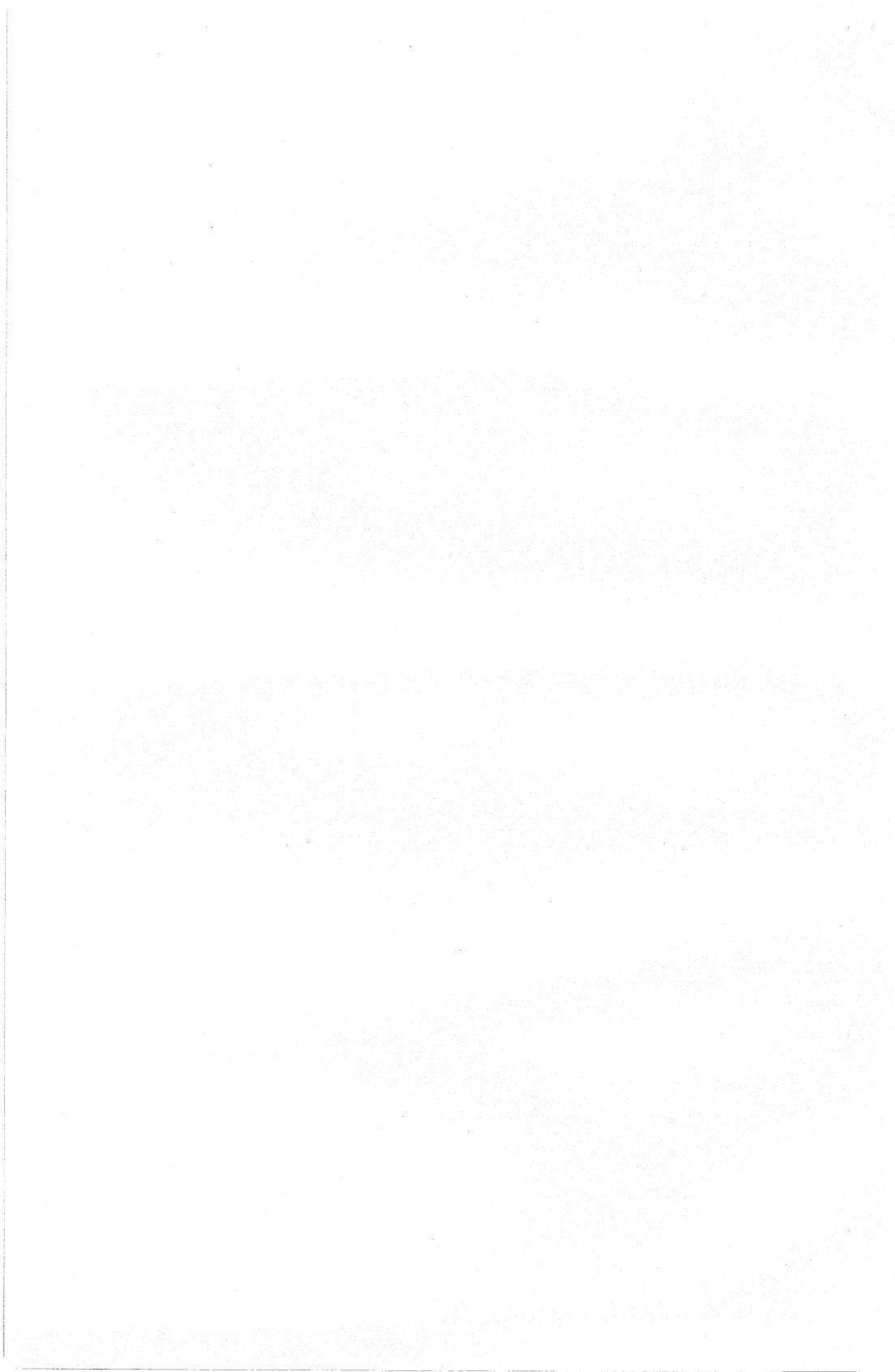
I would like to stress that Ms. Lima's work as guest editor and my own work on vol. 13 was small compared with that of the organizers of the original New York conference, the ATINT Symposium, "Brecht in Latin America." *The Brecht Yearbook* served as host for a number of ATINT members, both as authors and editors. The *Yearbook* staff acted as "redactor", in the sense of "editing" rather than "authorship." Neither Ms. Lima or I had, or have, any desire to be seen as authors of the work. That honor belongs to the ATINT members who organized the original conference in New York.

A clarification of the specific role of the ATINT members in the various sections of the joint work has since been sent to me by Prof. Judith A. Weiss. I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge what each member of the ATINT collective contributed individually, even if this perhaps appears in some cases obviously redundant. I am deeply grateful to each individual who made this joint ATINT/IBS initiative in Spanish possible, and am pleased to have an opportunity to specify here exactly who contributed which parts of this complex and enlightening body of work.

The unsigned preface to the whole work was by Prof. Claudia Kaiser-Lenoir who also edited the original transcripts of the entire conference. A long section on pp.103-4 is, of course, by L. Damasceno, also the bibliographical reference on p. 109 and the original editing of comments by Rosset on p. 106 ff. Finally, Prof. Beatriz Rizk was not only responsible for the introduction to her section, pp. 111-25, but also found and inserted the bibliographical data on p.114.

The resulting work broadened and deepened our understanding of Brecht's impact in a part of the world where no Brecht weariness is visible. The IBS is grateful to ATINT and its members for their contributions to the last volume, and we look forward to further cooperation.

John Fuegi
College Park



A Brief Account of Brechtian Reception in China

Huang Zuolin

Perhaps you may be interested to know something about the reception of Brecht in my country. Well, I'll take the opportunity to give you a short account of it, and my colleagues could furnish you the details if you are interested.

First of all, I must express my thankfulness to my friend Senda Korea; it was he who started the game going, if I may say so. When Mr. Senda visited Peking in 1956, he pointed out to the late Tian Han, the former President of the China Theatre Artists Association, that China knew next to nothing about Brecht. This was perfectly true, and Senda Korea's frankness poignantly stimulated a few Chinese theatre workers. The outcome of this weighty remark was the production of *Mother Courage and her Children* in 1959, of which I happened to be the director. As a matter of fact, I started to introduce Brecht and Piscator to my theatre colleagues as early as 1951, giving a six-hour lecture in one single day. It took me more than six weeks to prepare but no one seemed interested at all. This reminds me of a curious experience I had some 55 years ago, 1931 to be exact, when Bernard Shaw visited China as a tourist, his aim being to see the Great Wall. Before Shaw's arrival, quite a number of journalists went to interview Dr. Hu Shih, anxious to find out what the eminent scholar would do to welcome the world-famous dramatist. Hu Shih gave a cut and dried reply, saying that the best way to receive the queer old man was to ignore him altogether. I felt rather upset as I personally had a strong affection for Shaw, for it was he who had kindled my passion for the theatre as early as 1927. Therefore I wrote an open letter to him published in an English Daily in Tientsin in the name of the Shawological Institute, a pure whimsy of my own. The President of the Institute, I wrote in the letter, was Huang Zuolin, Vice-President Huang Zuolin, General Secretary Huang Zuolin, Members Huang Zuolin, Huang Zuolin, Yours very sincerely, Huang Zuolin. You see, I was using Shaw's own weapon, "an extraordinary weapon, that of humor", as Brecht rightly styled it, to poke fun at the Irish dramatist. When I delivered the letter to Shaw in person, the grand old man appeared much amused.

I quote this incident not to blow my own horn, but to illustrate that as much as in the case of Bernard Shaw, so it was also with Bertolt Brecht. In both I was a lonely soul, with no following whatsoever. I started from scratch, so to speak. Even though we put in great effort staging *Mother Courage*, the production was a flop, it played no more than 11 performances with only 40% attendance. This is quite unusual in the 50 years of my professional life. Like Ah Q, I had to console

myself by telling my friends that I had administered such a strong dose of the *Verfremdungseffekt* that the audience were "distanced" away from the theatre's doors! But that was 1959. However, twenty years later, in 1979, conditions had changed when Chen Yong and I co-directed *Life of Galileo* in Peking; it ran as many as 80 performances, full house all the way through. Before I took off to Peking to direct the play, my children called me "Father Courage" and considerably reminded me about "once beaten twice shy". I wavered a little but on pondering the matter over, I decided to put my trust in the German poet-scientist or scientist-poet as well as in the forceful personality of Chen Yong, so I gathered up enough nerve finally to take the plunge.

Why then did *Mother Courage* fail and why did *Galileo* hit, you may want to ask? Well, *Mother Courage* failed because the public was not psychologically prepared for it. The "Thirty Years War" was entirely alien to them, it was nobody's business. Besides, *Mother Courage* being an anti-war play, distinction must be made between a just war and an unjust war. One could not simply say: "all wars are deadly, detrimental to mankind." Yao Wenyuan, one of the Gang of Four, the tycoon of critics in those days, condemned it as a "pacifist" play, written by "a petit-bourgeois author."

Galileo however was put on not long after the downfall of the Gang of Four at a time when "the battle was for a theatre fit for the scientific age", so the production took the capital by storm and was televised all over the nation. Since then, Bertolt Brecht has become extraordinarily popular. In December 1984, college students from England, America and Holland staged the *Threepenny Opera* in Nanking, being highly praised.

In the spring of 1985, the first symposium on Brecht was held in Beijing, where *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The Good Person of Sezuán* and *Schweyk in the Second World War* were put on. Immediately following, Shanghai presented *The Petit-Bourgeois Wedding*, scenes from *Herr Puntila and his Servant Matti* and one scene from *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich* - "The Chalk Cross". On both occasions, we were honored by the presence of our dear President, Antony Tatlow. All of them were enthusiastically acclaimed. The discussions were heated and full of life. With regard to the actual productions, the respective directors will talk about them in detail during the discussion.

As a by-product, the Brechtian view has recently been extended to the Ping Tan (that is, story-telling with pipa accompaniment, an ancient Chinese performing art). It was deeply inspired by the symposium and created a piece completely under the Brechtian principles which have been found readily acceptable by the general public. Concurrently, the well-known Shanghai Comics Troupe has made a satire out of Brecht's noted saying that "if you digest beforehand what you are going to offer to the audience, then you would be serving them shit", and then, all of a sudden, they ironically switched the dialogue to another inflexible rule that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating."

During the past ten days Mr. Senda Korea has brought his famous troupe to China to play *The Good Person of Sezuán*. Wherever they

went - Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou - they were warmly and widely applauded.

All this goes to show that Bertolt Brecht is firmly getting a foothold in China. Starting with one person in 1951, his following has been increased to at least 200 in 1979 and by now it has grown to thousands, not counting the amateurs, whose name is legion. All in all, I see a bright prospect for his plays and theories in my country.

Huang Zuolin. "Kurzer Bericht über die Brechtrezeption in China."

Im Jahre 1956 machte Senda Korea die chinesischen Kollegen darauf aufmerksam, daß Brecht ihnen fast unbekannt sei. Damit fing das Interesse für ihn an. Huang hatte fünf Jahre vorher einen (berühmten) sechsstündigen Vortrag über Brecht gehalten, der ihm zufolge keinerlei Wirkung gehabt habe. Er erzählt von einer unterhaltsamen Begegnung mit G.B. Shaw im Jahre 1931. Huang meint, in seiner 1959er Inszenierung von *Mutter Courage* den V-Effekt allzu effektiv angewendet zu haben, da das Publikum abgeschreckt wurde. Mehr Erfolg hatte die 1979er Inszenierung des *Leben des Galilei*. Huang erklärt die Gründe für diese unterschiedliche Reaktion und erwägt die Chancen für die Rezeption Brechts im heutigen China.

Huang Zuolin. "Rapport bref sur la réception de Brecht en Chine."

L'intérêt pour l'oeuvre brechtienne en Chine date de l'année 1956, lorsque Senda Korea observa que les Chinois l'ignoraient presque absolument. Huang lui-même avait donné une conférence de proportions épiques, durant six heures entières, sans éveiller, selon lui, le moindre intérêt. Il raconte aussi l'histoire amusante d'une rencontre en 1931 avec G.B. Shaw. Huang croit que son propre emploi de l'effet de distanciation fut trop efficace dans sa réalisation de *Mère Courage* en 1959, puisqu'il provoqua l'effroi et la fuite du public. Pourtant sa *Vie de Galilée* réussit mieux. Huang explique ces réactions de la part du public, et il examine les possibilités qui s'offrent actuellement au théâtre brechtien en Chine.

Huang Zuolin. "Breve Informe sobre la recepción de Brecht en China."

Empezaron los chinos a interesarse en Brecht solamente en 1956, cuando Senda Korea observó que ellos no sabían nada de él. El mismo Huang había dado en 1951 una conferencia sobre Brecht de proporciones épicas, a saber de 6 horas seguidas, sin despertar, según dice, el menor interés. También cuenta la historia divertida de un encuentro suyo con G.B. Shaw en 1931. Huang cree haber empleado demasiado bien el efecto de distanciaci3n en su realizaci3n de *Madre Coraje* de 1959, porque el p3blico huy3 espantado; pero tuvo m3s 3xito con su *Vida de Galileo* de 1979. Explica las razones de estas reacciones, y añaade algunas reflexiones sobre las oportunidades que ofrece la China de hoy al teatro brechtiano.

Greetings from Japan to the International Brecht Society

Senda Korea

Ladies and Gentlemen! Brechtians from many lands!
It is a great honor and pleasure to open this Symposium of the International Brecht Society.

It is now half a century ago since I first produced Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* in Japan. Interrupted by the war, I began to direct his plays again in 1953. Up till now I have done 26 productions.

As you know, I am not a theoretician but a practical man of the theatre. So I am particularly glad my contribution to this Symposium is not an academic paper but in the form of productions. Didn't Brecht say: The proof of the pudding is in the eating? I wonder if you will like the taste of my pudding. In any event, I am not giving you the recipe, but the pudding itself. And I am always ready even for your strongest criticism as the start of a creative discussion.

Now I would just like to tell you my impressions of the poster for our production. It shows our main actress, Komaki Kurihara, in two roles, the good one and the bad one. It made me think of Brecht's poem about the Japanese mask. He describes how difficult it is to be evil. It is nicer to be good, but circumstances don't always allow this. Even in today's society, just being good is still difficult. I think my actress has succeeded quite well not just in contrasting the good and the bad, but in showing the dialectical relationship between both moral concepts.

As for the so-called weariness with Brecht, well I am fairly optimistic, although I must admit that Japanese interest in Brecht has weakened somewhat. Some of our intellectuals and young people do not want to face reality and try to escape by seeking refuge in a theatre of fictions/illusions. But other young people, and their number is not small, still find they can learn from Brecht and in the process they confront new realities. Interest in Brecht is growing among workers' theatre groups and their audiences. Some worker-dramatists have developed their own methods based on Brecht, and have written their own plays.

The Japanese Theatre Directors' Association has organized a group to attend the Symposium. More than a dozen directors will be coming on Wednesday to see performances and attend the Symposium. It is a little difficult widening the circle of those interested in Brecht but not impossible. And I hope the Brechtians who have come here from so many countries will strengthen my conviction.

The so-called weariness with Brecht ought to be called weariness with thought, or lack of social action. I have absolutely no doubt about Brecht's efficacy, as long as the Brechtian method means understanding and intervening in the modern world.

I could give you a list of the reasons for my interest in Brecht, but to save time I am just going to speak of one of them.

In many of his writings on art Brecht mentions the sciences. For him, science for science's sake is as meaningless as *l'art pour l'art*. A theatre interested in man's social life and in contemporary behavior cannot get by without the help of the political and social sciences. That is what Brecht thought. Not even a simple murder can be explained by means of the "artistic imagination", instead you need to use the whole of modern psychology and sociology. If Brecht were alive today, he would be using all the information available through Communication Theory, Cybernetics, Semiotics, Anthropology, Biochemistry, and so forth.

Naturally, the "Theatre of the Scientific Age" sounds a little suspicious today. Our social life is now subject to the pressures of science and technology. And science, which man has developed, threatens to destroy humanity by means of nuclear power and chemical weapons. The rationalization, automation and expansion of industry threatens to endanger our daily life and our environment. But if we just shy away from this negative side of advanced technology and science and shout out the old slogans like "Back to Nature", "Back to the Old Ways", we will never reach a solution.

We have to confront these things and transform them again into something human and useful. Brecht's method can help here, providing we develop it.

One other point. I value Brecht highly because, unlike other "realists" in the theatre, he had a great regard for the playful and the fantastic. Even our highly developed technology has received powerful ideas from the imagination. In a famous essay, Lenin mentions the connection between dream and revolution. The merely pragmatic does not really help us forward. The "art of living", which Brecht thought the greatest of all arts, is in my opinion the best method of bringing art and science together.

What I have said has been a little schematic and theoretical, and means nothing other than that I try to create this sense of pleasure on the stage. If my words have not helped you understand this, please judge what I wanted to say by my productions.

I thank you for the opportunity of showing my four productions, the Sichuan play and the four didactic plays, and I ask for your creative criticism.

Thank you for your attention.

Senda Korea. "Ein Grußwort aus Japan an die Internationale Brecht Gesellschaft."

Mit vier Lehrstücken und *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* hat der japanische Regisseur Senda Korea fünf Brecht-Inszenierungen auf der internationalen Brecht-Konferenz in Hongkong vorgestellt. Auch für den japanischen Kulturraum sieht er die Bedeutung Brechts darin, dem Illusionstheater die Erfahrungen der Realität entgegenzusetzen. An der allgemeinen "Brechtmüdigkeit", die sich immer wieder in die Diskussion drängt, sei nicht etwa Brecht selbst schuld, vielmehr führt Senda Korea dies auf die allgemeine intellektuelle Indifferenz der letzten Jahre zurück. Was ihn an Brecht am meisten fasziniert, ist die enge Verbindung zwischen künstlerischer Kreativität und wissenschaftlicher Disziplin: Durch Soziologie und Psychologie erhält die Kunst den Auftrag, Verantwortungsbewußtsein zu schaffen; andererseits soll die kalte, rationalistische Effizienz der technologischen Gesellschaft harmonischer und menschlicher gemacht werden. Damit, so glaubt Senda Korea, hat uns Brecht auch den Schlüssel zur Lösung unserer gegenwärtigen Probleme in die Hand gegeben.

Senda Korea. "Salutations du Japon à la Société Internationale Brecht."

Senda Korea souhaite la bienvenue aux participants du Symposium. Ayant mis en scène plus de 26 productions brechtiennes depuis un demi-siècle, Senda est plutôt un homme de la pratique théâtrale qu'un théoricien. Selon lui, la preuve ultime est constituée par les productions, et la désaffection pour Brecht n'est que superficielle, car sa méthode reste efficace si elle implique une compréhension et une intervention dans le monde contemporain. Elle permettrait, par exemple, de rendre à la science sa dimension humaine et éthique. Senda Korea remercie alors le public et lui demande une réception critique de ses quatre productions.

Senda Korea. "Saludos desde el Japón a la Sociedad Internacional Brecht."

El director encargado de iniciar el Simposio de la Sociedad Internacional Brecht, se declaró satisfecho de participar él mismo a través de su representación de *El alma buena de Sechuan*, y de las cuatro obras didácticas.

En otra parte de su alocución, reconoció el relativo abandono de Brecht por parte de algunos intelectuales y jóvenes, atribuyéndolo a un correspondiente abandono, tanto de una actitud crítica frente a la complejidad inegable de los problemas que presenta hoy en día la realidad, como de una parálisis de los mecanismos prácticos para solucionarlos. Sin embargo, este artista se manifestó optimista, pues dijo que puede verse en el Japón un renacimiento de los métodos

brechtianos en varios grupos de trabajadores del teatro, cuyas creaciones originales basadas en Brecht, están recibiendo un apoyo entusiasta por parte del público.

En cuanto a su interés personal en Brecht, Senda Korea lo atribuyó al hecho que, como el dramaturgo alemán en su propia época, está él en contra de un "Arte por el Arte", y en favor de un teatro abierto sobre la vida y sostenido por un recurso audaz a todas las ramas del saber humano.

Asimismo, este orador se manifestó contrario a una vuelta atrás, espresando en este respeto que solamente una confrontación resuelta puede contribuir al mejoramiento progresivo de la sociedad, y que es aquí donde los métodos brechtianos pueden ser más útiles, ya que aunque realistas, no desdeñan lo onírico y lo imaginario como ingredientes indispensables por una "Arte de Buen Vivir", que era para Brecht la más importante de las artes.

The Context of Change In East Asian Theatre

Antony Tatlow

The reciprocal investigation of cultural forms produced by Western and East Asian societies has reached a new stage of development. What we encountered during our Hong Kong Symposium must be seen as a facet of this phenomenon. I wish to suggest a context, though plotting it adequately would obviously exceed the bounds of this short introduction, which looks to China, now changing more quickly than Japan.

Setting aside all questions about the extent to which Brecht himself realized his interest in East Asian theatre, or whether others ever really understood it, that interest now appears much less eccentric than it still seemed until quite recently to many people. For we no longer just talk, on whatever theoretical basis, about the desirability of interrelationships between East Asian and Western theatre, these possibilities are now increasingly actually tested by practice.

Artists in China are breaking away from the severe constrictions that so prejudiced their ability to deal with anything beyond the most narrowly pragmatic focus upon contemporary questions of social policy, whose scope was predetermined by the exigencies of those very policies. They are now aware how Brecht's theatre enables and encourages them to experiment. Their contemporary theatre is growing more politically and aesthetically sophisticated. These experiments are not only changing Chinese theatre, they are also developing a potential contained within, and perhaps never fully realized by, Brechtian theatre. So what is happening should concern those Westerners who are not inclined to look beyond what they perceive as their own cultural borders.

Meanwhile some of the most creative experiments in Western theatre - Mnouchkine, Peter Brook - draw on their sense of the potential contained within East Asian forms. Another example of these processes must be the Shanghai Kunju opera style performance of *Macbeth*, directed by Li Jiayao, which has been so acclaimed at the Edinburgh Festival and elsewhere.

So knowledge of Brecht's attraction to East Asian forms, and the creative adaptation of his plays to East Asian theatre, can become the most productive way of developing a potential within that culture, even as Li Jiayao, for example, came to Shakespeare via Brecht. Then the encounter with Brecht's theatre becomes an encounter with their own cultural heritage, and in fact the only one that can really free it from its own inhibitions. A passage through the "foreign" can be the only way of encountering the "self", a process I term the dialectics of acculturation. The following contributions to our Symposium represent stages in these

unfolding processes, and, as Senda Korea reminded us, the theatre director must be judged by the quality of the performance.

As we take a long-term view of the developing relations between East Asian and Western culture, when we consider the range of the dynamics that are involved, the achievements of the pioneers who introduced Brecht to East Asia, Senda Korea and Huang Zuolin, will seem increasingly significant. Senda saw the 1928 Berlin production of *The Threepenny Opera*, returned shortly afterwards to Japan and has directed plays by Brecht ever since. His Haiyuza Theatre, indisputably one of the world's best, honored us by coming to Hong Kong. Huang Zuolin introduced Brecht's theatre to China thirty years ago and the consequences are still unfolding. Like many other artists, they suffered for their commitment. The first task was clearly to make this Western theatre known to their compatriots. What so impresses me in the achievements, remarkable by any standards, of these two octogenarians, is how they have preserved their creativity. Their work has moved from necessary replication to developing the potential of these dynamic encounters. Naturally there are degrees of developability, depending on conditions too intricate to indicate here. Some sense of the contextual changes can be obtained from the proceedings of the 1982 Hong Kong Brecht conference, *Brecht and East Asian Theatre*, edited by A. Tatlow and T.W. Wong (Hong Kong University Press, 1983). In any event, their imaginative dedication has prepared the ground for the next stage of experimentation.

One can distinguish, in China, two strands in this recent development. The first is represented by the Beijing People's Arts Theatre *Schweyk in the Second World War*, directed by Lin Zhao-hua, which we saw in Hong Kong as a cinema-screen video. Dominated by a huge net, enmeshing the characters, this production suggested an astringent view of inimical and frozen social relations, helped by superb acting, and a creative application of the principle of externalization in a style that seems to have severed contact with the traditional past. But even as the paradigms in Chinese society continue to change, the second example seems to me perhaps more significant: the summer 1987 performance of *The Good Person of Sezuan* in a Sichuan (Sezuan) opera style, using the panoply of that remarkable form's narrative, lyrical and externalizing techniques. Critics in China are saying that this production represents, not just an interesting experiment with Brecht, but quite simply a new stage in the development of Chinese theatre. I have seen it and agree. These developments are truly significant and must be adequately described elsewhere.

What they all show us is that the practical work, a stage of which is documented in this volume, is leading on to what seem to me important creative developments, for we are witnessing, finally and even as the economic problems of Chinese theatre grow more acute, that liberation of the creative potential in Chinese culture which we have been anticipating for so long.

Antony Tatlow. "Der Wandel des fernöstlichen Theaters im Kontext."

Die Rezeption brechtscher Theaterkonzeptionen in China hat den raschen politischen Wandel dieser Tage begleitet. Nach der Pionierarbeit Senda Koreas in Japan Anfang der Dreißiger Jahre, hat sich in den Fünfzigern Brechts Einfluß durch Huang Zuolin auch nach und nach in China etabliert. Die interkulturellen Beziehungen zwischen Asien und Europa entwickeln sich auf zunehmend höherem Niveau und tragen wesentlich zu einer Erweiterung des kreativen Potentials bei, wie durch die Arbeiten von Bertolt Brecht, Peter Brook und Ariane Mnouchkine im Westen, sowie die Theaterkunst Li Jiayaos und Huang Zuolins in China bewiesen wird.

Besonders in China zeigt sich das in zwei bemerkenswert ausgeprägten Rezeptionslinien: Da ist zum einen ein extrem modernistischer, dekonstruktiver Aufführungsstil, den Lin Zhaohua in seinem Beijinger Theater der Volkskunst mit einer *Schweyk* Version vorstellt; kontrastiert wird dies durch eine traditionalistische Produktion von Brechts *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* im Stile der Sezuan-Oper, die sich sehr um eine Wiederbelebung hergebrachter chinesischer Theaterformen bemüht. In letzterer sieht Tatlow die für das chinesische Theater vielleicht bedeutsamere Rezeptionsform, da sie Tradition und Innovation verbindet und somit in einer stärkeren historischen Kontinuität steht; hier bildete sich gleichsam die neue Genese der zeitgenössischen chinesischen Gesellschaft ab.

Antony Tatlow. "Le contexte du changement dans le théâtre de l'Asie orientale."

La réciprocité de l'intérêt culturel entre l'Occident et l'extrême Orient a atteint ici un nouveau stade dans son développement, comme en témoigne la pratique théâtrale au Japon (Senda Korea), en Chine (Li Jiayao, Huang Zuolin), et à l'Occident (Mnouchkine, Peter Brook). Brecht a permis le développement d'un théâtre expérimental et, dans une dynamique de l'acculturation à travers l'Autre, la redécouverte par chaque culture de sa propre identité ainsi que de son héritage traditionnel. Ce sont les réalisations pratiques qui donnent la meilleure preuve de cette ouverture réciproque.

Antony Tatlow. "El contexto del cambio en el teatro del este asiático."

Durante el simposio en Hong Kong, Antony Tatlow se refirió a los cambios recientes en las relaciones entre Oriente y Occidente en general, y dentro de ese contexto a la influencia de la obra de Brecht como punto de articulación entre las dos tradiciones.

En su presentación, Tatlow dijo que finalmente estamos presenciando el resultado de la liberación del inmenso potencial

creativo de la cultura china, impelido por la notable influencia de la pionera obra brechtiana. Esta ha actuado como catalizadora, impulsando a los profesionales del teatro chino a experimentar con formas nuevas, y a superar así la estrechez conceptual de la tradición, que limitaba el teatro a lidiar solamente con los problemas más triviales o esquemáticamente planteados.

Como ejemplo de este intercambio fructífero, Tatlow aludió a los casos de Mnouchkine y Peter Brook que han hecho uso de formas chinas en sendas obras, como también al caso de Li Jiayao cuyo *Macbeth* acababa de ser reclamado en el Festival de Edimburgo y que reconocía haber sido introducido a la obra de Shakespeare a través de la de Brecht. Tatlow se refirió también a la obra del director Senda Korea, que después de haber presenciado *La opera de tres centavos* en Berlín en 1928, regresó al Japón donde hizo de la difusión de la obra Brechtiana una tarea sin pausa. Tatlow dijo también que tanto en la cultura oriental como en la occidental, este "pasaje por lo 'extranjero' asegura el único camino para el encuentro con lo propio."

Para finalizar, Antony Tatlow describió los dos aspectos de esta nueva orientación del trabajo teatral en China, refiriéndose a la representación de *Schweyk en la segunda guerra mundial*, dirigida por Lin Zhaohua, y a *El alma buena de Sechuan*, como ejemplos de estas dos tendencias. En su opinión, esta adaptación no solamente es la más valiosa, porque representa un experimento interesante con Brecht, sino es también una nueva etapa en el desarrollo del teatro chino.

Brecht and the Paradigm Change

Antony Tatlow

We are underway, launched by two formidable and courageous navigators. Their presence, and all that it symbolizes, must be a good omen. But this is the International Brecht Society's Seventh Symposium, the first to be held in Asia, and now we run into the first contradiction: the president's address, whose function is probably to make people feel that things can only get better, for there is something in it to displease everybody.

My title is "Brecht and the Paradigm Change". You wish to know what that means. I am going to tell you, but not just yet.

First of all, I want to explain how we all got here. Then I want to suggest respectfully how we might use the time. Then I am going to take the plunge. So there will be three parts to this address: explanatory, hortatory and expository.

Nobody expects the president to say anything terribly sensible. If he ever had the ambition to do so, or the delusion that he could, they have wilted as he found himself turning into a typist, filing-clerk, messenger, telephonist, father-confessor, psychiatric graphologist, diplomat, masseur, guillotine, mendicant, polemicist and clown in the corridors of government. All honorable professions and each one a full-time job.

A short while ago the German Historians' Association was addressed by its President. He told them that the history of Germany would have taken an entirely different course, if the Alps and the Vistula had been placed elsewhere by nature. You think it odd that they applauded him warmly, but I now understand how all of that could happen.

That we are now assembled is due to you who have come from afar and to those here who took pity on me. When something goes well in our organization, it will almost certainly have been due to their intervention. When things go wrong, as they will, the cause will probably be something I forgot to do.

When I attend conferences abroad, Hong Kong is always mentioned at the end and in this form: "... and we even have delegates from Japan and Hong Kong." It is sweet to reverse this procedure, for we even have delegates from Great Britain and from Ireland, whom I particularly welcome.

I now move to the hortatory mode through a short bridging passage of self-exculpation, cleverly disguised as self-incrimination.

Many languages will be spoken but we are not the United Nations. We lack the resources for proper translation. In a smaller group this is less serious. The mechanics of a larger Symposium inhibit easy

solutions. Our intention is that when a paper is not delivered in English, a translation will be available. As to the reality - well I suggest you blame me. I apologize that we cannot continuously extend reciprocal facilities to our colleagues from China. We do have polyglot colleagues ready to interpret; gather around them. The United Nations can solve its communication problems; the results are perhaps not correspondingly impressive. We will not solve ours and may yet understand each other better.

But this supposition brings me closer to my major topic, for it may be the source of a delusion. Ease of communication often, perhaps always, masks deeper cultural difficulties. If we are united by interest in Brecht, we may be divided by our cultural assumptions. Here I can only urge self-reflexive anthropological observation: of other theories as of other cultures. Perhaps this is best spoken to those who are not here and you may find what I say self-evident.

And yet my simple words point to a large problem. Failure to test the suppositions of one's own theories, and ignoring those of others, is a universal practice, but because of presumed cultural closeness, German-speaking critics often believe themselves immune to this problem and in possession of the authentic Brecht. And if they do not like what they perceive, they consign him to less developed audiences in the Third World where his simplicities still have force. They have moved on to wider horizons, and we must follow some of them.

So what do we mean by "Brecht and the Paradigm Change"? Here the water deepens, the currents begin to tug. You cannot be a Brechtian or a card-carrying member of the IBS - there are application forms by the door - unless you are prepared to give a global accounting of your position. Our constitution requires us to encourage "the interdisciplinary study of the relationship between the modern arts and society". This necessarily involves engaging with developing theories. It also involves a global perspective, both geographical and theoretical. I am already taking a position towards modern debates but everything depends on how such globalization is envisaged.

At this particular political and cultural moment, "paradigm change" could have two immediate implications: the current changes in China's social and cultural practices and, more distantly, the sense of change that holds the attention of most cultural theorists in the West. More experienced voices than mine will speak of the first; I wish to examine the second. These spheres seem unsynchronized but that is a function of their contradictions which can be plotted, though I won't try to do this. At the end of the week we may know more about it.

But it is time to confess that I also employed a subterfuge with this choice of theme. For it is not, as you have noticed, "Brecht and Paradigm Change", but the unifyingly divisive and at any rate peremptory "Brecht and The Paradigm Change." "Which paradigm?" You have been asking and that is just what I intended. This was a friendly but deliberate provocation and time will tell whether it proves fruitful.

Though my intentions are global, I must now narrow my perspective because there is so much to say and I deliberately wish to vary the

discourse of my analyses, moving from more abstract speculation to the presentation of specific evidence from Brecht's writing and thought.

First of all I want to look at some problems in Western critical theory in relation to his work, then at critical positions which narrow its capacity, then to show how it is wider than many suppose or condone, and finally to suggest how this broadening of perspective is related to the globalization of theory, to the paradigm change that is the title of my paper.

For some time now the critical ground has been shifting. A catchphrase in the West is that these movements, their general direction, are indecipherable. That there is a crisis in theory is an unremarkable assumption. Here the Chinese word for crisis, *weiji*, is suggestive, since it combines the signs for "danger" and "opportunity". I would want to connect this with something Manfred Wekwerth said recently, one of Brecht's assistant directors and now risen to dignity and office as President of the Academy of Arts of the German Democratic Republic: "We have been changing the world for some time. Perhaps we should now begin to interpret it again." His Western European counterparts cannot agree on how this should be done.

Wekwerth's observation, with its provocative reversal of Marx's celebrated Feuerbach thesis, can be usefully attuned not merely to a fashionable change of tone but to a much more radical reconceiving of the paradigms that control our responses. Any analysis of danger/opportunity must be adequate to the interrelationships between the so-called Three Worlds, as between Eastern and Western cultures, and here Brecht's work offers a persuasive, and perhaps still unparalleled, opportunity to think about these dangers. Obviously this has to be argued, and it is equally obvious that I cannot give enough detailed evidence today.

But I make two assumptions: that the coalition of disciplines known as "cultural studies" and focused by the term "critical theory", with its deconstructing study of language and metaphor, has moved to a central position and not just for the humanities, and secondly that the Brecht which interests me is not the Brecht I encounter in so many books.

With this shift in the disciplines, the hard have turned soft and the soft have hardened. The discipline of history is now hard put to define its categories; the rug has been tugged from under the discipline of philosophy; and even economists admit their graphs are fantasies of exactitude resting upon unexamined metaphors. I quote from the *Journal of Economic Literature* :

Economics is adrift in metaphors . . . they are taken literally because they happen to be in the language of mathematics. To say that markets can be represented by supply and demand curves is no less a metaphor than to say that the west wind is 'the breath of autumn's being.' Modern economics is . . . metaphor run wild." (Quoted in R. Kuttner: "On the state of Economics." *Dialogue* 3, 1986, p. 70.)

Therefore I might call this paper "Derrida, Zen and Brecht", and the sequence is important. The Buddha has been cheerfully smashed anyway and that is a good beginning. Daoism puts it like this: "Dao ke dao, fei chang dao; ming ke ming, fei chang ming." So the famous first words of the classic text, and their meaning for us is that Brecht is not the constant Brecht.

The context for any theory, critical or otherwise, is changing. What we are doing now affects not just our neighbors or the next generation but hundreds of generations to come. We need to think relationally and to do so in four dimensions. We need a new temporal dimension to morality. The enormity of this project slowly dawns on us because we already see the dangers of failing to realize it.

Critical theories come from the West. Brecht's reflections have suggestive connections with East Asian thought. This conjecture is worth following because of its relationalist, and potentially universalist, implications. I do not necessarily believe that East Asia has the cure for Western headaches, or put it this way, if it has, then the West will have the cure for East Asian headaches. What is incontrovertible is that we can no longer refuse to think interrelationally, we have to take everything into account, we can no longer compartmentalize ourselves.

Though Brecht anticipated much of what critical theorists say, and thought, though not systematically, beyond their conclusions, it is noticeable how he, rather than Adorno and Benjamin, has been left aside. There are probably two reasons for this. Brecht is equated with the narrowly conceived productivist ethic and its realist aesthetic, widely advocated by his fans, whereas his position can only be described as relationalist and cannot be reduced to a moment of, or wholly equated with stages of, unfolding processes. Secondly, his critics, but also his advocates, constantly simplify his plays and their aesthetic, holding both to the reductive criteria in terms of which their meaning was socially authorized. In other words, they are pegged to the level of the theories of their day and the social practices which those theories sanctioned. And now that both theories and practices have changed, they stand as monuments to a superseded historical period; in other words, they are out of date.

Their enormous success inhibited reinterpretation, as people necessarily freed themselves from the simplifications with which they were equated. So they are now stamped "Fit for Export" and shipped as secondhand goods to the historically backward Third World, as if the First World had not created it. I will argue, though not have time to prove adequately, that this process involves a most interesting repressive reading of Brecht which equates him with what can be safely denied so that the implications of the rest can be ignored.

My assertion that we must widen theory runs counter to recent movements which share in their diversity the supposition that the knowledge enabling us to do this was based upon illusions which have disappeared for good, and thank goodness, because universalizing only and always leads to terrorizing. But we are dealing here with differences in logical types, and I argue that these negative dialectics, let me call them that for short though I don't just mean Adorno, are all

caught up in a form of Platonism and pre-determined by the positive strength of that which they refuse.

These theories came from the Left, though they serve many purposes. Many naturally contain a doubleness and hence a potential to push beyond the gesture of refusal. Adorno responded to Stalinist politics, positivist social theory, vestiges of scientific positivism and linguistic and epistemological realism. Structuralism posited structures behind appearances, thus also questioning any realist aesthetic. Post-structuralism deconstructed those structures and any other suppositions of rest or fixity in language, whilst also denying access beyond "language" for there is nothing except the ceaselessly differentialising "text". Postmodernism, an eclectic collection of theoretical and aesthetic positions, is perhaps unified by resistance to any universalizing or progressivist position. These so hurriedly summarized phenomena have in common that they posit a crisis of representation, of subjectivity, and of any attempt to construct a social text.

The movement away from universalizations, the rejection of totalizing theories, led to micrological analyses which, when they defamiliarize, are always useful but if left unconnected merely constitute the obverse of the Platonic model they reject. Poststructuralist defamiliarizing so often ends in mannerist trivialization or genuine circularity. For Paul de Man the empirical self exists only in the form of language that asserts the knowledge of its own inauthenticity. This constricts even as it liberates us. And what does this mean: "A nameless war in the name of the name. It would be the end and the revelation of the name itself, the apocalypse of the name" ? It means that Derrida is warning of the dangers of nuclear war. I know that there is a vulgar edge to this criticism but I have a point.

There seem in Western terms only two discourses opposed to what I have so brutally summarized: Feminism and Habermas. Naturally both Derrida's post-structuralism and, perhaps less so, Lyotard's post-modernism contain the potential for a positional shift towards a logic of relations. If that is so, there need be no insuperable barrier to a projection from Habermas's theories, whose call for a movement from what he terms the *Arbeits-* to the *Kommunikationsgesellschaft* states in his language what I would call a movement from a productivist to a relational model or paradigm. When that model is truly relationalized, it is no longer incompatible with Feminism.

But Lyotard's position is more symptomatic of the mood in Western critical theory. For him, modernism consists of the belief in a narrative of progress, in the possibility of consensus. The disintegration of this belief through post-modernism gives us the strength to "endure the incommensurable". This typically Nietzschean gesture is defined by the discourse it opposes, for where are the terrors of the incommensurable? They are defined by Platonic loss, which represents the second stage of Zen perception, when mountains have ceased to be mountains. Lyotard equates Habermas's position, which may here stand for Brecht's, with a Hegelian totalization, closed, absolute and known, the regressive call for unity he so fears.

Others call Habermas's "ideal speech situation . . . a technocratic fantasy" (Lacapra in I. Hassan (ed.): *Renovation, Innovation*) or decide his communication theory is based on simple egopsychology which disregards Lacan's analysis of the invasion into language by unconscious meaning (Nägele in *New German Critique* Nr. 16, 1979). Such systematic disregard of the force of the Unconscious in language is another charge made against Brecht and I am going to refute it in a few moments. In any event, the concept of communicative interaction is held to imply an authoritarian unity as the goal of thought and practice, a modernist precluding of pluralism, hence a repetition of enlightenment modernization, whose belief in rational consensus is both naive and dangerous because leading to the imposition of closed systems. The rhetoric of Habermas's position may cause problems, let alone problems of understanding, but his arguments, perhaps when modified, represent a moment that cannot be lost. We face a megatonne metanarrative and Lyotard's refusal of narrativity is an ostrich policy.

Aligned with fashionable postmodernism, which has its critical moments, are theorists and fashion writers who seek to refute any capacity in Marxist thought for development. Since the positions they attack are the ones in terms of which Brecht is commonly read and since they are incompatible with the relationalism Brecht and Marxism represent, I mention them briefly. Todorov aligns Marxism and post-structuralism, for both refute human values, defined as universal values, the one by reducing all question of values to simple class-struggle, the other by opposing universal values in the name of taste. There is something in this second supposition. As for class-struggle, well Todorov has not theorized it, that is to say he has not historicized it, in fact he universalizes it!

My second example is something of a comic dialogic counterpart but has a function in the design of my argument. Ihab Hassan (op. cit.) believes he has discovered the fatal flaw in Marx, who argues that "social being" determines "consciousness" but also proposes, voluntaristically, that consciousness determines social being. This is circular and hence contradictory. Hassan has unmasked Marx. I mention this for three reasons. It draws attention to the level of some of these debates. It points to the problem of consciousness to which I turn in a moment, and it raises the question of the difference between non-relational and relational logical models.

And now, with apologies for the delay, I move to Brecht and first of all to the position of his writing in relation to these recent developments.

His work is characterized by its openness to a range of impulses. You could take it as a syllabus for Comparative Literature. One of its notable features is the creative assimilation of popular forms. This, however, is taken as a distinguishing mark of post-modernism. So I seemed to have proved that the avant-garde is post-modernist and that is supposed to be impossible.

Another characteristic is its refusal of closure, the fact that it is open-ended, always capable of extension, resisting attempts at systematic mastery both in formal terms, his readiness to change and to re-write, to adapt and re-examine, and in his theatrical practice,

where there were no presuppositions. Brecht's innovative aesthetic practice elided the distinction between art and interpretation. This view of both text and criticism as process sounds very like the most productive version of deconstruction.

Any rhetoric of closure represses theoretical problems. Brechtian and deconstructionist thought are equally opposed to it. But Brecht's evasion of closure stems, as we shall see, from the relationalist trajectory of his thought, and at that point he has necessarily transcended the deconstructionist swerve towards solipsism or what we might call its metaphysics of absence, which attaches it to the Platonic moment and the centering presence it so vigorously denies.

For Derrida, the metaphysics of presence finally substantiated the bourgeois ego which he and Brecht cheerfully deconstructed. But Derrida has nothing to put in its place. For Brecht and productive Marxist thought, presence is replaced by relations. And at that point we move towards a socio-ecological cybernetics. Without a consensus on its determination, we have no future. We are condemned to a relational consensus or to destruction. *Tertium non datur*; there is no alternative.

Before returning to this, I must ask how "subjectivity" is conceived and visualized in Brecht's plays, another vast topic and one that is even now, it seems to me, still widely misunderstood. I want to take illustrations from the plays we will be seeing this week and I concentrate on one facet of this large problem. Of course I can only skim the surface.

The representation of subjectivity focuses the issues in Brecht's work perhaps more clearly than anything else. Heuristically, it is potentially powerful. People still divide the work into early, middle and late plays with different subject-matter and styles. Tiring of the rationalized and too familiar late work, directors in both Germanies turned a few years ago to what they saw as the richer, wilder, less predictable early plays, searching there for the problematic subjectivity that seemed to have evaporated later. This later work was read through aspects of Brecht's theoretical statements, which themselves need situating, and the consequences were the caricature of his theatre we know all about. I must summarize it quickly since it represents what "Brechtian theatre" means to most people, reflecting of course the perhaps necessary history of its reception. This view holds that Brecht's dramaturgy controls plot, characters and audience, arguing from clarified theory. From a position of knowledge, the actors alienate the characters they present, distinguishing between the characters' position and their greater understanding of it. In watching the demonstration of this distinction, which poses interesting technical problems for the craft of acting, the audience learns to distinguish between a character's subjective position and an objective evaluation of that position. Hence it becomes impossible and unnecessary to empathize and identify with characters who have been so unmasked through the agency of a higher truth.

Hence the accusation that Brecht merely provides simplifications of simplifications. The first one is the Marxist simplification of history and the individual, and the second is Brecht's compounding of it by the

reductive, didactic simplicities of his dramaturgy. The sophisticated audience is no longer challenged, nothing is really called into question beyond a capacity to observe a simple doubleness between character and clarified context. Off with him to the Third World.

Another common, related and not wholly unjustified criticism is that interpreters explain Brecht with Brecht. Where the critic is hostile, the cycle of simplicities is then complete. I say "not wholly unjustified" for two reasons: such interpretation represents an orthodoxy and does seem to echo His Master's Voice. Naturally I think that here lies a serious misunderstanding, and on two levels: a failure to distinguish between the play and certain theoretical writings and, secondly, a failure to situate or deconstruct the theoretical writings as the product of a specific historical discourse.

My point here is that the fact that the plays clearly go beyond or operate on another plane from accepted theoretical discourse reveals discontinuities within Brecht's aesthetic-critical practice. These have been recognized but are invariably read out as "art" overcoming "theory", so the poet-artist reveals his true humanity as the theorist-ideologue closes ranks: a version of Esslin's schizophrenic. Naturally I argue that this aesthetic practice does not contradict or supersede the theoretical commentaries upon that practice, but deepens, enlivens and challenges them. I could put it this way: Brecht as a dramatist is a more interesting Marxist critic than the Marxist critic who explicates that drama.

These issues are focused by the problem of "subjectivity." It is a common belief that Brecht was not too interested in "psychology". After all, he said so himself. The inner life of his characters did not interest him, the plays do not work towards emotional effects, they offer little opportunity for emotional identification. We are familiar with the arguments, also with the reasons for them: the anti-naturalist aesthetic and the fascist blood-bath of feeling he detested and against which he set his cool, rational clarity. All very original and very necessary.

The problem is that these pronouncements and the historically understandable attitudes have obscured the dynamics of the plays, which entails the audiences' response to them. The most serious confusion lies in our understanding of what is meant by the "psychological". For this refusal of the psychological of course really only means the refusal of ego-psychology. It does not mean a refusal of the Unconscious. In fact, Brecht's theatre is distinguished by the originality and the force with which it externalizes the Unconscious. Who else has attempted and accomplished this so vividly and so consistently?

I want to illustrate my point from the plays. But first we need to ask about the concept of the Unconscious, especially in relation to Marxist critical theory, bearing in mind that the criticism of Brecht's concept of subjectivity, whereby he has de-psychologized and hence emotionally lobotomized the subject in pursuit of a simplistic economic anthropology, extends the criticism levelled at Marxist theory. I argue, of course, that de-psychologizing the subject, or disregarding the psychological, does not simplify or de-problematize the subject, but

achieves exactly the opposite. De-psychologization re-problematizes the subject, for it constitutes the conditions within which, and only within which, it is possible to formulate an adequate theory of subjectivity and to make it plain upon the stage. When this is accomplished, the audience is not confirmed in its knowledge and possession of a certain truth but must confront the problematic nature of its own identity. And that is the source of the energy in Brechtian theatre, no matter what fashions in interpretation may have told us.

What about that famous phrase from Marx which Hassan finds so useful? I do not need to prove to this gathering that all he has refuted is the simplest kind of vulgar Marxism, though that has been a force in the World. It has nothing to do with later theoretical developments, nor anything very much with what Marx actually meant. What Hassan has done is to abstract a phrase and misunderstand its context. My point is that in so alert a critic this refusal to engage with a body of thought on the level of its own sophistication can only be interpreted as a repression, and in a so self-consciously modern, or should I say postmodern, observer of intellectual fashions, what is being repressed is the relationalist challenge posed by Marx's thought. For "social being" naturally connotes the whole of socio-culture as the sum of productive forces, including language through which it is constituted, and "consciousness" means social character, which is composed of consciousness and the social unconscious. The arguments are all contextual, they cannot be abstracted out, the whole process is relational. Relationality is not circular but cybernetic. In place of Hegel's idealist self-consciousness as "spirit of the spirit", Marx envisaged "a historically created relation of individuals to nature and to one another."

The representation of the Unconscious in Brecht's work is an enormously rich topic. The encounter with East Asian acting helped him understand how these complex interrelationships could be externalized, memorably, unforgettably externalized, and that means invested with aesthetic power. This whole process was foreshortened, and the relationship with East Asian theatre, both actual and potential, widely misunderstood, along a false antithesis between concentration on an essentially emotional and aesthetic experience and Brecht's scientific theatre. Brecht himself was not really able to develop the "epic theatre" he envisaged. What he did was a fragment of what could have been done. His successors were understandably dazzled by his accomplishments and stayed with them, often watering them down. The problem is familiar. And we can separate a theoretical level and that of aesthetic practice.

What is to be done? Let's take the second first. There have been many calls recently to alienate Brecht's work, though not much advice as to how this could be done. There have also been some very successful innovative productions. But I now want to look at this matter from the perspective of my questions. I have suggested that defamiliarizing Brecht is not a problem of the work's capacity but of our understanding it, for which there are historical explanations.

What I envisage begins with a clearer perception of the social unconscious of the characters and the method of its representation

and, but this is an analytically separable part of an indivisible move, of the social unconscious of the audience which so constructs such characters. The layers of perception in the construction of character or subjectivity in Brecht are analogous to the capacity of the multi-layered Noh theatre, or to take a topical European example, of the presentational separation of the complexities of socially constructed subjectivity in Mnouchkine's theatre.

The failures in understanding Brecht's plays, so often countered by theoretical explanations that compound the problem, often stem from a blinkered, endemic, Western realism, the ineradicable naturalist psychology, which is unable to differentiate between various levels of voices or externalizing gesture. The dynamics in the structuring of subjectivity in the Sezuang play are constantly misunderstood, and we are then confronted with a one-dimensional, sentimental, utterly naive reading. I saw a production in Beijing by the students of the Central Academy of Drama which, not burdened by a dominant realist aesthetic, had no difficulty separating these layers between conscious calculation and the social unconscious. Somebody in the audience said to me afterwards: "I never realized that Brecht knew so much about China." I replied by smiling. This complex seeing is inescapably obvious through the distribution of voices in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* which literally takes the mind apart. I must pass on!

What of the audience? It is addressed in so many ways. Let's look at *Arturo Ui*. The standard charge is that it does not do justice to either the complexities of recent history, for the Chicago parody traduces that reality, or Hitler's character, the vegetarian persuading himself he could not kill, the psychotic modelling reality to his own dreams. The Brechtians counterargue: it is not meant to be about "Hitler"; Brecht is not trying to represent historical facts accurately, the play is a satire, the caricature deliberate, and just as much "about" Al Capone as Hitler, for fascism is the product of reactionary capitalism.

But of course the play is not "about" either Hitler or Al Capone, it's "about" the audience, history's participating audience and us as interpreting participators. What Hitler represented and accomplished was possible because he channelled the force of the economic unconscious of the capitalist system, which believed it could control him and the historical unconscious of his culture, interwoven with the forces that constituted that system. The suggestion that the play distorts historical reality in turn implies we might be repressing potential or actual complicity in the construction of that historical reality. Hitler did not march to Stalingrad alone, it is well known that he refused to go there, but "his" armies did because he had released the force of four hundred years of his own culture's unconscious. Hitler himself was an externalization of his culture's unconscious which he instinctively exploited in others, and that is why he was able to do so. The play does not reduce the dimensions of Fascism, as Adorno argued, unless you mean it fails to show every one of them. Hitler's psychosis was contained as a potential within and, when it became an historical force, was produced by the economic and historical unconscious of capitalism, whose expression "through" Hitler was of course particular

to the dynamics of German socio-culture. We cannot argue Hitler was not typical, yet of course he wasn't typical, but he nevertheless expressed these forces. The problem with Hitler and Co. was not that they were somehow so different but that they represented the unconscious of the same, hence the need to deny them, though we naturally distinguish between denial and rejection.

Brecht's play operates on a theoretically more powerful level, though it does not theorize, than that reached by many of its critics, some of whom never seem to have been in the theatre. Brecht spoke of the explosion of the dramaturgical core in his work, linking this with the new physics. The play shows the economic and historical unconscious in action, and that means showing the grotesque, destructive vitality of that unconscious. And that is why the warning at its end - *Der Schoss ist fruchtbar noch aus dem das kroch/The womb from which he crawled is fruitful still* - is so horrifyingly apposite: not because something called "capitalism" equals something called "fascism", but because the capacity of the unconscious has not changed. I apologize for belaboring this point, but it seems to me important.

Ariane Mnouchkine's remarkable theatre really only develops possibilities suggested by Brecht's dramaturgy. I do not mean by this that it was her source. The Théâtre du Soleil's brilliant systematization of gesture, whose codification is not rigid and which faces the same problem of continuance which Brecht scarcely had time to address, externalizes the character's inner energies. Such visualization through externalizing gesture does not lead back to an inviolate inward self, as the isolate source of all meaning, but functions as representation and questioning of ideological structures.

Let me take an example from her Shakespeare cycle. In the battle at the end of *Henry IV*, the culminating duel between Percy and Prince Hal is universally performed, with more or less fustian, as a credible clash of swords demanded by the realist aesthetic. In filmed versions of such battle scenes, the imagination is assassinated, as horses gallop, blood spurts and broad swords disembowel. But Mnouchkine, like East Asian theatre, goes to the heart of the matter.

Prince Hal and Percy are seated opposite each other throughout this encounter, whose martial character is barely suggested. They scarcely move. They relate more as lovers than as combatants, stretching out to touch one another. This radical gestural defamiliarization reveals the structure of the ideology within which they exist and which they articulate. Though Hal's defeat of Percy may represent the necessary replacement of feudal separatism by incipient absolutism, it is conducted not as a revelation of national destiny but as a struggle among equals, who are therefore interchangeable and more beholden to each other than to their respective historical positions, no matter in what terms these are subsequently constructed. Such positions are beyond their ken. Mnouchkine's style, concentrating upon the person and externalizing ideologically separable structures of feeling, enables us to comprehend the complexity of cultural attitude and social fact, and this is done by reconceiving subjectivity. As Mnouchkine and Brecht have shown, developing a gesturally

sophisticated theatre on no account entails the neglect, let alone abandonment, of speech, as the property of individuation, advocated by Artaud and practised by his successors.

The best summary of Brecht's relationalist aesthetic is a short passage entitled "On Chinese Painting". Its implications are fascinating. In a letter to Grosz Brecht describes in some detail a painting he saw in the house of Karin Michaelis. I have spent a long time trying to trace it but it has been destroyed. I have, however, a photograph of it which serves our purpose well enough. In the passage I now want to read, Brecht abstracts from the details he described in that letter in order to derive some general principles of Chinese art which do not depend upon this painting alone.

On Chinese Painting:

As we know, the Chinese do not use the art of perspective. They don't like looking at everything from one single point-of-view. In their pictures several things are ordered in relation to each other the way a town's inhabitants are distributed throughout the town, not independent of each other but not in a state of subordination which threatens their very existence. It is necessary to look at this comparison a little more closely. The families we are comparing with these things live in a town, represented in our picture, in greater freedom than we are accustomed to living in. They don't exist just by virtue of their connections with a single family. The Chinese composition lacks an element of compulsion to which we are completely accustomed. This order requires no force. The designs contain a lot of freedom. The eye is able to go on a voyage of discovery. The things that are represented play the role of elements which can exist on their own, and yet in the relationship which they form on the page they constitute a whole, if not an indivisible one. You can cut the pages into sections without rendering them meaningless, but also not without altering them.

The Chinese artists also have lots of room on their paper. Some parts of the surface appear to be unused; but these parts play an important role in the composition; judging by their extent and their form they appear to be just as carefully devised as the outlines of the objects. In these gaps the paper itself or the canvas acquires a quite specific value. The basic surface is not simply denied by the artist through covering it up completely. The mirror in which something is here mirrored retains its value as mirror. Among other things that signifies a laudable abandonment of the thorough subjugation of the viewer, whose illusion is not fully completed. Like these pictures I love gardens in which the gardeners have not shaped nature completely, which have space, where things lie side by side. (Brecht: *Gesammelte Werke*, Frankfurt 1967, vol.18, p. 278f.)

Brecht contrasts Western and Chinese perspective in painting. Conventional Western perspective imposes a uni-perspectival order upon the objects within its frame. According to certain laws of proportion the painting constrains the objects it depicts through the gaze of a posited viewing subject. Brecht argues, in effect, that this realist aesthetic depends upon a double form of constraint: not only aligned with the eye of a posited dominant subject or viewer, the actual viewer of the painting is also forced to accept the dominance of this perspective. Hence it constrains both objects and viewer. Inasmuch as it includes landscape, it imposes a superficial arbitrary order on the natural world, whilst through its doubleness accomplishing what he terms "the thorough subjugation of the viewer". In this Western realist aesthetic the natural world is organized for exploitation by the dominant subject, whose perspectival order is imposed over the whole painting.

Such a perspective not only subjugates without remainder the whole of the visible world, it also guarantees the authenticity of the dominant subject-position, or rather asserts the ideological claim to such untrammelled authenticity. Brecht contrasts this mathematization of physical and hierarchization of social space with the multi-perspectival aesthetic of the Chinese painting. It not only eschews any such mechanical spatial organization, since its empty spaces remind us of nature's irreducibility, but also refuses to reduce the represented human figures to one single point-of-view. They do not stand in uniperspectival dependency but in a multi-perspectival, relational independency. "This order", Brecht remarked, "requires no force."

Though this analysis clearly has politically utopian characteristics, it is indeed related to Chinese aesthetic perception and to what fascinated Brecht in East Asian theatre, where he discovered sophisticated methods of visualizing and, from the perspective of the realist Western aesthetic, reconceiving subjectivity. Such repositioning is naturally connected with the decentering of the subject in social and psychological theory for which Brecht was a pathmaker but which his position implicitly transcends.

Brecht's description of Chinese painting reminds me of a passage in Fritjof Capra:

Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human conquest over nature. For each such conquest takes its revenge on us. Each of them, it is true, has in the first place consequences on which we counted, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel out the first . . . Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people . . . But if it has already required the labour of thousands of years for us to learn to some extent to calculate the more remote natural consequences of our action . . . it has been still more difficult in regard to the more remote social consequences of these actions.¹

But wait a moment. Isn't there something wrong? Surely that isn't Capra. You are right. It is Fritjof Engels, otherwise known as Friedrich. The need for a change to a relational paradigm has seldom been better expressed, though naturally some of his arguments have been superseded, as he would be the first to acknowledge. I suppose the real problem now is that such thinking is no longer simply "utopian" but the only way of avoiding disaster.

This relationalism constitutes a metanarrative, though an interrelational one, and we now have to learn how to read it and to write it at the same time.

NOTES

1. Friedrich Engels, *The Dialectics of Nature*, New York, 1940, p.291ff.



Brecht's description of the painting he admired in Karin Michaelis's house:

"...a little later I saw a large chinese painting on paper, about one-and-a-half times three metres high, apparently representing life in the Golden Age. Trees, old men, girls, buildings. The figures are about [-] cm tall (sic), and there are around forty of them, and still the painter knew how to create plenty of space between them. Between the groups (there are six groups and only three single figures) lie whole seas. In addition to this there are tall trees, a small temple flooded with water, a palace, a garden, clouds overhead, and only then does the sky begin! And nothing appears small! Four old men are sitting round a garden table playing a board game, not far away three others are examining an architect's plan together. Another is enticing a fish out of the waves, which however - it's about one centimetre long and green - seems to be giving him a negative answer. Half-a-dozen people are sitting on a piece of land in the flood that has been torn away; they are burning incense paper in honour of the gods (enthroned above, busy with their appearance), engaging in discussions, probably about historical materialism, one of them with a fat stomach stands like a dancer on a kind of tub in the waves, holding an umbrella I believe and wearing a beautifully painted crimson coat, a chancer!..."

From a letter to Georg Grosz dated 2nd September 1934.

Antony Tatlow. "Brecht im Paradigmawechsel."

Das Interesse an Brecht, das die Teilnehmer des Brecht-Symposiums eint, wird in zweiter Linie kompliziert durch verschiedene kulturell determinierte, zumeist unbewußte Vorerwartungen. Die kritische Bewußtwerdung der eigenen Positionen ist daher unabdingbar, wenn eine globale Perspektive erreicht werden soll. Kritisches Denken darf sich nicht in Partikularität und Spezialwissen abschotten, sondern muß sich der Vielfalt der Bezüge öffnen und Interrelationen erkennen.

Tatlow bringt diese Problematik in den Zusammenhang mit dem Begriff des Paradigmenwechsels, der den abrupten Wechsel im Gefüge kultureller und soziologischer Wertsysteme charakterisiert: Die Bedingungen und Voraussetzungen kritischen Denkens in allen Forschungsbereichen verschieben sich. Interdisziplinäres und kulturübergreifendes Denken ist gefordert. Tatlow gibt eine Standortbestimmung Brechts im Zusammenhang mit eben dieser modernen kulturtheoretischen Diskussion und argumentiert, daß Brecht immer noch als regressiv mißverstanden wird, da er angeblich in der Tradition von Hegel und Marx in einem geschlossenen Denksystem befangen sei. Eigentlich aber sei Brecht eher "relationistisch" veranlagt und somit ein Vorläufer der von der Kritischen Theorie gefundenen Offenheit, die sich in Postmoderne (Lyotard) und Post-Strukturalismus (Derrida) widersprüchlich weiterentwickelt.

Brecht geht dabei jedoch über die Dekonstruktion hinaus und ermöglicht einen Konsens durch dynamische, soziokulturelle Ansätze, durch eine relationistische Ästhetik. Tatlow demonstriert das am Subjektbegriff bei Brecht: im Grunde genommen eliminierte Brecht die Psychologie gar nicht aus seinen Figuren, vielmehr tauche sie auf als das sozial Unbewußte, die durch den sozialen Kontext bestimmte Identität. Brecht kontextualisiert den Subjektbegriff genauso wie die neueste Kulturanthropologie. Danach drückt sich im Subjekt ein kollektiv Unbewußtes aus, das mit ökonomischen, historischen und individualpsychologischen Elementen in Verbindung stehe. Die knappste Zusammenfassung dieses relationistischen Denkens findet Tatlow in Brechts Betrachtungen zu "Chinesischer Malerei": während die traditionell realistische westliche Schule der Malerei die Welt aus einer klaren, fest definierten Perspektive heraus abbildet und den Betrachter einer einzigen Sichtweise unterwirft, erlaubt die eher relationistisch orientierte ostasiatische Kunst den Bildelementen ein organisch gebundenes, aber dennoch eigenständiges Nebeneinander.

Das Prinzip des dominierenden Subjekts drückt sich in der Kunst aus, in der hierarchischen Wert- und Machtstruktur der Realpolitik und in dem Ehrgeiz nach der technischen Beherrschung der Natur, während das Paradigma der asiatischen Kunst und Kultur einen ausgewogenen Relationismus zu vermitteln scheint, eine Dezentrierung des Subjekts. Ein rein "westliches" Verhalten führt zwar zur erwünschten Kontrolle aber auf lange Sicht auch in die Selbstzerstörung. Im Bewußtsein der heutigen, kulturübergreifenden Interdependenzen, der gegenseitigen Abhängigkeiten scheint die in Brechts Kunst angedeutete Erkenntniskritik und gesellschaftliche Utopie den einzig gangbaren Weg

aus der drohenden Krise vorzuzeichnen. Weder der "Westen" noch der "Osten" verfügen über Allerheilmittel aber ein wirklich interkulturelles Denken, wie Brecht es uns vorgelebt hat, ist heute unentbehrlich geworden.

Antony Tatlow. "Brecht et le changement de paradigme."

Quand nous parlons d'une modification du paradigme, dans le contexte de ce symposium, deux implications se présentent: le changement culturel et politique de la Chine et aussi le changement à l'Ouest qui retient l'attention de ses propres théoriciens. Nous nous pencherons ici sur la seconde.

Nous examinerons d'abord certains problèmes posés par la théorie critique en ce qui concerne l'oeuvre de Brecht. Ensuite nous analyserons certaines positions qui réduisent son efficacité, et nous montrerons que l'enjeu est plus grand qu'il ne laisse supposer, et que notre argument est lié à l'extension de la théorie critique et à l'application du paradigme relationnel.

Il y a une crise de la théorie dans la culture occidentale. Le terme de crise est pris ici dans son sens chinois de danger et d'opportunité, tout à la fois. Selon le mot de Wekwerth: "Il y a un certain temps que nous transformons le monde, peut-être devrions nous commencer maintenant à l'interpréter." Cependant il n'y a pas de consensus sur la manière de l'interpréter. Cette formule parodique des *Thèses sur Feuerbach* devrait nous encourager à repenser toute la question du paradigme. Brecht nous offre une occasion unique de l'aborder, en nous orientant vers l'interrelation entre les trois Mondes et entre l'Occident et l'Orient. Ni l'Orient ni l'Occident ne sont avancés ici comme des panacées. Mais nous sommes contraints à penser d'une manière globale. Brecht a été exclu du champs de la théorie critique par la réduction de son oeuvre à une esthétique "réaliste" et une éthique stakhanoviste, et aussi par la réduction de sa théorie au contexte de sa lecture originelle.

L'idée que la pensée de Brecht est susceptible d'élargissement semble contredire les perspectives de la déconstruction, du post-modernisme et de la dialectique négative. Selon ces façons de penser, toute universalisation n'est qu'illusion. Mais le refus de l'universel reste lui-même sous l'emprise d'un formalisme platonicien qu'il rejette par ailleurs. Il n'y a que deux courants qui s'opposent à tout ceci: la théorie de la raison communicative d'Habermas et le féminisme.

L'oeuvre de Brecht se caractérise par son ouverture à de nombreuses influences, par son absence de clôture, et par son effacement de la distinction entre l'art et l'interprétation. En cela, il se rapproche du côté le plus productif de la déconstruction. Mais le refus de la clôture a son origine dans un paradigme relationnel qui dépasse la métaphysique de l'absence dénoncée par la déconstruction (Derrida). Brecht aussi déconstruit la métaphysique de la présence mais c'est pour envisager un paradigme relationnel.

Le meilleur résumé de la vision relationnel de Brecht se trouve dans un texte sur la peinture chinoise dans lequel il compare la perspective unifiée de la peinture européenne et la multiplicité des perspectives dans l'art pictoral de l'Asie de l'Est. Dans la peinture européenne, le sujet et l'objet sont emprisonnés dans une perspective unique. Brecht oppose à cette hiérarchisation de l'espace sociale la multiplicité de la peinture chinoise. Cette opposition a des conséquences utopiques sur le plan politique; elle se rapporte aussi à la peinture chinoise et à ce qui fascine Brecht dans le théâtre asiatique.

Ces observations sont évidemment reliées au décentrement du sujet dans les théories sociales et psychologiques dont Brecht est un initiateur, mais sa position transcende ce décentrement. Le paradigme relationnel n'est pas seulement utopique, il nous est imposé si l'on veut éviter la catastrophe.

Antony Tatlow. "Brecht y el cambio paradigmático."

Tatlow aborda la "crisis" en la teoría crítica occidental respecto a la obra de Brecht para sugerir que hay que transformar esa crítica en un "paradigma relacional". La palabra china para crisis -*weiji* - contiene tanto el sentido de "peligro", como también el de "oportunidad." Aunque Brecht anticipa mucho de lo que dicen ahora los teóricos de la crítica, éstos, según Tatlow, sólo estudian a Adorno y Benjamin.

Tatlow desecha la acusación que Brecht ignora sistemáticamente la fuerza del inconsciente en el lenguaje. El sostiene, al contrario, que uno de los característicos más destacados de la obra brechtiana es la gran variedad de impulsos, y el rechazamiento de la clausura. La práctica estética e innovativa de Brecht sumprime la distinción entre el arte y la interpretación. La manera en que Brecht "despsicologiza" a sus personajes, o no hace caso de lo psicológico, no quiere decir que Brecht simplifique ni desproblematice al personaje; la verdad es que él no permite a su público quedarse seguro de que lo psicológico sea la base única del ser humano. Ese público tiene que hacer frente a la complejidad que surge del drama y que, por consiguiente, pone en duda la identidad del propio público.

La presentación del inconsciente en la obra brechtiana es un tema extraordinariamente rico. El encuentro con el arte asiático le revela a Brecht cómo se puede externalizar lo inconsciente - es decir, cómo se puede darle poder estético y, al mismo tiempo, inolvidable forma dramática.

El mejor resumen de la estética relacional de Brecht se encuentra en un trozo entitulado "La pintura china", en el cual Brecht compara la perspectiva china con la occidental.

Brecht is at Home in Asia: A Report on the IBS Symposium in Hong Kong December 1986

Carl Weber

When in December 1986 scholars from all over the world arrived in Hong Kong for the Seventh Symposium of the International Brecht Society, few of them expected a conference with so many participants, or the number of papers presented or productions performed. Aside from 125 academics, there were 139 actors and 37 stage directors or designers who had come to Hong Kong to discuss Brecht's work and its impact on contemporary theatre and/or society. Nearly 50 papers were read; panels brought together directors from European and Asian countries; there were performances, demonstrations and video recordings of performances shown, and altogether 10 productions could be seen in theatres or concert halls. This encounter of Brecht research and practice was the most intensive and extensive symposium the International Brecht Society has ever assembled.

Many of the papers are published in this present volume, and I am sure the resonance of the conference will be felt in future Brecht research. What deserves immediate reporting and a first evaluation, however, are the performances that were presented during the week; after all, they added up to a first truly international Asian Brecht Festival.

A wide range of works and approaches could be seen; there were highly polished productions by top professional companies as well as spirited semi-professional, agit-prop type presentations; there was an exquisitely honed recital in cabaret format as well as remarkably skilled work by young Hong Kong acting students. We saw lavish stagings of some of the major plays next to resolute adaptations done in the most simple, but effective, street theatre style. And there was also new work which applied Brecht's dramaturgic and performance theories.

What became evident was that Brecht has considerable relevance for much contemporary Asian theatre and only now has he been truly discovered in some countries. It also became evident that there is passionate disagreement about Brecht's potential impact, pitting scholars and theatre practitioners from the West against those from Asia. Many of the discussions and the papers read during the conference dealt with a lingering Brecht fatigue in the West, especially in Western Europe, while others described the invigorating effect his plays and his theories have in Asia and other parts of the so-called Third World. Especially noteworthy in this context is the fact that

Brecht, according to the statistics, is one of the most frequently performed playwrights of this century in the West, while critics and theatre people keep questioning his relevance for contemporary culture, whereas the number of Brecht productions in Asian countries is rather small but the freshness of the work is surprising and there seems to be little, if any, doubt about the viability and importance of his plays and his theory.

Japan assimilated Western technology and production modes earlier than any other Asian culture and was most successful in its appropriation of Western ideas and art. Consequently, Brecht had already been discovered in the Thirties by Japanese theatres that followed Western models in their work. Senda Korea, today the grand old man of Shingeki, The New Theatre, as Western-oriented theatre is called, directed *The Threepenny Opera* in the thirties and staged 26 Brecht productions since. In his address to the Hong Kong symposium he also mentioned "a weariness with Brecht", a "somewhat weakened interest" in Japan; he blamed tendencies towards escapism among the younger generation of intellectuals and audiences, but professed to be "fairly optimistic" about the future reception of Brecht, citing as proof his growing popularity among workers' theatre groups.

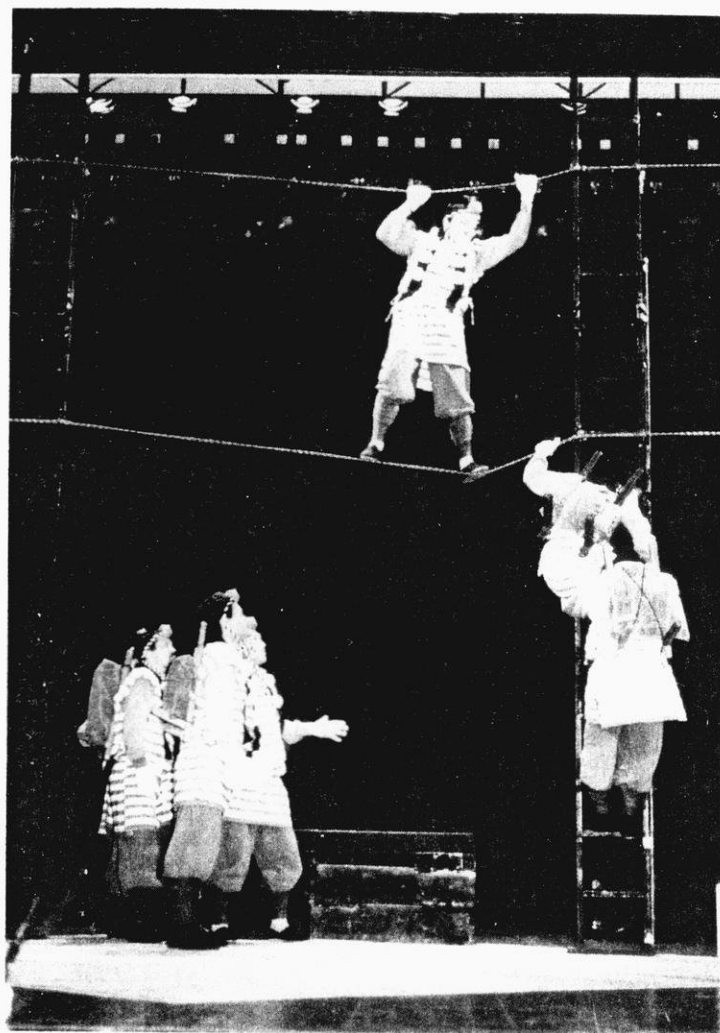
Senda Korea's company, the Haiyuza Theatre of Tokyo, showed two of his productions in Hong Kong, *The Good Person of Sezuan* and an evening of didactic plays, combining *He Who Says Yes, He Who Says No*; with *The Horatians and the Curiatians*. These were brilliantly conceived and directed performances, with excellent acting and imaginative staging. *The Good Person's* set was constructed from the debris of industrial civilization, using wire mesh, dilapidated wooden poles or boardings, torn wrapping materials and advertisements, all this in the drab grey and brownish colors of a contemporary shanty town. Senda's blocking takes great care to achieve a "telling of the fable", forming often tight clusters of actors juxtaposed to other groups or to individual protagonists; the pace is brisk without being rushed, each moment is given its proper weight and importance, the songs evolve from the action but are clearly separated, the narrative unfolding of the plot takes its own deliberate time while keeping the spectators' attention throughout - in short: a production which looked and sounded very much like the Berliner Ensemble's work of the late Fifties and Sixties, without actually following its model. I felt like being in a time warp: there was energy, great intelligence, and clarity in the performance, but - except for brief moments - the audience seemed to be "back in the future" instead of the Eighties of our century. The central role of Shen Te/Shui Ta was played with great virtuosity by Komaki Kurihara, an alumna of Senda's Acting School and Company who went on to become a star of Japanese film and television. Her performance tended to romanticize Shen Te, giving her much sweetness and innocence and hardly making us aware that prostitution, after all, is a tough business: an interpretation of Shen Te as a "soulful whore" which couldn't help adding to the dated feeling of the production, at least to Western eyes. Maybe certain details of her performance spelled differently to a Japanese viewer. As Shui Ta,

however, Kurihara suddenly seemed to propel the production into the present. Here was an immensely compelling, cool and controlled entrepreneur, a man/woman driven by ambition and greed, yet still, or rather because of this drive and the elegance of its execution, enormously seductive. The attractiveness of evil has rarely been so impressive on stage and its danger seldom so clear. The final scene with the ascension of the Gods unfortunately failed, due to the technical limitations of the Koshan theatre, an enormous, rather inhospitable, hangar-like modern structure which might serve well for rock concerts but not for spoken drama.

Yet such handicaps didn't hamper at all the production of the "Lehrstücke": one of the most successful and innovative readings of a Brechtian text during the symposium; regrettably they were shown only once, as a special presentation for the participants of the conference. Here, Senda achieved a truly contemporary and immensely theatrical interpretation of those difficult texts; its clarity, inventiveness, and playfulness made watching a sheer delight.

He Who Says Yes was acted by men, (though the lead was a young actress who played a boy most convincingly while still making us aware of this trans-gender casting, a beautifully dialectical performance), and given in a deeply serious mood. All the young travellers were dressed in grey-blue and white striped tunics over grey-blue pantsuits, vaguely reminiscent of historical costumes and at the same time quite possible in a big contemporary city, except for the old-style grey backpacks they carried. Crossing the mountain was represented by climbing up and down metal ladders and traversing two steel wires stretched between them, a dangerous-looking and exquisitely performed maneuver. The final throwing into the abyss of the sick boy, who had agreed to his own death, was in its simple staging very moving. The Chorus was seated upstage and to the side, as in the No theater, wearing dark-green Russian blouses (the only visual choice that had a folkloristic, slightly phony effect) and reciting its verses with totally unaffected sincerity. The performance had the intense concentration and serenity of No theatre. *He Who Says No*, in contrast, was played by young women, their costume the same as their male predecessors, except for red and white striped tunics, and they wore red headbands, quite fashionable red, soft boots, and also carried red, modern looking backpacks. We were told that their garb and their movement patterns evoked the image of female Japanese Olympic athletes, the allusion implying a critique of contemporary competitive sports and its win-or-die commercialization. Their crossing of the mountain was done on simple folding step-ladders, with a lot of exaggerated exertion; the debate about what should be done with the sick boy/girl was a heated free-for-all discussion, the final refusal and its impact on the shocked group was presented in a truly comic gesture which created a refreshing, liberated - and liberating - effect.

The juxtaposition of the two texts in two strikingly different performance modes, within an otherwise rigidly-structured "frame" of the overall staging, achieved everything one should expect in Brecht's theatre: emotional involvement which is immediately distanced, the



Crossing the narrow ridge, in the Haiyuza Theatre's
production of *He who says Yes*.



Azdak in trouble in the last scene of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, played by the China Youth Art Theatre.

joy of play, the artistry of skilled performers, and the pleasurable provocation that makes us critically aware of the events we have watched and, consequently, of the world we live in.

Senda's staging of *The Horatians and the Curiatians* emphasized even more strongly a playfulness, a joy of performing and physically excelling in it - aspects Brecht must have had in mind when he designed the piece to be acted by children. There was again cross-gender casting of the young actors, yet no recognizable principle as in the previous plays appeared. It was rather like what kids in a playground might do: everybody plays what he/she is best in, and sometimes the players switch parts. Costumes and props looked as if done by children for a school performance, "designed" but made from most accessible materials, be it cloth or wood. In the back, on a platform, were percussion instruments as for a school dance; two girls in red costumes (looking rather like dwarfs from a Disney movie) played the drums and cymbals and occasionally paraded a cut-out, representing the Sun mounted on a stick: a simple but effective way to indicate the progress of time. To the right and left, the Choruses of the two warring parties were seated, dressed in somber-colored hoods, with long beards made from dried cotton wool; they were holding long wooden poles which they used to create a city wall or to make sounds with. In short, everything looked like a fairy-tale enacted by children, except for the warriors whose costumes and props seemed to be too elaborate and calculated to fit the otherwise beautifully "naive" *gestus*. The performers, especially when miming the fight scenes, were stunning in their acrobatic skills and consequently fascinating to watch. But their athletic performance seemed to clash, at least in this observer's mind, with the basic concept of "children at play" which otherwise served Brecht's text so well.

Of the professional productions presented in Hong Kong, Korea Senda's staging of these "Lehrstücke" achieved the most original contemporary interpretation of a Brecht text and did so without denying its historicity, truly an example of applied dialectics.

If Japan seems to be in a Brecht "recession" not unlike the one most Western European critics diagnose for their theatre, in China the discovery of Brecht is just beginning, as Chinese theatre directors, designers and critics explained in their speeches at the conference. When Huang Zuolin, the most prominent of China's "Brechtians", staged *Mother Courage* for the Shanghai People's Art Theatre in 1959, a production which closely followed the playwright's own Berlin model of ten years earlier, this first Chinese Brecht performance encountered little else but misunderstanding by audiences and hostility by critics. They were used to a Stanislavskian theatre of emphasis and identification, first adopted during the Twenties and further developed after the revolution, according to Zhdanov's doctrine of "Socialist Realism". "Brecht's alienation effect had most successfully alienated the audience who gladly stayed clear of the theatre doors," as Huang Zuolin joked later.

During the Cultural Revolution, the "bourgeois" Brecht was

condemned as worthless for China's brave new society, like most other Western or Eastern art. Not until 1979, twenty years after his failed *Mother Courage*, was Huang Zuolin able to present Brecht to Chinese audiences again. His and Chen Yong's *Life of Galileo* at Beijing's China Youth Art Theatre turned out to be a resounding success, it ran to packed houses for 80 performances - obviously the times had changed, and with it audiences and critics. Since then, Brecht attracts ever-increasing interest in China and his dramaturgy has become a model for many younger playwrights. However, there were only three more productions of full-length plays so far: *The Good Person of Sezuan*; *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and the one-act *The Respectable Wedding*; though excerpts from *Schweyk in the Second World War*, *Puntilla and his Man Matti*; and *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* have also been staged. In view of the few plays that were actually seen in China, the impact Brecht's work appears to have had is surprising.

In Hong Kong, two of these stagings from the People's Republic could be sampled: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in the City Hall Concert Hall, and scenes from the *Schweyk* production on video screen. These productions were strictly opposed to each other and their approach to Brecht was drastically different.

Chen Yong, the director of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, explained in a paper for the conference, that she tried to find "a nexus between Brechtian theatre and the Chinese traditional theatre." Huang Zuolin, her old mentor, called the production "an attempt to absorb Brecht's theory into the Stanislavskian method as well as traditional Chinese performing arts." Chen Yong received her training as director at Moscow's Lunacharski Academy of Dramatic Art in the Fifties, and what she saw and learned there still seems to guide her directorial thinking. The production, most lavishly done in vibrant colors, acted with impressive physical and vocal skills, and thoroughly entertaining the Hong Kong audience, turned Brecht's play into a kind of Chino-Russian operetta. As Chen Yong pointed out, recitation, folklore dance and martial arts' techniques from Chinese theatrical tradition were employed to "unleash the creativity of the cast and to free them from mere imitation of the realities of life." The result reminded me of Soviet musical film comedies popular during the Forties and early Fifties or those narrative ballet productions at the Bolshoi or Kirov theatres, where a folklore dance-vocabulary and heavy-handed miming of pseudo-realistic action abounded. The music sounded like the score of a Russian operetta, and at times the actors accompanied the storyteller's recitation with danced or mimed enactments of his narrative, turning Brecht's concept of theatrical dialectics on its head. Grusha was cast as a slender, graceful young woman, Ding Jiali, who was also an accomplished dancer and fitted perfectly the production's concept, never shying away from cute or droll moments a scene might suggest. And Li Jinjun as the Singer was infectious in his enjoyment of a score which offered many opportunities to show off his ringing baritone. The last scene, the test of the chalkcircle, provided another surprise: Michael looked like a young teenager, barely shorter than the

two mothers competing for him.

The set consisted mainly of three sail-like canvasses stretched behind, and right and left of the playing space where locations were indicated by simple, easily movable set pieces. Abstractions of landscapes, of the sun, stars, clouds, or a moon, were projected on the canvas screens, in rich, deep reds, yellows, browns, or indigos. The projections added to the lavish, operatic gestus the production seemed to aim for.

There was no question that the show was a crowd pleaser, though I doubt if it left the audience with anything but a pleasant culinary experience. One could argue that this might be a justified strategy to attract Chinese audiences to Brecht's work, maligned for so long as hostile to any emotion, non-theatrical and boringly cerebral. Justified only, though, if the next step would quickly follow and introduce the same audience to the true intentions of Brecht's theatre.

Schweyk in the Second World War, a production of the Beijing People's Art Theater, tried with remarkable success (as far as I could judge from the couple of scenes shown on video film during the conference) to present Brecht's intentions and to adopt his play to present-day Chinese conditions without hiding the historical field it was related to.

Director Lin Zhao-hua staged an immensely theatrical production that was stunning in its austere but poignant imagery. His young actors, recent graduates of Beijing's Acting Academy, presented clearly defined but detailed performances. The 25-year-old who played Schweyk, a round face under short black hair, on top of a short, round body, showed an agility and grace as well as coiled energy, and such perfect comic timing that he made me think of Chaplin in W.C. Field's body. The way he played with the interrogation lamp on SS Officer Bullinger's desk, turning it hither and thither to avoid its glare, sometimes directing it at his captor's face but immediately "admitting" his awful mistake and turning it back on his own face to illuminate his grovelling for mercy, which quickly changes into an offer to procure a prized lapdog for the officer, Sir! while his hand is raised to shield his eyes but uncannily ends up in Hitler's own, deliberately sloppy, way of saluting - all this offered such a wealth of gestic material and provided such an incisive comment on the little man's behavior in the face of brute power that Brecht wouldn't have stopped laughing, could he have seen it.

The stage was bare, except for a desk with the lamp and Bullinger's chair, its back to the audience, so we were never really able to see the face of power. Upstage, towering over it all, a gigantic flag with the swastika hung from the flies. In another scene - *Schweyk* is waiting with others to be shipped to the front - the actors were enclosed by a gigantic net hanging from the flies. Obviously, Lin Zhao-hua likes his visual metaphors uncrowded by detail which might merely illustrate a scene, or provide naturalistic environment not essential to it.

Compared to the other Asian productions presented in Hong Kong, *Schweyk* came closest to a visual approach and sensibility which

dominates the European theatre today. Directors and critics from France and Germany stated that the video showed the most impressive production they had seen at the conference. It was also successful in reaching its young Beijing audiences, as Chinese participants in the symposium assured me. Such responses support my view that *Schweyk* is a truly contemporary appropriation of Brecht, as close to his stated intentions as to the contemporary condition of its new audience.

The most amazing performances from China, however, were not of a Brecht text. The "Famous Performance Artist of Ballad Singing in Suzhou Dialect" (as it says on her card), Jiang Yunxian, presented two demonstrations of *Pingtán*. Introducing her, Li Jiayao, the director of the Shanghai Youth Theatre, explained this old traditional folk art, indigenous to the province Suzhou. The performer is at once actor, storyteller, singer, and instrumentalist. He/she narrates the text, often breaks into singing, plays all the characters during extensive dialogue sections while assuming the appropriate voice and facial "mask" for each character, comments on the story and its characters, and accompanies the text by the occasional plucking of a long-necked string instrument, or the banging of a small hand drum, while other sound is created with the human voice or a wooden gavel slapped on top of the small table behind which the performer is sitting. The audience is always directly addressed - no "fourth wall" here - and frequently encouraged to form opinions or draw conclusions from the story. Often the ending is told first, so the spectators' attention is directed towards the progress of the plot rather than its outcome. A *Pingtán* piece may last a month, six months or even a year; it is presented as a serial divided into chapters which are relatively independent episodes in themselves, somewhat like a "Brechtian" soap opera.

Jiang Yunxian displayed her astounding virtuosity with two greatly different texts. As a demonstration, she performed an excerpt from a piece based on a novel by Zhang Henshui of the Twenties, a chapter depicting events on a Beijing market square where an old street performer of martial arts is heckled by two scoundrels and, flying into a rage, teaches his tormentors a lesson. The plasticity with which she created all characters mimetically and vocally was simply stunning and - as the Chinese term it - the "leaping into and leaping out of" character, or from narration to commentary, was totally clear, even without understanding the language; in other words, we saw "gestic acting" - in Brecht's understanding of it - as convincing and pure as I have ever seen it. Aside from the human characters, she also created with her voice birds, the animals of the market, the sounds of the craftsmen's tools, and so forth, while employing the simple instruments to highlight phrases, accentuate speeches, or create additional sound effects.

The dialectics and the delight of *Pingtán* create a V-Effect which Brecht could not have improved upon, and in the frequent interweaving of various storylines, in the rambling diversions from the main fable, and in its serialization of stories, *Pingtán* even anticipated certain aspects of a post-Brechtian, non-linear Western dramaturgy.



The incomparable Jiang Yunxiang performing *pingtan*.



Ah Sei (alias Simone) trying hard to understand the real world.

As a special gift to the symposium, Jiang Yunxian had prepared a new, full length performance (though certainly short for *Pingtian* standards) of the classical *Chinese Chalk Circle*, the piece which first Klabund and later Brecht based their versions on, more or less closely. Again the performer's ability to create convincing characterizations of the two mothers, the judge, the servants, the dying husband and father, and many others, was remarkable in its combining of mimesis with distancing. The switch from speech to singing, from acting to narrating, from involvement to commenting, was done with such ease and humor that the sheer execution itself provided constant entertainment. And it was especially fascinating to watch how certain codified gestures, like the raising of a folding fan (a threat of great weight), the spreading of a handkerchief (presentation of a letter), a lifted palm facing up (serving a meal on a plate), supported the delicate balance between quasi realistic vocal and facial expression of characters, often emphatic delivery of the narration, and distanced, evaluating comment.

As Li Jiayao pointed out, if Brecht had seen a *Pingtian* performance, he might have discovered a theatrical model that was even closer to his own ideas of an epic-dialectic theatre than Mei Lanfang's demonstration of Peking Opera which he saw in 1935 and embraced so warmly in his essay on Chinese theatre.

Hong Kong is a city with an amazing number of newly built playhouses, some of them representing the state of the art in modern theatre construction, like the recently completed Academy for Performing Arts (itself a very young institution), combining a theatre of opera-like proportions and a 500-seat house with a remarkably well structured stage/audience relation. And when, after a day of sessions and discussions, the conference participants went upstairs from the Recital Hall of the Hong Kong Arts Center where the symposium convened - the center also has a theatre, plus a small studio stage, on its premises - and looked across the harbor, they could see another enormous theatre-building going up in Kowloon. One cannot help but wonder what all these theatres are for: Hong Kong, a city/country of more than 5 million people today, subsidizes only two small professional companies and, for two years, the Academy. There is, of course, a thriving film industry but indigenous theatre at this time is mainly a venue for amateurs, aside from the few traditional Cantonese opera companies left which are said to be inferior. When I asked Hong Kong theatre people about this phenomenon, the answers boiled down to: Hong Kong is interested in profits and how to maximize them; buildings have tangible value, a company or a performance do not. On the other hand, the administration of the crown colony and local big business obviously want to encourage the arts, but they seem to believe that production facilities rather than people will bring forth creativity.

At City Hall Theatre, one of two stages in another fairly recent edifice, Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, a company established ten years ago by the Urban Council, presented *The Resistible Rise of*

Arturo Ui. The director, Bernadette Tsui, who studied theatre in Germany and New York, sees the play as a political cartoon of considerable relevance to today's Hong Kong where reforms are only now under way to introduce a system of elected representation.

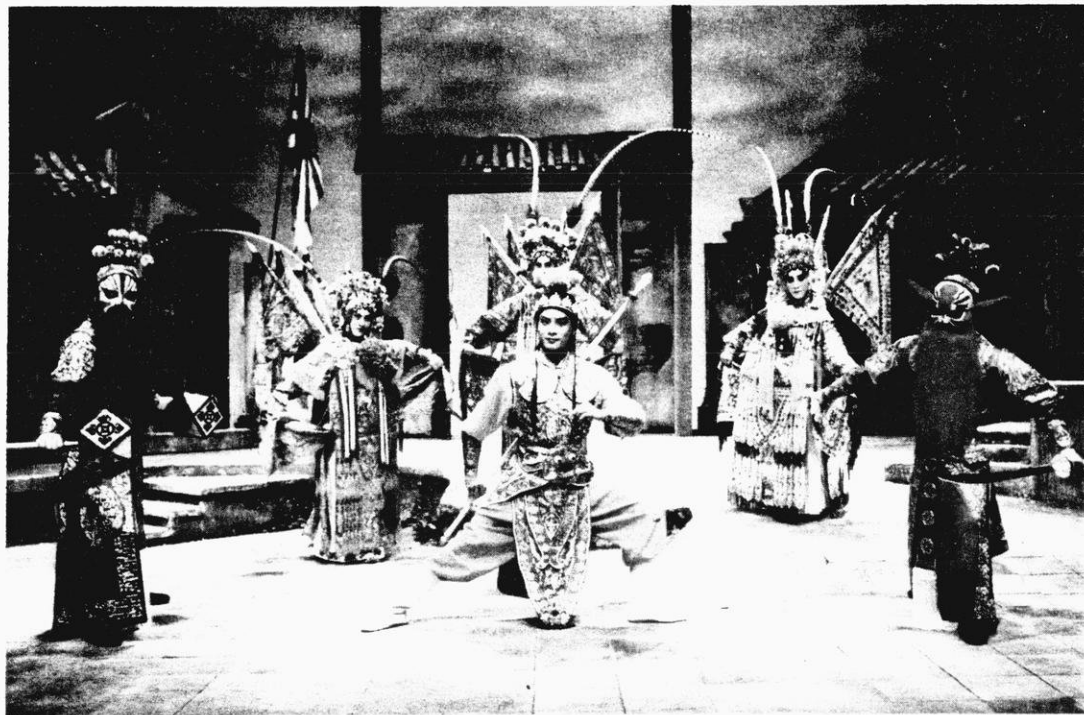
She had to work with a very young cast; most of its members graduated in the late Seventies or Eighties from university or a mainland acting school. This made for a very spirited, energetic performance which veered somewhat towards oversimplification and a lot of mugging and undifferentiated banging out of lines. However, Ko Tin-lung as Ui and Lam Chung, a former member of the drama company of Canton, as Roma, are promising actors and defined their character's gestus with wit and verve. The set by Lo King-man was quite ingenious in its use of a pivoting structure center stage which made for a quick and fluid performance pace; his costumes served the director's concept well. To what extent the performance achieved its laudable purpose of enabling the audience to "recognize the many Arturo Uis, Clarks and Dogsboroughs around us, and thus actively seek to prevent them from dominating the political arena" of Hong Kong, as Tsui expressed it in her program note, was impossible to gauge but the intention deserves respect.

The Academy for Performing Arts contributed a production of the rarely seen *The Visions of Simone Machard*, written by Brecht and Lion Feuchtwanger during exile in the US, intended at that time for Broadway. The director, Frederic Mao, is Head of the Chinese Acting Program at the Academy and, besides having been trained in classical Chinese theatre, studied in the States and worked as an actor here for more than a decade, eventually performing leading roles in Harold Prince's "Pacific Overtures" on Broadway. He had adapted the play about a French girl who, in 1940, dreams of being Joan of Arc and obsessed with her mission blows up a petrol depot to prevent it from falling into the hands of the invading German army. In Mao's adaptation the story happens during Japan's invasion of China in the late 1930's. Consequently, the girl does not envision herself as St. Joan but as the young heroine Yeung Pai-fung from the legend of the Yeung warriors in the Sung Dynasty; Brecht's dream interludes when Joan meets the Dauphin, Queen Isabeau, etc., become episodes as we know them from the iconography of Beijing Opera, and in the surprisingly skilled, athletic performance of the young second-year acting students these dream-scenes were not only a delight to watch but contrasted with the realistic scenes of the play more convincingly and tellingly than I have seen in any Western production. The adaptation made Brecht's fable also more accessible and meaningful to contemporary Chinese audiences.

Several of the young performers were equally remarkable in their realistic characters, imbuing them with a well observed and clearly delineated individual gestus. Simone, or Ah Sei in this version, was performed by four different actresses. Even if this may have originally been conceived as educational strategy for a student production, it was perfect for director Mao's concept, creating a *V-Effekt* which made the spectators re-evaluate the girl's actions each time a new



Ah Sei-Simone and her brother, the angel. Note the Japanese flag.



The dream as Chinese Opera.

actress appeared in the role.

Set and costumes (Design: Richard Berry) were most professionally executed in the drab and detailed realism aimed for by the production, while the traditional opera scenes provided a burst of colorful costumes and masks. If this production is representative for the level of acting and technical production the Hong Kong Academy has accomplished in its barely two years of training, many American schools could learn from their work.

Both Hong Kong productions evidenced the Western training of their directors, and this aspect deserves a closer analysis than possible here. But then, almost everything in Hong Kong shows the stamp of Western civilization and how could the theatre but reflect this.

It was not until the mid-Sixties that Brecht was introduced to the Indian theatre which, of course, consists of many theatre cultures in many languages. I directed one of the first Indian Brecht productions (1968), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, at the Asian Theatre Institute of New Delhi, and found it fascinating how well Brecht's performance gestus fitted the theatrical instincts and talents of the native actors. The Bengali theatre had discovered Brecht at the same time and *The Threepenny Opera* was the first of his works shown in Calcutta in 1969. Meanwhile, ten plays have been staged and several of them have had popular runs.

Unity Theatre, one of the 1200 (!) professional or amateur companies in this city of 12 million people, brought its performance of *Puntila and his Man Matti* to Hong Kong. The company has been active for 15 years and has produced three Brecht plays but also other translations from the German, by Dürrenmatt, Horvath, and Kroetz. Its director since 1979, Sekhar Chatterjee, is obviously an actor-manager in the Anglo-Indian tradition: he adopted and directed the piece, he composed the folksy music, and he plays the lead who has become *Pontu Laha* (as the play is called now), Bengali landowner and master of chauffeur Moti to whom, in one of his drunken bouts, he wants to marry his daughter Radha. While Puntila commands Matti to build him Mount Hatelma with his library's furniture, drunk Pontu Laha has Moti pile up the smashed furniture of his counting house and, helped onto it, proclaims he is on a Himalaya expedition.

Chatterjee plays Pontu Laha in a most economic mode, with minimal effort of voice and gesture but an impressive presence. Few of the other actors can hold their own against him; Moti is cast with a popular Bengali movie actor, Subrato Bhattacharjee, who hardly ever transcends the cliché of the virile leading man and fails to explore the dialectics of the role. However, Debdut Bose as the Attaché Ayan truly excels with an hilarious, chaplinesque performance. Swagata Roychoudhury's voluptuous Radha shows only the spoiled and silly rich girl, pouting, giggling, petulant; that she is also the victim of a patriarchal, exploitative order seems never to have dawned upon the director or the actress.

Still, the production is swift, entertaining, and brings off many of

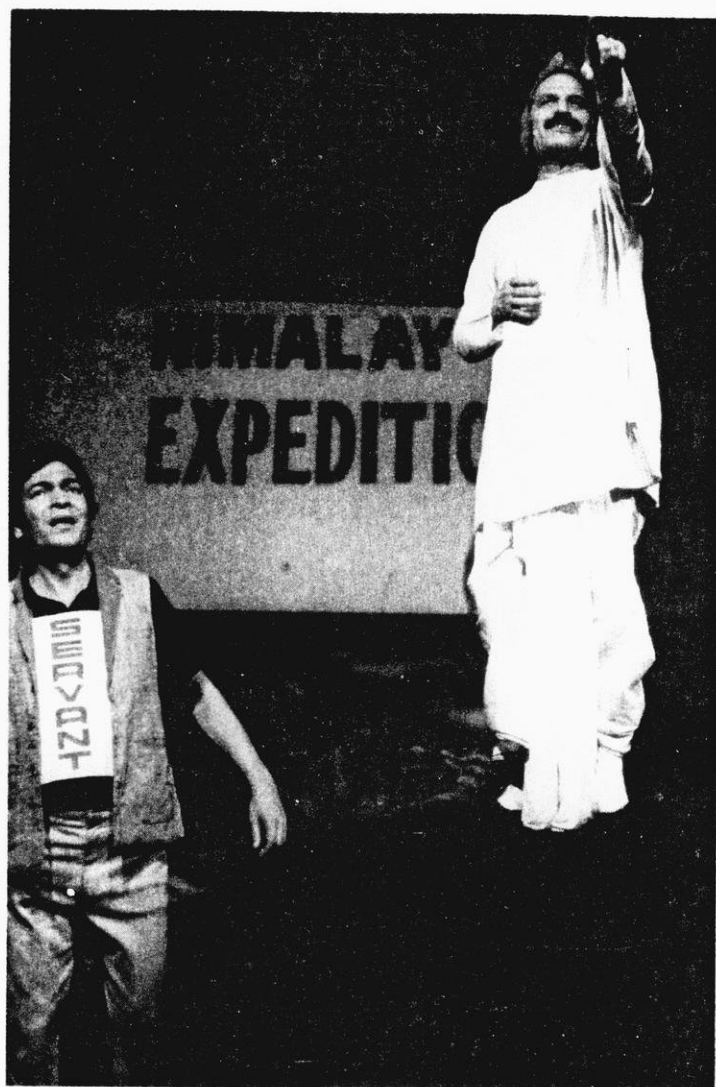
Brecht's intentions. Chatterjee's direction employs very obvious "V-effects", such as signs hung around the actors' necks (SERVANT for Moti, at times) or the little red cap with earflaps Pontu Laha puts on whenever we are to understand he is drunk - quite necessary, because Chatterjee barely changes physical gestus or speech pattern when playing the inebriated boss - but they are too simplistic and undialectical to achieve more than emphasizing the already all too obvious. Both Chatterjee's music, based on popular forms, and his use of three folk singers, accompanied by percussion and accordion, who sing the introduction to each scene with remarkably strong and piercing voices, was definitely effective and stirring. And the simple, easily transportable pieces of scenery worked well, especially the "walking" palm tree at which Pontu Laha and Moti pass water while discussing the beauty of doing it in the open air.

Again, adapting Brecht's fable to a native culture and/or social pattern proved to be more than merely an audience-pleasing device. De-alienating Brecht's text, it achieved a fresh kind of de-familiarization, bringing things close while still creating enough distance - an interesting dialectical process which calls for investigation.

PETA, the Philippine Educational Theater Association, has managed to survive during trying times for twenty years, producing plays, training theatre workers, and aiding in the establishment and development of community theatres all over the Philippine islands. Presently, there are about 200 members, most of them social workers, union organizers, students, teachers, very few of them full-time professional theatre people; their work is supported by the Trade Union Movement. PETA brought to Hong Kong examples of a popular agit-prop theatre close to what Brecht once envisaged in the early Thirties. One company of several which are presently touring North America, Europe and Asia, showed their recent version of Brecht's *Chalk Circle*, (and I dropped "Caucasian" with good reason), they also showed on video a performance of an earlier production (with a local theatre group) in a village on Mindanao. Villagers were sitting, standing, walking about, while watching the play, soldiers could be seen among them, watching the crowd but also the show.

The video made manifest what Professor Maria Louisa F. Torres and others reported at the symposium about PETA's work, which constitutes a remarkably organized and efficient effort to advance a people's thinking and feeling by live theatre.

Their performance of *Chalk Circle* on the small stage of the Arts Center's Recital Hall was, as to be expected, less professional, less polished than others we had occasion to watch. But the directness and ease of their acting, the unforced delivery of speeches and dialogue, the utterly clear gestus of every gesture, every movement, every exchange, and their deep commitment to the play and its message made them, in this observer's view, achieve what Brecht proposed in his poem "Letter to the Workers' Theatre Union in New York, Regarding the Play *The Mother*."



Puntila knows the way, in the Unity Theatre's production.



Gruscha crosses the dangerous bridge in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, PETA production.

The performance showed the lightness, deliberate pace, political awareness and inquisitive attitude Brecht asked of a theatre providing instruction and encouragement for the daily struggle of the oppressed. A small number of actors played all the roles. Four bamboo poles and a couple of two-yard-wide strips of red silk were sufficient to create the gates of cathedral and governor's palace, the sedan chair of the governor's wife, the bridge across the abyss, the glacier or the river, and the handling of those simple props was superb in its imaginative signifying of each specific location or action. Many of the formalized movement patterns were based on tribal Philippine dances, as the music was created with indigenous folk instruments. The ironshirts/soldiers carried small boards with toy bells which they rhythmically shook or struck with their wooden swords, to indicate attack, marches, music, and the threat of violence.

Since the adaptation moved the story from Caucasian Georgia to a pre-colonial Mindanao - the governor and his wife had become a "sultan" and his "sultana", for instance - all characters were dressed in colorful folk costumes, some historical, others in more or less contemporary garb.

We were told that sometimes during village performances the soldiers in the play and the real soldiers watching looked practically interchangeable. In the Hong Kong presentation, there was no child in the famous scene of the chalk circle. The pulling of the little boy was mimed by the two mothers. When later asked about this peculiar choice the PETA actors explained: when performing in a village, they invite a child from the audience to play little Michael. What an imaginative way to involve an audience and bring the message home!

In PETA's version the play lasted barely 90 minutes, exactly the attention span of an ambulatory audience, but all the essential aspects of Brecht's parable were told. Here we saw another example how an approach that is neither biased, nor intimidated, can result in a remarkable appropriation of Brecht's work, and in his very own spirit. "The classics show us the truth only in so far as it is a truth for us," as he once said. PETA truly followed his advice, and then it really does not count much if skill and talent of the performers are lacking in certain respects, as I heard it complained about PETA's actors. It was obvious that some were only moderately gifted amateurs. But this did not matter at all in view of their spirited and committed performance.

PETA showed another example of their work, a political musical revue, *Panata Sa Kalayaan* (An Oath to Freedom). Here, features of popular entertainments and television were used as models to comment on, or illustrate, the struggle of various oppressed groups in Philippine society, from peasants to students, from professionals to tribal minorities. The Marcos dictatorship is portrayed by a bunch of "vaudeville performers", some of them transvestites. The first part ends with the overthrow of Marcos, brought about with the help of the Catholic Church and Cardinal Sin. In the second part, it is emphasized that the struggle has not been won yet, the forces of old are still in control of economy and army. AIDS, even, is introduced as a consequence of US military bases. The piece ends with a review of all

the characters' dreams - still unfulfilled. And it challenges them to continue the struggle.

This crude confection may have its impact in the Philippines, though I cannot pretend that I am convinced of this. Uprooted and presented to an audience of Western, Chinese and emigrant Filipino spectators in Hong Kong it seemed to stir some response with the Filipinos, but little with others. It was a far cry from the impressive and moving performance of *Chalk Circle*. But not having seen *Panata Sa Kalayaan* with an audience it was conceived for, it is impossible to judge its accomplishment. However, the lack of skill and training which was not detrimental to the *Chalk Circle* performance (actually even an advantage in a way) became painfully evident here.

Nevertheless, even with its shortcomings PETA is the rare example of a "grassroots" organization which has successfully aspired to Brecht's dream of a theatre that truly is "of and for the people."

There were plans to bring the London National Theatre's production of *The Mother* to Hong Kong; since unfortunately this could not be realized, a cabaret-type recital performance from Australia became the only "Western" contribution to the Brecht festival. Robyn Archer, very well accompanied on piano and accordion by Michael Morley, presented BRECHT & CO, a program of poetry and songs by Brecht and his three main composers, Weill, Eisler and Dessau. Aside from well-known material which she managed to make quite "fresh" in her performance, Archer also did many rarely heard pieces, like "Nana's Song", "Ballad on Approving of the World", "The Hollywood Elegies", or "The Flower Garden". I previously knew her work only from records and always had been much impressed with her musicality and her direct, unadorned style as a singer. Here I discovered what an excellent actress she is. The humor, crispness, and subtlety of her "cool" delivery which nevertheless can be deeply moving, the range and timbre of her voice, and the unfailing instinct and precision with which she differentiates texture and gestus of each poem or song, plus her stage "presence", make her one of the foremost interpreters of Brecht texts today - and of much more stuff, I am sure. I do not know any other singer performing Brecht in English who would be superior to this exceptional artist. It truly is a loss for all American fans of Brecht, Weill, or Eisler, that Robyn Archer has not yet toured the States and Canada.

The IBS symposium in Hong Kong was certainly most important as a meeting of Western and Asian minds, be they academics or theatre practitioners, who presented stimulating papers, engaged in heated discussions, and exchanged their often deeply conflicting views on Brecht's work and its relation to contemporary society and culture. But it also was a major event for the theatre in Asia and Brecht's role in it. The justified complaints about his dwindling impact in the West, especially in continental Europe, encountered an absolute confidence in his art and its efficacy among Asian theatre workers and scholars

which was not merely voiced in discussion but clearly evinced in many of the performances shown during the symposium. These conflicting positions - or do they rather complement each other? - raise fascinating questions which will be discussed for a long time. Is Brecht's paradigm still a tool with which we can interpret the contemporary world? Or are his models too simplistic for the presentation of post-industrialist society and only relevant now for less developed Third World cultures? Do we need new paradigms, so we can radically re-discover his work? Or has his appropriation by the indigenous theatre in Asia already begun to move towards such a new paradigm? Indeed, the old dialectician has not ceased to confront us with ever new contradictions.

**Carl Weber. "Brecht ist auch in Asien zu Hause.
Ein Bericht über das IBS Symposium
in Hong Kong, Dezember 1986."**

Die hartnäckigen Gerüchte um eine andauernde "Brecht-Müdigkeit" werden auf eindrucksvolle Weise widerlegt durch die Bandbreite frischer Theaterinszenierungen, die während des IBS-Symposiums zu sehen waren. Ausgefeilte professionelle Produktionen waren neben talentiertem Studententheater zu sehen und dokumentierten den lebendigen Eindruck, den Brecht offenbar immer noch auf die asiatische Kulturszene auszuüben scheint. Carl Weber berichtet als erstes über japanische Brecht-Inszenierungen Senda Koreas, dessen Pionierarbeit mit der *Dreigroschenoper* (1930) Japan als eines der ersten asiatischen Länder am frühesten und nachhaltigsten für Brechts Theater öffnete. Während seine Version von *Der Gute Mensch von Sezuan* sich eng an den vom Berliner Ensemble vorgegebenen Inszenierungsstil der späten 50er Jahre anlehnt, zeigt seine Interpretation der Lehrstücke größere künstlerische Eigenwilligkeit durch die Einarbeitung traditioneller japanischer Nô-Elemente, durch artistische Spielfreude der Schauspieler und, ohne dabei ihre Geschichtlichkeit zu verleugnen, durch selbstironische Provokationen in den präsentierten Stücken; so liefern sie ein schönes Beispiel angewandter brechtscher Dialektik.

Brechts Rezeption in China setzte dagegen mit 1959 erst verspätet ein durch Huang Zuolins *Mutter Courage* - Inszenierung am Shanghaier Volkstheater. Im Verlaufe der Kulturrevolution wurde Brecht dann als "bürgerlicher Formalist" sowieso auf den Index gesetzt, so daß bisher lediglich acht Brecht-Inszenierungen in China gezeigt werden konnten, von denen zwei - *Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis* und *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg* - zu sehen waren. Während die *Kreidekreis*-Produktion die dialektischen Strukturen bei Brecht durch eine glatte folkloristische Inszenierung in chinesischer Operntradition einfach übergang, zeigte das Pekinger Volkstheater die Video-Aufzeichnung einer *Schweyk*-Adaption, die deutlich den Einfluß heutigen europäischen Regie-Theaters verriet und dennoch - oder deswegen? - großen Anklang bei einem jungen chinesischen Publikum fand. Von großem Eindruck war die Demonstration des traditionellen *Pingtan*-Theaters: eine Schauspielerin, die in verschiedene Rollen schlüpfend Szenisches und Narratives integrierte, entsprach darin ganz der Ästhetik Brechts.

Das indische Unity Theatre stellte in Hongkong seine entsprechend adaptierte Fassung des *Puntila* als Geschichte vom bengalischen Grundbesitzer *Pontu Laha* vor, und die Philippinen, vertreten durch den Dachverband der "Philippine Educational Theatre Association", zeigten ihre Version des *Kaukasischen Kreidekreises*, offensichtlich beeinflusst durch den sozio-kulturellen Rahmen des von der Marcos-Diktatur bedrückten Landes.

Sozusagen der Westen des Ostens war vertreten durch die australische Sängerin Robyn Archer, die durch ein Kabarett-Medley auch einmal verdienstermaßen das Augenmerk auf die Musik lenkte und bekanntere wie unbekanntere Brecht-Songs vortrug.

Wesentlichstes Ergebnis der akademischen und künstlerischen Beiträge des Symposiums war wohl die andauernde Diskussion, ob und wie weit die moderne Welt noch in die Erklärungs- und Darstellungsmuster der brechtschen Ästhetik paßt - ob die alten Widersprüche noch die neuen Widersprüche in sich abzubilden vermögen?

Carl Weber. "Brecht est chez lui en Asie: Rapport au sujet du Colloque SIB de Hong Kong en décembre 1986."

Lors du septième symposium de la SIB à Hong Kong, on a pu assister à une rencontre de première importance entre le monde intellectuel de l'ouest et de l'est. Ce fut aussi un événement sans précédent pour le théâtre en Asie et le rôle qu'y joue Brecht. L'affaiblissement de l'effet produit par Brecht, en Europe surtout, a confronté une confiance en son art dans le monde académique et parmi les praticiens du théâtre en Asie. Au cours du Symposium, on a pu assister à plusieurs représentations dignes d'intérêt: *la Bonne âme de Se-Tchouan*, *Celui qui dit oui, celui qui dit non*, et *les Horaces et les Curiaces* par le Théâtre Haiyuza de Tokyo; celles-ci ont été les représentations contemporaines les plus originales; *Schweyk dans la deuxième guerre mondiale*, et *le Cercle de craie caucasien* mis en scène par Chen Yong et joué par le "Théâtre artistique de la jeunesse chinoise"; *le Cercle de craie chinois*, qui est à l'origine du *Cercle de craie caucasien*, a été joué par Jiang Yunxiang; deux représentations de Hong Kong très occidentalisées, *la Résistible ascension d'Arturo Ui* par Bernadette Tsui au City Hall et *les Visions de Simone Marchand* par Frederic Mao; *Maître Puntila et son valet Matti* par l'Unity Theatre (Calcutta); *le Cercle de craie caucasien* par le Philippine Educational Theatre Association dans une adaptation très impressionnante, bien que moins professionnelle que les autres. La diversité des adaptations, qui démontre la variété de la réception de Brecht en Asie, fait preuve de la vitalité de la dramaturgie brechtienne en Asie - contraste frappant avec sa réception contemporaine en Occident.

Carl Weber. "Brecht está en su casa en Asia: Un relato del Simposio IBS en Hong Kong, diciembre de 1986."

Muchas de las discusiones del Simposio de la SIB enfocaron la fatiga con Brecht que persiste en el occidente, especialmente en la Europa occidental, mientras otras describieron el efecto estimulante de sus obras y sus teorías en Asia y otras partes del así llamado Tercer Mundo. Weber evalúa las realizaciones vistas durante la semana del Simposio, subrayando la importancia de Brecht para una gran parte del teatro asiático contemporáneo.

La compañía de Senda Korea, el Teatro Haiyuza de Toquio, mostró dos realizaciones - *El alma buena de Sechuan* y tres obras didácticas, incluso *El que dice sí / El que dice no*. La yuxtaposición de las dos realizaciones marcadamente distintas alcanzó todo lo que se podría esperar del teatro de Brecht: compromiso emocional inmediatamente "distanciado", la alegría del drama como juego, la habilidad del arte, y la provocación agradable que nos hace considerar críticamente los acontecimientos que vemos y, por consiguiente, el mundo en que vivimos.

El video de *Schweyk en la segunda guerra mundial*, una realización del Teatro Artístico Popular de Pekín, dirigida por Lin Zhao-hua, fue la más perfecta del simposio, según los directores y los críticos de Francia y Alemania.

Jiang Yunxian, cantando en el dialecto de Suzhou, presentó dos demostraciones del *Pingtan*, un modo teatral más próximo a las ideas de Brecht mismo sobre lo que debería ser un teatro épico-dialéctico, que la representación de la Ópera de Pekín de Mei Lanfang, vista por Brecht en 1935, y descrita tan calurosamente en su ensayo sobre el teatro chino.

Weber también discute las realizaciones de *La ascensión resistible de Arturo Ui* (Teatro Repertorio de Hong Kong), dirigida por Bernadette Tsui; de *Las visiones de Simone Marchand* (Academia de Artes Teatrales); de *Puntila y su hombre Matti* (o *Ponto Laha*, como la obra es conocida hoy en India) por el Teatro Unidad de Calcutta; de la Asociación del Teatro Educativo Filipino (PETA) del *Círculo de Tiza* y de una revista política musical, "Panata Sa Kalayaan" (*Un Juramento de Libertad*). Un recital estilo cabaret de Australia fue la única contribución "occidental" al festival de Brecht. Robyn Archer presentó *Brecht y Cía*, un programa de poesía y canciones de Brecht y sus tres compositores principales, Weill, Eisler y Dessau.

El simposio planteó inquietudes que serán debatidas durante mucho tiempo: ¿queda el paradigma de Brecht un instrumento con el cual se puede interpretar el mundo contemporáneo? ¿Son sus modelos excesivamente simplistas para la representación de sociedades postindustrializadas, y ahora pertinentes tan sólo para las culturas del Tercer Mundo? ¿Necesitamos paradigmas nuevos para poder redescubrir la calidad radical de su obra? ¿O quizás su apropiación por el teatro indígena de Asia ya empezó a movernos hacia un paradigma nuevo?

Brecht and the Current Transformation of the Theatre In China

Chen Yong

As we all know, Brecht was influenced by East Asian arts, especially those of China and Japan. He evolved an anti-mechanical process of thinking. He did not represent things in the theatre as accomplished facts but as a process to be observed as developing and capable of being questioned.

Western empiricism polarized and simplified the relationship between man and nature. It emphasized that man must overcome nature. It ignored the constraints that nature placed on man. It fragmented the world and overlooked its overall coherence. It saw the structure of knowledge as prefabricated. Brecht's epic theatre and theory of alienation was an opposing force to nineteenth century European philosophy and the Aristotelian poetics which had dominated Western theatre for over 2000 years. His theatre challenged the imagination, as well as the mode of social analysis. It transformed, transposed and replaced a whole system of principles of the theatre.

Another well known fact is that spoken drama came to China through Japan and the West about four decades ago at a time when the Western stage was dominated by Naturalism. It was a transitional stage which saw rapid changes in the modern theatre. The vanguard of the Chinese new cultural movement used spoken drama as a weapon against feudalism and the old culture. This movement reflected changing currents of thought and social analysis. But it did not pay much attention to theatrical representation as such. The May 4th Movement opened up new vistas. What we witnessed moving across the Chinese stage in rapid succession were classical, expressionist, realist, symbolist, and art-for-art's-sake drama. Every kind of theatrical mode, style and theories exerted varying degrees of influence on the development of Chinese spoken drama. In China to-day, political choice is undeniably a strong factor. In a society plagued with political problems, plays with social political themes take root readily. Naturalist and Expressionist drama, with their concern for topical problems, were natural vehicles for expressions of class struggle and the struggle for a people's consciousness. That explained why Naturalism and Expressionism held sway over several decades. In the Fifties, Stanislavsky's method gained popularity in China. Perhaps it was a partial understanding of the Stanislavskian method which added to the propensity to develop in a certain fixed direction. Most playwrights and directors adopted and vigorously pursued the method of complete identification. Thus they were placed at the periphery of the quest for total conversion.

In 1959, our renowned director Huang Zuolin staged *Mother Courage and her Children* in the Shanghai People's Art Theatre. In a subsequent paper entitled "On Dramatic Theory," he discussed the interaction between the dramatic principles of Stanislavsky, Mei Lanfang and Brecht. He aimed to go beyond narrow identification with a certain dramatic theory which was so typical of contemporary dramatic works. It was my regret that I did not see that performance of *Mother Courage*. It was reputed to have been staged in the style of the Berliner Ensemble, and to have put a great distance between itself and the type of spoken drama known to the Chinese audience. The audience was unprepared and did not react strongly in either way. Huang Zuolin jokingly remarked that Brecht's alienation effect had indeed alienated the audience to the effect that they stayed clear of the theatre door.

Twenty years later, in March 1979, Huang Zuolin and I jointly directed the China Youth Art Theatre in *Life of Galileo* in Beijing. We made some fairly extensive cuts. We also gave the play a slightly different interpretation. We emphasized the need for exceptional courage in the pursuit of science. We successfully created the complex image of a hero and a rebel in *Galileo*. We materialized Brecht's "picture of an unadorned new age". The play was given a tremendous reception by co-workers in the theatre profession, critics, and audiences. There were over 40 press notices in Beijing alone. It played to full houses in its run of over 80 performances. Of course, the staging of *Galileo* could not be said to be strictly Brechtian. Neither have we arrived at a way of translating and staging Brecht in China. But this experimentation showed that the Chinese audience was ready to understand and accept Brecht's plays. Epic theatre with its dialectical content, its artistic power, its lively representation has not only given a fresh impetus to the thinking and artistic perception of the audience, it has also brought something new to Chinese theatre in general.

Initial changes were detectable in dramatic structure. Playwrights gradually realized that an "over-finished", "over-refined" piece of work shut up dramatic writing in a self-satisfied world. This had severed the link with the many-sided life of society. Sha Yexin's *Mayor Chen Yi*, Liu Shugang's *Investigation and Analysis of 15 Divorce Cases* and Chen Baichen's adaptation of Lu Xun's *Story of Ah Q* all brushed aside the traditional hold of the tightly-knit plot and the cause and effect or linear development approach to structure. They showed that people's actions and behavior are far more complex and multidimensional than what was considered "dramatic." Gao Xingjian's *Station and Savage*, Sun Huizhu and Zhang Mali's *Old B is Hanging Up on the Wall*, He Zizhuang et al's *Obsequies on the Mountain*, Wang Peigong's *Us (WM)*, Tao Jun et al's *The Devil's Formula*, Ma Zhongjun and Qin Peichun's *Red Room, White Room, Black Room* all used multiple levels of representation in order to represent totality. They aimed at historicizing man's perception of his present situation.

Late Nineteenth century illusionist theatre greatly influenced Chinese drama. For a long time, the concept of the "Fourth Wall" tied the hands of playwrights, directors, actors and designers. Brecht's epic theatre freed the stage as an arena for representation. It did not

camouflage theatrical business as anything other than staging a show. It instantly made audiences aware of being in a theatre. It formed a strong counter-current to the dominance of Expressionism on the Chinese stage. It opened up new ways, more choices, more creative possibilities. The theatre was at last released from a strictly naturalistic, outward imitation of life. The more creative playwrights were then able to maneuver their own as well as the audience's imaginative and creative power to overcome the regularity of everyday life. They were able to reveal the inner order and the complexities of life. The abler directors found unbounded freedom within the boundary of the stage. The alienation effect has a dual role. It stresses the indigenous and independent expressive power of each of the composite elements of the theatre: dialogue, music, choreography, setting, lighting, sound effects, costume, props and color. It also stresses that each of the above is a component of the whole. Through juxtaposition, contrasts, interaction, estrangement, superimposition and through a complex system of notation, the dramatist creates a multi-dimensional aural and visual structure to manifest the evergrowing multiplicities of his conception of the world and the intricacies of the mind.

The greatest enlightenment that Brecht has brought to Chinese theatre is the fluidity shown in his drama and his theories. It is not a paradigm, but a world picture. It is a dialectical way to get to know about man and man in his environment. To be an untiring revolutionary in the theatre is to encourage unceasing exploration and progress, and not to rest on one's laurels. His drama should reflect society, partake in the transformation of the present, revolutionize the audience and the theatre itself.

In April 1985, the First Brecht Symposium in China was held in Beijing. The following plays were staged in Beijing and Shanghai: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The Good Person of Sezuan*, *Schweyk in the Second World War* (excerpts only), *A Respectable Wedding*, *Mr. Puntilla and His Man Matti* (excerpts only), and *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* (excerpts only). Different directors experimented with different emphases and brought Brecht to the Chinese stage. Their degree of achievement and influence were not the same, but each of them was irreplaceable in its individual value.

In my direction of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, I tried to find a connecting point between the principles of Brechtian theatre and Chinese traditional theatre. Recitation, stylised gestures and martial arts techniques were highlighted to create the many characters, to carry out various stage business and scene changes. This was aimed at unleashing the creativity of the cast and to free them from mere imitation of the realities of life. They could then do their best to unveil society as it was. Our masks were based on Peking opera face-painting. We used stylised voice projection, stylised bodily attitudes, contrasts in the rhythm of movement, multi-dimensional changes and techniques.

The cast felt an unaccustomed joy and freedom in creativity. This was because they were fully aware that they had been given a new

freedom to "perform" and that were not to be inhibited by immediate experience.

The structure of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* requires the use of a ballad-singer's recitation as the main method of narration to express thoughts and feelings. Therefore it was a great problem to coordinate music, drama and narrative into a coherent whole. We used choreographed movements, mime, and martial arts techniques to bring out fully spatial and temporal fluidity on the stage. To this we added hypothetical and symbolic settings. The actors' body movements formed a lively composition on stage. Sound effects and lighting were designed to reveal, so that the audience could not forget they were in the arena of performance and could not escape from theatricality. Entertainment and artistic appreciation happen concurrently, so one can expect a true dialogue between emotion and reason.

Research into and use of Brechtian art not only forms a link between the theatre workers in China and the pulse of international theatre movement, it also stimulates our respect, fervor for, and reassessment of our own superb traditional theatrical heritage.

We would not like to be simply labelled Brecht's vanguard or proponents. Nor would we claim to be Brecht's disciples, just as we once impotently professed to be Stanislavsky's disciples. We must develop our indigenous performance style in the process of learning from others.

Brecht said that comprehensive changes in the theater were brought about through the inspiration of the artists and that these changes must match the changes in the spirit of the age. China now is experiencing irrepressible transformations in its politics, economy, culture and the arts. Its experience progresses from isolation to opening, from the static to the fluid, from single-tracked to multi-dimensional movement in its historical process. The struggle between tradition and transformation, repression and creativity, is moving towards a polarization. We have taken a definite step forward in our cultural progress and our critical self-examination. Our tradition of representation and our aesthetic sense are now confronting a momentous and inescapable task. Therefore it is natural that the whole of our cultural front is turning its focus on Brecht. We are grateful for his enlightenment and help. The China Youth Art Theatre's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is certainly different from the original Berliner Ensemble production. It is also different from any other productions elsewhere. It can be viewed as the personal interpretation of the cast and of the director. It is a theatrical experience which awaits the critical appraisal of the audience.

Thank you.

Chen Yong. "Brecht im gegenwärtigen Wandel des chinesischen Theaters."

Der Einfluß der asiatischen Kultur auf den späten Brecht ist bekannt, und Chen Yong referiert kurz den Einfluß, den umgekehrt Brechts Theater auf ein China hatte, das im Rahmen der politischen Revolution zunehmend in den Bann des psychologisch-realistischen westlichen Dramas der 20er und 30er Jahre geriet, und das daher zunächst sehr befremdlich auf die erste Begegnung mit Brechts *Mutter Courage* im Jahre 1959 reagierte.

Erst zwanzig Jahre später stellte sich der erste Erfolg ein durch eine Inszenierung des *Leben des Galilei*, dessen nachhaltiger Eindruck bereits kurz danach in neuen eigenen Produktionen des chinesischen Theaters spürbar werden sollte. Die bislang dominierende Form des "well made play" begann komplexeren Formen zu weichen, die allein imstande gewesen seien, die komplexere Realität der zeitgenössischen chinesischen Gesellschaft abzubilden. Die neuen Stücke bemühen sich, angeregt durch Brecht, die vielfältigen theatralischen Ausdrucksformen wie Dialog, Musik, Kostüm etc. produktiver zusammenwirken zu lassen; starre Theorien entwickeln sich zu flexiblen, ausdrucksfähigen Konzepten. In ihren eigenen Inszenierungen sucht Chen Yong nach einer organischen Fusion zwischen Brecht und dem chinesischen Theater, indem sie Elemente der Peking-Oper mit ihrer Szenenfülle und der ihr eigenen artistischen Spielfreude verarbeitet, aber jeden Illusionismus und Sensationalismus durch dauernde Betonung des Spielcharakters unschädlich macht.

Die Exkursion in das Brecht-Theater führt so für Chen Yong wieder zurück zu den Wurzeln der reichen und urwüchsigen Theatertradition Chinas. Die Spannungen zwischen Wandlung und Bewahrung, Isolation und Öffnung, Ein- und Vieldimensionalität bilden Chens Meinung nach den Geist der sozioökonomischen Wandlungen des modernen Chinas ab - ganz im Sinne Brechts.

Chen Yong. "Brecht et la transformation actuelle du théâtre en Chine."

C'est un fait bien connu que Brecht s'est inspiré des arts asiatiques en développant une mode de pensée non-mécanique et en représentant dans son théâtre le mouvement plutôt que l'accomplissement de l'action. Le théâtre parlé a été introduit en Chine il y a soixante ans alors que le théâtre occidental était dominé par le naturalisme. L'avant-garde a utilisé ce théâtre nouveau comme arme contre l'ancienne culture féodale, sans se soucier de la forme. Le naturalisme et l'expressionisme étaient des moyens adéquats pour parler des problèmes politiques. Le mouvement du Quatre Mai a ouvert d'autres perspectives. Dans les années cinquante, on a pris Stanislavski comme modèle. En 1959, Huang Zuolin a mis en scène *Mère Courage* en coopération avec le Théâtre artistique populaire de Shanghaï dans un style proche du Berliner Ensemble. Le public n'était pas prêt à

l'acueillir. Ce n'est qu'à partir de 1979, dans la mise en scène par Huang Zuolin et Chen Yong en collaboration avec le Théâtre artistique de la jeunesse chinoise de *Vie de Galilée*, que la dramaturgie de Brecht a apporté, grâce à une réception positive de la pièce, un renouveau au sein du théâtre chinois. Les réalisations dramatiques ont brisé les conventions qui enfermaient la dramaturgie établie. Ensuite, le théâtre a été enrichi, grâce au concept du *Verfremdungseffekt*. Dans la mise en scène du *Cercle de craie caucasien*, au cours du Symposium Brecht à Beijing en 1985, Chen Yong a essayé d'établir des liens entre Brecht et le théâtre chinois. On peut dire que la dramaturgie en Chine est un disciple de celle de Brecht, dans le sens non d'une répétition, mais d'une créativité. La Chine subit des changements dans sa politique, dans son économie et dans sa culture, et pour cette raison, il est normal que la culture chinoise se tourne vers Brecht.

Chen Yong. "Brecht y la transformación actual del teatro en China."

Como sabemos todos, Brecht fue influenciado por las artes japonesas y chinas y creó un modo de pensar antimecánico. Él no representa las cosas en el teatro como hechos acabados, sino como un proceso en desarrollo y capaz de ser interrogado. El teatro épico de Brecht y su teoría del *Verfremdung* se oponen a la filosofía europea del siglo XIX y la poética aristotélica.

El teatro hablado llegó hasta China desde el occidente a través del Japón hace sesenta años, cuando el teatro occidental era más influenciado por el naturalismo. La "avant-garde" utilizó este teatro como arma contra la antigua cultura feudal, pero no se preocupó con la forma. El teatro chino fue influenciado entonces por muchísimos estilos y teorías dramáticas. El naturalismo como el expresionismo eran igualmente adecuados para transmitir problemas políticos, pero el Movimiento del Cuatro de Mayo abrió otras perspectivas. En los años 50, el método de Stanislavski dominó en China.

La versión de *Madre Coraje* dirigida por Huang Zuolin (Teatro Popular de Shanghai, 1959), basada sobre el modelo del *Berliner Ensemble*, no agradó al público que no estaba preparado para tanto. Huang Zuolin discute también las relaciones entre Stanislavski, Mei Lanfang y Brecht.

La versión de *Galileo Galilei* (Teatro artístico de la juventud, 1979) no fue realmente brechtiana. Huang Zuolin y el autor subrayaron el coraje extraordinario necesario para la investigación científica. Consiguieron una traducción y realización de la obra de Brecht aptas para el público chino. Esta experiencia demostró que este público estaba listo para comprender y aceptar a Brecht.

El primer simposio sobre Brecht fue en abril de 1985, en Pekín. Varias obras fueron representadas con más o menos éxito. Mi adaptación de *El Círculo de tiza caucasiano* intentó combinar los principios brechtianos con el teatro tradicional chino: recitación, gestos

estilizados, técnicas provenientes de las artes marciales fueron utilizados.

La experimentación con el arte teatral de Brecht favoreció el contacto de los trabajadores del teatro de China con el movimiento teatral internacional, y estimuló nuestro respeto por nuestra propia tradición. No creemos ser discípulos ni de Brecht ni de Stanislavski. Tendremos que desarrollar nuestro propio estilo de representación a partir de las enseñanzas de otros.

La China actual pasa por cambios políticos, económicos, artísticos y culturales. La lucha se polariza entre la tradición, la transformación, la represión y la creación. Brecht será cada vez más necesario para nuestra autocrítica y para nuestro progreso cultural.

Brecht's Drama and the Modern Chinese Stage

Xue Dianjie

Take *The True Story of Ah Q* and other dramas performed recently by the Central Experimental Theater as examples, and we will have an inside view of the influence of Brecht's drama upon playwrighting and the performance of modern Chinese drama.

I

Mr. Huang Zuolin raised the question of "the outlook on drama" when he was discussing the comparison between Stanislavsky's system, Brecht's drama and the traditional opera of our country in 1962. After being suspended for more than ten years, the discussion of the outlook on drama has expanded from discussing reason and feelings, thought and appreciation, to learning through practice and expression, to discussing the influence of vulgar sociology upon drama, the social function and aesthetic function of drama. From the comparison between eastern culture and western culture to national cultural psychology and national traditional aesthetic habit, the viewpoints are sharply contradictory, and the disputation heated. But no matter whether one thinks that Brecht's drama is unsuitable to Chinese conditions or considers that Brecht's drama is exactly necessary for China, the opposition only goes to show that we can't neglect the tremendous influence exerted by Brecht's drama upon the development of our drama, especially the modern drama. The influence is not only displayed by the many plays performed and the theories translated and introduced to China (although we have much work to do in this aspect), but also by the fact that, even though quite a number of dramatists, directors, performers and stage artists are not performing dramas written by Brecht, yet their writing practice and stage practice are affected by Brecht's drama in different degrees. I would like to take several dramas which have been performed in recent years as examples showing the influence of Brecht's drama upon our stage. But it may be only a peephole view. A number of people in our theater like Brecht's drama, and they also have the will to develop our modern drama by applying Brecht's dramatic ideas in their work with the exchange of views of the drama of East and West in mind. These dramas aren't entirely of Brecht's type as they are also affected by the influence of our own tradition, especially the tradition of national drama and other modern world drama.

II

The True Story of Ah Q was revised by dramatist Chen Baichen, based on Lu Xun's novel of the same title. Wen Xingyu was the director. This drama had been performed twice by the Central Experimental Theater in 1981 and 1986. Lu Xun, with tremendous enthusiasm and rationalism, "feeling pity for his misfortunes and angry for his bad behavior", created the immortal image of Ah Q. The moral victory method of Ah Q is the result of the tremendous internal injury of mental enslavement in the Chinese people's soul, which was caused by the culture of feudal society, and semi-feudal and semi-colonial society over a long period of time. It is the alienation and distortion of human nature, and it is also the collapse of the human mental world. Ah Q is an apathetic, ignorant and forgetful person. He meekly submits to oppression and resigns himself to humiliation. He lacks self-confidence and self-respect and hasn't any spirit of resistance before the strong man. However, he doesn't miss any chances to bully and humiliate the weak by which he becomes overweening and very pleased with himself. Almost every Chinese person can find a factor or trace of Ah Q's character in him- or herself. If national, deep-rooted bad habits couldn't be cured, the progress of society is hopeless. Our famous reviewer Liu Zaifu said: "Lu Xun was not an ordinary writer. He was an uncommon writer who took part in history with the brilliant reasoning of a cultural giant and thinker." Lu Xun wrote *The True Story of Ah Q* in 1921. Of course it is impossible that it can have any relations with Brecht's drama. But we find that between Lu Xun and Brecht there are some astonishing similarities. The analysis and criticism of the national deep-rooted bad habits of the Chinese people by Lu Xun were based on reflections upon the source that made the Chinese nation backward and disastrous. Brecht's critique of the psychology of the German urban petit-bourgeois was based on his reflection of the German national disaster, for instance war, the Fascists and their social basis. Therefore there is nothing strange about why the writing technique of Lu Xun and the *Verfremdungseffekt* of Brecht were so similar. Lu Xun said: "Besides arousing public indignation, we should use methods to implant real courage. While working up their emotion, we should also attempt to arouse their clear reasoning: giving special stress to courage and reasoning."¹ He also said: "What he wrote about is openly acknowledged and also often seen, but being nothing strange, it is naturally unnoticed by anyone. Although what happened is already considered at the time as irrational, funny, base, and even hateful, yet because it had always been like that, so customary, no one considered it strange any more even if it takes place openly in public. To give it a special emphasis now will move people."² This similarity gave the director and stage artist designer courage to apply the narrative technique of Brecht's drama in treating *The True Story of Ah Q*. Lu Xun had declared that "his object wasn't to arouse pity"³ when he wrote *The True Story of Ah Q*. Our performance does not try to make the audience sympathize with the unfortunate destiny of Ah Q but to arouse the audience's reason and encourage close examination, that is we stress

"anger for his bad behavior". For example, we laid stress on revealing and criticizing the Ah Q-type's "peasant's view of revolution" in the performance of Ah Q rebelling in his dream. This makes us think that in view of the revolutionary peasant origin, it is necessary to look closely for introspection and free oneself from the deep level of the Chinese people's national cultural psychology. In our performance, the purpose of putting the imperial crown and gown on the rebellious Ah Q in his dream was to remind the audience that they should look closely at this point.

In the performance of this drama we used the *Verfremdungseffekt* consciously. For instance, the narrator appeared on the stage, and the revelation of Ah Q's moral victory was completed jointly by the performance of the actor and the explanation of the narrator. Combining narration with performance is also reflected in two other dramas: One being the handling of a scene in the drama *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* in which Mother Yang's son was promoted from a coolie to an overseer, and the other being the singer that narrated the escape of Grusha in the drama *Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis*. When the drama was performed we used incandescent lamps for the stage illumination. All the light equipment was revealed to the audience. This was almost a revolution for Chinese stage lighting at that time. The stage setting was drawn with the technique of China's traditional "line drawing" with ink and brush. We drew the social environment of Wei Zhuang on a tattered gunny to create some kind of metaphor. Since this drama derived from a story, narrative features were retained, so that it was possible for us to apply the technique of narrative drama.

III

Investigation and Analysis of Fifteen Divorce Cases was written by Liu Shugang. Geng Zheng was the director. The drama was first performed by the Central Experimental Theater at Beijing in 1983. This drama is composed of many divorce cases. Except for a group of characters that run through the whole drama, a number of divorce cases are independent pieces. The situation of divorce is complicated. The divorce cases shown in this drama reveal the traditional idea of marriage which was formed by feudal society and culture. They also reveal the confusion and perplexity, progress and retrogression, searching for the value and dignity of a human being, and sentiment or morality, all brought about with the stepping of the old society into the modern one which is rethinking the traditional idea of marriage.

There are two explanatory people in the play. One is a man and the other is a woman. These two people play the different roles in the different divorce cases. Their dresses, adornments and headgear are placed at the two sides of the stage where they can be seen by the audience. They make up in the presence of the audience and enter into the spirit of the characters. They also remove their stage makeup and costumes in the presence of the audience and review and comment on the story of the drama and the behavior of the characters. And

sometimes they act as the explanatory narrator and talk with the character's soul and analyze the contradictions in their innermost being. Time and space are free and relative. Recollection and reality appear alternately and sometimes the actor performs the future. For example, Shen Te in *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* performed how she would carry her forthcoming baby to pick cherries. There was a picture hung at the back of the stage. On the picture there were many drawings, such as the dream of pursuing happiness, the annoyance of unfortunate marriage and some words for contemplation such as "family", "morality", "marriage", "the second generation", "law", "soul" and so on. The stage was only a space for performing. The environment of the story was told by the performance of the actor.

This drama isn't completely Brecht's, but obviously, there are many similar narrative drama factors in it.

IV

The Visit of a Dead Man to The Living was written by Liu Shugang. Tian Chengren and Wu Xiaojang were the directors. The drama was first performed by the Central Experimental Theater in 1985. The author handled a very severe theme with a rather relaxed technique. A young man whose name was Xiao Xiao encountered two pickpockets on the bus. He stood up and fought with them, but he was attacked by them and died. After he died, he went to visit the passengers one by one and asked them why they did not help him when he was fighting with the pickpockets. Among the passengers there were cadres, workers, young women, pupils and peasants who had come into town. Some of the workers could also do martial arts. The person whose things were stolen did not even dare to admit the fact. Since the passengers were in the presence of the dead, they couldn't conceal their true psychological feelings at the time of the incident. So the surface layer of life has been peeled off and the mask on their faces taken away. The intense struggle in their innermost being has begun to be waged. Every one had their own pursuit of life and tried to defend themselves or felt ashamed about it. But the dead forgave them one after another. In order not to make the drama too callous and grim, the author sometimes added some singing, dancing or humorous performances to lighten the atmosphere. The author seemed to be detached, but in fact he has very strong feelings of right and wrong. He kept his distance and looked closely at reality. The director handled the performance with full dramatic feelings or even playful feelings. The performers sat at the two sides on the stage. If the performance called for one of the performers, the actor just stood up, put on his mask and draped the emblematic costume on him in the presence of the audience. Then he walked to the middle of the stage and began to perform, dance or sing accordingly. When he finished his performance, he took off the mask, hung it on the wall and went back to his original place. Sometimes the performers served as the stage workers making the sound effects of rain or snow. The setting of the stage had some uncoordinated sketches. These drawings display

surprise, numbness, pain or struggling faces, figures of arms. A drummer was placed at an outstanding place on the stage, and the drum beats would control the rhythm of the performance. A play is only a play. It isn't real life. Dramatic art is only the other shore of reality. It only serves the purpose for the audience to compare the story in the drama with reality. For example, Xiao Xiao forgave all the passengers, but whether the audience forgives them or not is the choice of real people.

Xiao Xiao did not receive any special attention during his life time. Before his death he asked to join the Communist Party, but the Party Organization did not need him. But after he died, he was posthumously admitted as a member of the Communist Party. And according to the necessity of social propaganda, he was preached as a "hero". Society not only distorted the living being but also distorted the dead. There was a funeral and a memorial meeting in the drama, but the "hero" always wanted to laugh, so he was always destroying the solemn and respectful atmosphere of the meeting. The elegiac couplet of the meeting wasn't in praise of the dead. The first line of the couplet was "How could the story on the stage not exist in the world?" The second line of the couplet was "The character in the drama is often among the audience." This told the audience that this is nothing more than performance. The whole drama is composed of a number of passages. Each passage can be independent. The technique which is adopted in the narration of the living passenger is that the reality and recollection alternately appear on the stage. Narration and performance are combined together. From unheroizing the leading character in the drama to the application of various *Verfremdungseffekte*, we can see the influence of Brecht's drama. Of course there are some factors that do not belong to narrative drama, such as the inclusion of the dancing scene.

NOTES

1. Lu Xun, *The Complete Works of Lu Xun*, Vol. 1, 1958, pp. 322 (Chinese edition).
2. Lu Xun, *The Complete Works of Lu Xun*, Vol. 6, 1958, pp. 258 (Chinese edition).
3. Lu Xun, *The Epistolary Collection of Lu Xun*, Vol. 1, 1976, pp. 261 (Chinese edition).

Xue Dianjie. "Brechts Theater und die moderne chinesische Bühne."

Xue zeigt, wie die in Brechts Theater entwickelten Techniken das moderne chinesische Theater beeinflusst hat. Er weist hin auf den vergleichbaren Gebrauch von Verfremdungseffekten, besonders in der Aufführung von Lu Xun *Die wahre Geschichte des Ah Q* durch das Central Experimental Theater in Beijing. Traumszenen wurden dort verwendet, um die Aufmerksamkeit auf gewisse, kritiklos akzeptierte Züge in der nationalen Psyche zu lenken. Er bringt weitere Beispiele für die Hervorrufung einer durch Brechts Methoden angeregten kritischen Stellungnahme Verhaltensweisen gegenüber, die sonst einfach "normal" erschienen wären.

Xue Dianjie. "Le théâtre de Brecht et la dramaturgie chinoise moderne."

Xue démontre comment la connaissance du théâtre brechtien a influencé la dramaturgie chinoise. Il invoque un parallélisme entre l'emploi des techniques de distanciation chez Brecht et dans une production de *L'Histoire véritable d'Ah Q* par le Théâtre Central Expérimental. Dans cette dernière, certaines suites d'images oniriques servent à instaurer un écart critique, et à attirer une attention toute nouvelle sur quelques traits psychologiques du caractère national. Xue fournit ensuite quelques exemples des formes désautomatisantes, qui mettent les spectateurs à même de porter des jugements critiques sur les normes qui passent pour celles d'une conduite naturelle. La création de ces techniques a été inspirée par la grande oeuvre brechtienne.

Xue Dianjie. "El teatro de Brecht y la dramaturgia china moderna."

Xue demuestra cómo el conocimiento del teatro de Brecht ha influido la dramaturgia moderna de China. Traza el recurso a ciertos efectos defamiliarizadores que asemejan *La Verdadera historia de Ah Q* de Lu Xun, realizada por El Teatro Central Experimental, a la obra brechtiana. En aquella producción se emplearon secuencias oníricas para distanciar al público y atraer su atención sobre unos rasgos del carácter nacional de los cuales se desentendía hasta entonces. Xue presenta también otros ejemplos de formas distanciadoras que permiten al público echar una mirada crítica sobre las normas aceptadas como las de un modo de vivir incontestable. La invención de tales métodos innovadores es alentada por el ejemplo de la gran obra brechtiana.

Brecht and the Chinese Theater In the Eighties

Li Jianming

I am glad to have this opportunity to participate in the Seventh International Brecht Symposium. I am grateful to the organizers of the symposium for their hard work that makes it possible for us to gather here today. This gives us a chance to learn from the experience of our friends in Hong Kong, Asia, as well as other countries in promoting Brechtian theater. Brecht, the greatest dramatist of our time, has been dead for thirty years. Within this period, the dialectic theater of Brecht has exerted great influence upon the stages in different countries. Not only has his idea on the theater nurtured a breed of playwrights, directors and actors, more importantly, his aesthetics which aims at "reforming the world" has blazed a new path for modern theater, which takes the audience as a crucial constituent of the art of theater. Brecht was profoundly interested in Chinese philosophy, theater and the great social changes that had occurred in China. It was a pity that our interest in him lagged behind for a long time. Only within recent years have Brecht's work and his ideas on the theater aroused the attention of the Chinese theater circles and slowly won their approval. The study of such a change not only can help us understand the special attributes of the Chinese theater and its directions of development, it also allows us to comprehend the social background appropriate for the promotion of Brechtian theater and its contemporary significance. I shall present to you the influences Brecht has exerted on Chinese theater, and the consequences as well as the difficulties we face in our attempts to promote Brecht's theater.

Reception of Brecht in China

During these thirty years, much evidence has proved that the acceptance of Brecht by Chinese theater circles has not been easy. This is not only because modern Chinese spoken theater has been deeply influenced by the convention of naturalistic theater which took Stanislavsky's system as the orthodox model and rejected all other systems, it is also related to the once conservative and dogmatic cultural policy of China. However, the fact that Brecht's ideas on theater have been understood and accepted by more and more people reveals the great vitality of Brechtian theater and the development of Chinese theater under new historical conditions. After 1949, the influence of Brecht on Chinese theater could roughly be divided into three stages: 1. In the Fifties when Huang Zuolin introduced Brechtian dramaturgy for the first time in China and later brought *Mother Courage* on stage in

Shanghai; 2. After the Cultural Revolution when the Chinese Youth Art Theater produced *Life of Galileo* and exerted influences; 3. After the first Brecht Symposium was held in China in April, 1985.

In 1959 Huang Zuolin published an article which introduced Brecht to the Chinese public for the first time. In the article, he raised the important issue of what should be learned from Brecht and emphatically presented the characteristics of Brecht's theory of narrative theater. He pointed out that the objective of the Brechtian theater is to help the audience establish a positive and critical attitude toward life and to show them that both society and man can change, so that they can recognize their own responsibility and capability. Mr. Huang also stressed in the article the dialectical relationship between emotion and rational thinking. However, this important article by Mr. Huang did not receive due attention in theater circles. Most people even had the idea that to watch plays rationally was to reject emotion, was to oppose the creation of vivid, moving and imitable heroic images on stage. In 1963, Yao Wenyuan, though without specifying his target, criticized in an article "the dangerous tendency of capitalist artists acclaiming the bourgeois dramatist Brecht". Between the Fifties and Sixties, the resistance one faced in introducing Brechtian theater to the general public in China was enormous. This naturally concerned the problem of translation, but the main reason lay in the fact that most theater circles regarded the Three Unities of naturalist theater as the basis for the tradition of realist theater. At that time, the function of the theater was simply to serve the policy of the communist party. Under these circumstances, there could be no real theoretical discussions of theater. Judging from the demand of the audience, we can see that their habit of appreciation did not seem to have transcended empathy. People would still be moved by the epitome of the old society on stage. Though new social reforms had already surfaced, their inherent contradictions and difficulties had not been recognized and attended to seriously. Obviously, against the social background of that time, Brecht's dialectical theater still did not arouse the attention of the Chinese public, nor win its approval. Its hollow knowledge of the principles of development of a socialist society and the grave tendency to take literature and art as tools to serve the politics of the proletariat had shut the door on Brecht.

After the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese Youth Art Theater produced *Life of Galileo* in 1979 and this marked the beginning of the second stage of the introduction and study of Brecht in China. The production of *Life of Galileo* by the Chinese Youth Art Theater exerted its influence in the following three main aspects: 1. Brecht's theories on the writing of narrative drama and the dialectical character portrayal of Galileo inspired certain playwrights, directors and critics, releasing them from their accustomed Three Unities. Most of the works with narrative structure that occurred in China afterwards cannot be seen as unrelated to the influence of *Life of Galileo*. There also appeared then in the newspaper discussions of how to portray positive characters. Sensitive artists began to realize that they could no longer use imaginary gallant images with no contradictions or development to fool

the audience. The theater has to break the bondage of vulgar sociology. It has to truly reflect reality, reflect the great social incidences as well as the changes and developments of man. More importantly, Brecht's suggestion that theater has to inspire the audience to think began to take root in the minds of many theater workers. People began to pay attention to audience response and took it as an object for study. Some playwrights took the act of inspiring people to think as the point of departure for their creative work. 2. The production of *Life of Galileo* enabled some of the theater workers to see Brechtian theater as a complete system, not as a theory of acting. Hence it was not easily dismissable or replaced by Stanislavsky's system. Over a long period of time, Stanislavsky's system had been one of the major forces resisting the introduction of Brechtian theater into China. One who introduced Brecht was one who opposed Stanislavsky. This was a widespread prejudice. The production of *Life of Galileo* disclosed to people that Brecht was in the first place a playwright. The establishment of this fact reduced some of the resistance. 3. The production of *Life of Galileo* had yet another accomplishment: it helped abolish the illusion of life on stage. The use of the non-illusory stage by the Chinese Youth Art Theater in producing *Galileo* ended the history of dominance by the illusory stage in Chinese theater. Platforms, backdrops and indicative settings in the play conveyed to the audience a sense of beauty and inspired them with imagination and thinking. The success of this experiment removed the strands of doubt in the conservatives. And the art of stage design in this play became the pioneer in reforming the Chinese theater.

The production of *Life of Galileo* by the Chinese Youth Art Theater aroused very strong social reactions. The reason that within a short time after the Cultural Revolution Brechtian theater could elicit such strong social responses with the production of just one play was naturally related to the search of the artists and the demand of the audience at that particular period. After the Cultural Revolution, people in the literary and art world voiced different views concerning the function of the theater, the understanding of socialist realism as well as a series of other issues. They had broadened their vision, examined the advanced experience of countries abroad and moved forward with the spirit of the times. Under such historical circumstances, Brecht's drama found its particular niche in China.

In 1985, the opening of the first Brecht Symposium indicated the beginning of the third stage. This symposium, organized by non-government institutions, was held separately in Beijing and Shanghai. During the time of the Symposium, aside from discussions of seminar papers and exhibitions of related pictures, there were also performances. Beijing produced *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The Good Person of Sezuan*, *Schweyk in the Second World War* (segment). Shanghai produced *The Petit-Bourgeois Wedding*, *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* (segment), and *Mr. Puntila and his Man Matti* (in collaboration with Pingtan).

Those who participated in this symposium included playwrights, directors, stage designers, Brecht scholars, university students, five

theatrical troops and the staff and students of two dramatic academies. Mr. Tatlow gave talks on Brecht's aesthetics both in Beijing and in Shanghai, offering revealing insights to those present at the symposium. Within the six years between 1979 when the Chinese Youth Art Theater produced *Life of Galileo* and 1985 when the first Brecht Symposium was held in China, it could be said that China had preliminarily established a basic force to introduce Brechtian theater to the public. This was undoubtedly a great improvement. What needed to be stressed was that the symposium was held during the "crisis of the theater". Participants at the symposium analyzed dialectically the reason for the crisis as well as the prospects of the theater, discussing what we should learn from Brecht. The participants started off from the actual situation in China and unanimously agreed that Brechtian theater was a major force from which we could draw our support in the development of the Chinese theater. It was an important venue for the nurture of playwrights, stage designers and actors and an important means to elevate our aesthetic consciousness.

Both the Beijing and Shanghai productions were very successful. Directors and actors took the performance of Brecht's works as an experiment, entwining the techniques of the traditional Chinese folk theaters to make it vivid, lively, and hence smashing the prejudice among theater circles that Brecht's plays were dull and monotonous.

The real significance of the Brecht Symposium lay in releasing the study of Brecht from the academic library; this allowed Brecht's theater to enter into Chinese dramatic practice on a larger scale. Foreign Brecht scholars might feel that our productions did not follow the "norm." Perhaps this was in part correct. But the primary aim of the Chinese theater circles was to serve the Chinese audience. After all the resistances and difficulties had been conquered, they put things into practice. From this perspective, perhaps what we should value more was not the consequences but the process whereby activities were carried out.

During the ten years after the Cultural Revolution, some basic changes occurred within the Chinese theater. Looking back at the development of the Chinese theater during these ten years, we must point to the influence of Brechtian theater. Such influence did not lie in the number of works performed or the number of performances. It resided in the fact that the main views of Brecht's dialectical theater were understood by quite a large number of playwrights and directors. The shattering of stage illusions and the demand for thinking became the starting-point for most theater workers. In the last ten years, especially along with the implementation of more thorough reforms, artists regained their creative freedom. The discussions on the function of theater became more penetrating. The time when the theater served to propagandize the daily policy of the party or to unveil social ills in order to solicit the audience's sympathy had passed. The audience continually split into finer units. Aesthetic demands emerged one after another on different levels, urging artists to think more deeply and to learn from the movements abroad how to enlarge their vision. Under such circumstances, they naturally came into contact with Brecht's

aesthetic of the theater. The influence of Brecht can be felt in the following aspects: 1. In recent years, the change of the Chinese theater from attempts to appeal to emotion to attempts to appeal to reason is closely related to the promulgation of Brechtian theater. In the past, it had often been the aim of the Chinese theater to "move people with emotions." Any work that can move people to tears was acclaimed as excellent. Under the banner whereby revolutionary realism was combined with revolutionary romanticism, the ideology and appreciative standards of the petit-bourgeois overflowed. Works of art became teaching aids of vulgar sociology. This eventually limited man's imagination and turned art more and more into a formula. In the Eighties, such works can no longer gain support from the public. More and more playwrights liberated their creative power through the vitality of thinking, and they wrote to inspire people to think. They seek their materials in real life and combine reality with philosophical thinking. This has resulted in a series of works widely acclaimed by the public. Brecht's understanding of realism was accepted by more and more people. For a long time, the understanding of realism in our theater circles was narrow and fragmented. This was manifested in attempts to take the norm and characters of a certain classic as standards to measure all other works. Any work that happened to diverge from such a norm was condemned as traitor to the tradition of realism and considered formalistic. In this struggle which will continue for a long time, Brecht's discussion on realism could become a great materialistic force. 2. Under the influence of Brecht, more and more artists value the different techniques of performance borrowed from the traditional Chinese theater to enrich the form and content of creative plays.

Difficulties confronted

In the first Brecht Symposium in China, many participants voiced their views concerning the difficulties we are facing. I personally think that the responsibility of introducing at present the Brechtian theater aesthetic to China on a large scale is huge, and the difficulties are numerous. The reasons are as follows: 1. Many of Brecht's works transcend the temporal and spatial limits of our nation. This difference suggests that many of his works would not be easily accepted by the large Chinese public. In the first place, there is the obstacle of content. Next, the aesthetic demands of the audience are different. Brecht worked within a highly developed capitalist society and created many fine works that criticized the capitalist system. What interested him is not the personal fate of man, but great social events, and the relationship among men themselves and between man and society. The characters he created substantially embody the statement "Man is the sum of all his social relations." And China now is at a time of vigorous change. Many Marxist artists at present claim that man should be the foremost concern. This tide which manifested a thorough breach with the Chinese feudalist tradition is undoubtedly an improvement and a continuation of the great May Fourth Movement. And the emphasis on

"human nature" or "personality" is also a reflection of the change in economic life. Under these circumstances, to make many of Brecht's works stand firm on the Chinese stage is no easy task, because within a considerably long period of time, what interests the audience and the artists is not the contradiction of a modern capitalist society, but the question of releasing man from the pitfall of feudalist tradition. 2. The obstacle created by the present way of production. Though we have quite a number of large theaters and a huge team of playwrights, stage designers, actors and critics, as well as academies to train theater workers, the present way of production has become an obstacle in the development of the theater. The continual split-up of the audience and the emergence of various aesthetic demands force the Chinese theater to change its present style of production, because the rigid, unified way of production at present not only hinders most artists from giving free rein to their creative power, it can never achieve the aim of serving different levels of audience. We have to admit that Brechtian theater at present could only gain support from part of the audience. To establish a base for Brecht in China, we have to change the present way of production and build small theaters, without which nothing can be done. 3. The lack of a teaching base to promote Brechtian theater. Though Brecht's works have gained some preliminary success in some Chinese theaters, plans to build academies to train theater workers still remain blank. At present there is still no place in China to train theater consultants. The standard of criticism is also low. These constitute some of the difficulties in promoting Brechtian theater.

Here I wish to illustrate the above points with an example. In June 1986, to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of Brecht's death, the Beijing People's Art Theater and some young actors rehearsed *Schweyk in the Second World War*. This production was well understood and acclaimed by the audience, especially the young theater-goers. The reason that this performance could elicit positive responses from the audience is first of all that the theme of the dialectical relations between the common folk and the great personages is familiar and acceptable to the Chinese audience. If *Man is Man* or *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* had been staged at that time, the audience definitely would not have been so large. Therefore the crux of successfully producing Brecht's plays in China at present lies not in the director's interpretation but in the careful selection of suitable and easily digested works. In rehearsing *Schweyk in the Second World War*, certain weaknesses of our theater workers were revealed, the chief flaw being their inability to analyze dialectically the relationship among men and understand the social significance of the play. This is closely related to the teaching of drama in our country, the content and performance-style of old theatrical works, and general aesthetic habits. This on the one hand illustrates the difficulty in producing Brecht's plays, while also showing the importance of treating the process of rehearsing Brecht's plays as the means of training theater workers. Another revelation from the production of *Schweyk in the Second World War* is that it is not a great problem to ask the Chinese audience to watch plays rationally. On the contrary, the theory of the alienation effect and its application have

occurred in many contemporary Chinese plays, though some application is still not ideal.

Thirty years have passed since Huang Zuolin first introduced Brechtian theater to China. The rise and fall of Brecht in China during these thirty years proves that the introduction of Brechtian theater requires definite social conditions. It is closely related to society's demands. On the other hand, it also proves that Brechtian theater could exert positive influence on the past, present and future development of Chinese theater. We have gone through difficulties, we shall face still greater difficulties ahead. But we are more confident now than any time in the past, because the emergence of a new generation of Chinese writers and artists has established a favorable social milieu for the promotion of Brechtian theater among artists and part of the audience. Brecht said, "Following the great changes, the great times of art begin. Then how great will art be?" I am watching with curiosity such changes as China will undergo and positively participating in them.

Li Jianming. "Brecht und das chinesische Theater der 80er Jahre."

Das neuerliche Interesse in China für Brechts Theater hilft uns, das Wesen des chinesischen Theaters und seinen Hintergrund besser zu verstehen. Li unterscheidet drei Stufen bei der Rezeption seines Werks und erklärt, warum das chinesische Theaterverständnis eine ernsthafte Rezeption des Brechtschen Theaters zuerst praktisch ausschloß. Durch die Erfahrungen der Kulturrevolution ist jedoch eine Aufnahmebereitschaft für die Widersprüche und das dialektische Denken in den Stücken Brechts entstanden und das erklärt den Erfolg der *Galilei*-Inszenierung im Jahre 1979.

Eine weitere Rezeptionsstufe besteht nach dem 1985er Brecht-Symposium in Beijing und Shanghai, das zeitlich mit der "Theaterkrise" zusammenfiel. Nur gewisse Brechtstücke scheinen dem jetzigen chinesischen Publikum sinnvoll. Das komplexere dialektische Sehen Brechts bietet jedoch keine Schwierigkeit und der Beweis dafür ist der Erfolg einiger Dramatiker, die durch das Theater Brechts wesentliche Impulse erhalten haben.

Li Jianming. "Brecht et le théâtre chinois contemporain."

L'intérêt suscité en Chine par le théâtre brechtien nous aide à comprendre le théâtre chinois et ses fondements sociaux. Li fait une distinction entre trois phases de la réception de son oeuvre, et elle explique pourquoi les préconceptions des Chinois sur la nature de l'expérience théâtrale les rendaient pratiquement incapables d'apprécier celle du théâtre de Brecht. Cependant, la Révolution Culturelle a aiguisé la sensibilité du public envers les contradictions de la vie et partant de la pensée dialectique, ce qui explique la réussite de la *Vie de Galilée* en 1979.

Le Colloque sur Brecht à Pékin et Shanghai en 1985, qui coïncida avec la "crise du théâtre", marque une autre étape dans la réception de son influence. Il faut avouer que le nombre des pièces de Brecht susceptibles d'être comprises par le public chinois est assez restreint, mais les difficultés éprouvées par ce public n'ont pas pour cause les complexités de la vision dialectique du dramaturge; la preuve en est la réussite théâtrale de plusieurs écrivains inspirés par son oeuvre.

Li Jianming. "Brecht y el teatro chino contemporáneo."

El interés en el teatro de Brecht, todavía reciente en China, nos ayuda a comprender la naturaleza del teatro chino y la base social que lo sostiene. Li distingue entre tres etapas en la recepción de su obra, y explica por qué las ideas preconcebidas de los chinos acerca del teatro hacían imposible cualquier apreciación acertada del de Brecht. Sin

embargo, la Revolución Cultural aguzó la sensibilidad de la gente para con las contradicciones de su experiencia y del pensamiento dialéctico, lo cual explica el éxito que tuvo *La Vida de Galileo* en 1979.

Fue alcanzada otra etapa después del Coloquio sobre Brecht en Pekín y Shanghai en 1985, que coincidió con "la crisis del teatro". Sólo una cantidad restringida de las obras de Brecht son entendidas hoy por el público chino, pero esta dificultad no se debe a su visión compleja y dialéctica, pues algunos dramaturgos inspirados por esta obra han tenido éxito en China.

Paradigmenwechsel - auch in China: Neue Chancen für Brecht auf chinesischen Bühnen?

Wolfram Schlenker

Li Jianming hat auf diesem Symposium bereits einige wesentliche Probleme und Bedingungen der Brecht-Rezeption angedeutet.¹ Mein Beitrag soll versuchen, diese Punkte, die aus praktischen Erfahrungen hervorgingen,² noch etwas näher auszuführen.

"Brecht and the Paradigm Change" - paßt dieses Thema überhaupt hierher nach Hong Kong, nach China, nach Asien? Immerhin stammt die Fragestellung aus den entwickelsten westlichen Metropolen und sie bezieht sich auf Erfahrungen, die in entsprechendem Umfang noch nicht einmal hier in diesem Mahagonny Chinas, geschweige denn drüben auf dem Festland gemacht wurden.

Vor sechs Jahren kritisierte Klaus Völker hier in Hong Kong den blinden Fortschrittsoptimismus, dem das Stück *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* verhaftet sei.³ Frau Chen Yong, die uns jetzt hier ihre leichtfüßige Pekinger Inszenierung des Stücks von 1985 präsentiert, hat diese Kritik damals gehört, jedoch nicht berücksichtigt: Das Paradigma "Maximale Ausbeutung der Natur = Fortschritt" wird in China kaum noch bezweifelt. Doch ist hier auch Vorsicht und vielleicht auch etwas mehr Gerechtigkeit gegenüber Brecht angebracht. Ein Land wie China kann mit seiner erdrückenden Bevölkerung ohne adäquate Nutzbarmachung jedes Quadratzentimeters Boden nicht überleben. Ich sage *adäquat*: Das bedeutet auch Bodenpflege, Wasserschutz, Aufforstung, Wiederherstellung eines oft schon seit Jahrtausenden gestörten ökologischen Gleichgewichts. Dem widerspricht die Lösung des *kaukasischen Kreidekreises* aber nicht unbedingt.

Doch danach ist die Pekinger Inszenierung nicht orientiert. Chen Yong beabsichtigte, den "humanistischen" Gehalt herauszuarbeiten und das weist schon auf einen historisch anderen, aktuellen Paradigmenwechsel in China hin.⁴ Leider haben sich die Kollegen aus den anderen asiatischen Ländern nicht dazu geäußert, wie sie den in Westeuropa und Nordamerika konstatierten Paradigmenwechsel sehen. In China jedenfalls findet er (noch) nicht statt: Kaum jemand bezweifelt die Notwendigkeit von Modernisierung, sozialem Fortschritt und wirtschaftlichem Wachstum um fast jeden Preis. Ich weiß auch nicht, wer von uns Teilnehmern aus den industrialisierten Ländern sich in der Lage fühlen würde, hier gute Ratschläge zu erteilen. Einer auf 20m² zusammengepferchten Familie etwas von den "Grenzen des Wachstums" zu erzählen, wenn man selbst über 100m² bester Qualität bewohnt, ist nicht nur geschmacklos, sondern auch falsch.

Der westliche Paradigmenwechsel setzt die Lösung bestimmter sozialer Probleme und einen bestimmten, gesellschaftlich verallgemeinerten Reichtum voraus. Können die großen Veränderungen in der Volksrepublik China, die etwas mit den Problemen der Brecht-Rezeption dort zu tun haben müssen, mit dem Begriff wechselnder Paradigmen überhaupt sinnvoll erfaßt werden? Durch Antony Tatlows Insistieren auf einen entsprechenden Versuch entdeckte ich nach langen Zweifeln doch eine erstaunliche Produktivität des Begriffs für ein Verständnis der chinesischen Situation, gerade wegen seiner relativen Unbestimmtheit und seiner fehlenden Unterscheidung zwischen materiellen, gesellschaftlichen und rein geistigen Umwälzungsprozessen. Die Veränderungen in der VR China sind so komplex, daß sie sich einfachen Kategorisierungen (etwa durch naheliegende Begriffe wie "Kapitalismus" oder "Sozialismus") entziehen. Weitere Begriffe klären - zunächst wenigstens - mehr.

Kann man also sagen, in China heute bestehe das im Westen bezweifelte Paradigma wissenschaftlich-technischen Fortschritts der Menschheit unbezweifelt weiter fort? Es ist nicht so einfach: es beginnt sich überhaupt erst durchzusetzen, und zwar mit den ökonomischen Strukturen, die sich historisch als effektivste erwiesen haben: denen einer Warenwirtschaft. In der alten, bürokratisch-despotischen Gesellschaft Chinas waren Beständigkeit und Harmonie Hauptelemente der herrschenden ideologischen Auffassungen. Technische Entwicklung wurde unterdrückt, wo sie industriell profitabel wurde; ebenso wenig konnte sich das Handelskapital entfalten. So konnte sich die bäuerliche Subsistenzwirtschaft als Basis dieser Gesellschaft über Jahrtausende erhalten. Alle Aufstände und Revolutionen in China bis 1949 waren wesentlich konservativ orientiert oder mit sehr starken konservativen Elementen durchsetzt. Es hat der schweren Erfahrung der "Kulturrevolution" bedurft, daß sich das Paradigma des technischen und wirtschaftlichen Fortschritts in der staatstragenden Schicht und bei relevanten Teilen der Bevölkerung wirklich durchsetzte. Das Scheitern und die Exzesse der Kulturrevolution machten klar, daß im 20. Jahrhundert in China ein Begriffsapparat, der aus der Kritik der kapitalistischen Industriegesellschaften entstanden war, teilweise dazu verwendet wurde, im Kern konservative bäuerliche Utopien von Gleichheit zu formulieren, die auf der ökonomischen Basis von Natural- und Subsistenzwirtschaft beruhten. Als Ideologen einer im wesentlichen von Bauern getragenen Revolution griffen ihre Führer Waren- und Geldverhältnisse mit sozialistischen Begriffen an, wo diese ihre historisch progressive Rolle noch keineswegs erfüllt hatten. So wurde in den Jahrzehnten bis 1978 ein Paradigma zur Interpretation und Prägung einer angeblich völlig neuen Gesellschaft geschaffen, das unter den hehren Begriffen *Revolution*, *Gleichheit*, *Bewußtheit* und *Planung* die Konservierung despotischer Verhältnisse, persönlicher Abhängigkeit, von Armut und Lethargie ermöglichte und rechtfertigte. Es versteht sich, daß dies nicht bewußt geschah. Heute entdecken nun führende Politologen (und lassen dies auch drucken), daß der Sozialismus nach 1949 "aus demselben Holz geschnitzt" war "wie die chinesische tra-

ditionelle feudale Politik".⁵ Tatsächlich waren kollektive Arbeit, Staatsmonopol in wesentlichen ökonomischen Bereichen (Unterdrückung des Profitstrebens und häufiger Enteignung von Privateigentum) durchaus auch für das alte China konstitutiv, ganz im Gegensatz zur feudalen Gesellschaft Europas. Der despotische Gehalt von traditionellen Gleichheitsvorstellungen drückt sich in bekannten Sprichwörtern aus wie dem folgenden: "The tree that is taller than the others will be destroyed by the wind." Die Kulturrevolution war, so gesehen, der letzte verzweifelte Versuch, das alte Paradigma gegen den unerbittlichen Lauf der Zeit zu retten. Je erbitterter etwas historisch Überfälliges verteidigt wird, desto gründlicher zerfällt es schließlich in Scherben. Planung macht zunehmend dem Wertgesetz Platz, die Kategorie "Klassenkampf" wird ersetzt durch "Entwicklung der Produktivkräfte", Gleichheit und Kollektivität durch Differenzierung und Konkurrenz, Bewußtsein durch materiellen Anreiz. Während die alten Begriffe wesentlich ideologisch waren, sind die neuen ehrlicher. Alle erwähnten Punkte zeigen letztlich nur, daß außerökonomischer Zwang durch ökonomischen Zwang ersetzt wird - es kommt die ökonomische Maschine in Gang, die in der Weltgeschichte zur Produktion materiellen Reichtums am effektivsten war. Es entfalten sich allmählich die Elemente, die bisher auf der ganzen Welt die alten, traditionellen Gesellschaftsformen zersetzt haben. Ihr gemeinsamer Nenner ist wohl naturhafte persönliche Abhängigkeitsbeziehungen zwischen den Menschen. Diese persönliche Abhängigkeit wird ersetzt durch sachliche Abhängigkeit, deren Kehrseite gewisse individuelle Freiheiten, Massendemokratie und Pluralisierung von Macht in einer nach wie vor unbeherrschbaren Gesellschaft bilden. So auch in China, wo das Band, das die Gesellschaft zusammenhält, immer weniger der Plan, die Partei, der Staat, die Arbeitseinheit und die Familie sind und immer mehr das Geld bzw. - abstrakter - das Wertgesetz.

Entscheidend ist hier, daß es heute in China nicht um die Zerschlagung eines sozialistischen Paradigmas geht, wie viele innerhalb und außerhalb des Riesenreiches fürchten oder hoffen. Es zerfällt vielmehr eine Weltbetrachtung und eine gesellschaftliche Organisation, die trotz marxistischer Kategorien und trotz ihrer Industrialisierungserfolge noch eng mit den Strukturen der letzten 2000 Jahre verstrickt ist. Dieser Bruch ist noch nicht vollständig vollzogen. Die Kämpfe wogen hin und her und beide Seiten beschuldigen sich, die Zukunft Chinas aufs Spiel zu setzen. Doch auch in der Kultur sind die Reformer auf dem Vormarsch und sie war immer eine Bastion der Konservativen. Kürzlich war in "Economic Daily" zu lesen, "with the growth of socialist market-oriented economy" entstünde endlich a "brandnew culture featuring the development of education and science, construction of democracy and legal system, the ideas of competition, enterprise, equality, liberty and individuality."⁶ So formuliert sich das neue Paradigma programmatisch. Und so sehr es an die Träume der französischen Revolution erinnert - es geht um einen Schritt nach vorn.

Was soll in einer solchen Lage Brecht? Doch sehen wir zunächst noch, wie die Bedingungen auf der Bühne selbst aussehen und wie dort

der "chinesische" Paradigmenwechsel erscheint. Ich will vor allem von drei Faktoren sprechen:

1. von älteren und neueren Traditionen der chinesischen Bühnenkunst,
2. von der Struktur des chinesischen Publikums und seinen Bedürfnissen und
3. von der kulturpolitischen Situation.⁷

Unter den Traditionen ist natürlich zuerst das alte Musiktheater zu nennen. Obwohl das aus Europa importierte Sprechtheater in expliziter Opposition dazu entstand, hat es doch einige Charakteristika unter dem Einfluß des traditionellen Theaters entwickelt, z.B. seine Volksverbundenheit. Insgesamt war das Musiktheater immer eine populäre Kunst, die als vorbürgerliche noch nicht der Spaltung in Massen- und gehobene Kunst unterlag. Sie lebt sehr stark von schaustellerischen Elementen (Akrobatik, Pantomime) und von der Musik und verwendet einige Kunstmittel, die Brecht als Mittel der Verfremdung sah. Doch waren die Protagonisten des Sprechtheaters in den 20er Jahren nicht einfach blind für ihre eigene Kultur, als sie diese Tradition als feudal und aufklärungsfeindlich, finster und antiprogessiv bekämpften. Themen wie theatralische Mittel spiegeln, bei aller Schönheit, eine alte Welt, in deren unveränderlich stabilem Rahmen die Individuen einen begrenzten und naturhaft bestimmten Platz haben. Auf nichts war dieses Theater weniger aus als auf kritische Reflexion, gesellschaftliche Änderung oder Befreiung des Individuums. Seine Hauptziele waren Affirmation der gegebenen Welt, d.h. auch ihre Beschönigung und eine daran geknüpfte Unterhaltung, bei der die Erzeugung von Gefühlen ein wichtiger Bestandteil war. Ich ziehe daraus zwei Schlußfolgerungen: Erstens ist es ein Irrtum, zu glauben, die Verbindung Brechts mit dieser Tradition würde seine Rezeption in irgendeiner Weise fördern und das Theater weiterbringen können. Zweitens dominiert in der chinesischen Kunst, auch im Theater, eine Rezeptionstradition, die es jedem auf kritische Reflexion orientierten Theater sehr schwer macht.

Erst kürzlich diskutierte ich mit jungen Intellektuellen über eine Dramatisierung von Lu Xuns Novelle *Ah Q* in Peking, die sehr stark von Brechts Theater beeinflusst war.⁸ Sie fanden das sehr gut, schränkten aber alle ein, sie würden das trotzdem nicht sehr gern sehen, weil man das Theater mit einem unangenehmen Gefühl verlasse. Kein kathartischer Höhepunkt, keine Lösungen, keine individuellen Idyllen verstellen die scharfe Aussage des Stücks über bestimmte Züge des chinesischen Nationalcharakters, die mit der drückenden feudal-bürokratischen Tradition des Landes zu tun haben. Selbst für einen großen Teil des intellektuellen Publikums hat Kunst eben vor allem zur Verschönerung eines ohnehin nicht sehr erfreulichen Lebens beizutragen, nicht zu seiner Reflexion.

Auch die anderen, jüngeren Traditionen des Theaters vermochten diese Rezeptionsgewohnheit und die plebejische Publikumsstruktur nicht zu ändern. In den großen, offenen Küstenstädten entwickelte die Intelligenz im Rahmen ihrer antiimperialistischen und antifeudalen

Emanzipationsbewegung ein Theater, das unter ausschließlich europäischem Einfluß vor allem naturalistisch geprägt war.⁹ Dieses Theater konnte nach seinem Untergang im antijapanischen und im Bürgerkrieg nie wieder aufleben. In gewissem Maß verschmolz es nach 1949 mit den Einflüssen des Agitproptheaters der KP, das diese vor allem für ein bäuerliches Publikum entwickelt hatte.

So entstand nach 1949 mit starken russischen Einflüssen eine spezifisch volksrepublikanisch-chinesische Form des Theaters neben der Musiktheatertradition. Dieses bisher vor allem sehr plebejische Theater ist ein äußerst unbestimmtes Gebilde, das auf schwachen Beinen steht: Es hat kein Stammpublikum, kein Repertoire, Schauspieler mit einem durchschnittlich relativ niedrigen Bildungsstand, es lebt von aktuellen Stücken und muß leicht verständlich sein. Es ist, für deutsche Begriffe, ein ausgesprochen nichtliterarisches Theater. Kein Wunder, daß es für jeden gesellschaftlichen Wechsel äußerst anfällig ist. Das zeigte sich ganz plötzlich 1984/85, als es von einem Jahr auf das andere in eine Krise stürzte. Theaterhäuser in den Provinzen schlossen, die Aufführungen der weiterbestehenden verringerten sich oft um über die Hälfte, viele der besten Autoren, Regisseure und Schauspieler wanderten zum Fernsehen oder Film ab. Immer weniger gute Stücke wurden produziert, das Publikum blieb weg.

Hier sehen wir schon den "chinesischen" Paradigmenwechsel bzw. seine materielle Grundlage am Werk. Struktur und Bedürfnisse des Publikums wandeln sich stürmisch - sie bilden den 2. Faktor, der das moderne chinesische Theater bestimmt. Die Reformpolitik, die nun auch in den Städten umgesetzt wird, steigert einerseits die durchschnittlichen Lebenshaltungskosten der dortigen Bevölkerung. Andererseits bietet sie zahlreiche Kompensationsmöglichkeiten, da eigenständige wirtschaftliche Aktivitäten, Nebenerwerb, Erarbeitung von Prämien usw. in großem Maß ermöglicht werden. Gleichzeitig ist das Warenangebot reichhaltiger als früher: Es lohnt sich nun, Geld zu haben. Geld beginnt eine immer größere Rolle zu spielen. Die Menschen haben weniger Zeit, dafür mehr hochwertige Konsumgüter wie Fernsehapparate und Videorecorder. Diese Prestigeobjekte wollen nicht nur genutzt sein, sondern liefern bequemer und oft auch angemessener jene leichte Unterhaltung, die der vom Streß des Geldverdienens und der auflebenden Konkurrenz geplagte Mensch braucht. Fast nur noch differenziertere ästhetische Bedürfnisse führen ins Theater, doch darauf ist dieses nicht richtig eingestellt. Betrachtet man erfolgreichere Stücke, seitdem das chinesische Sprechtheater in seiner Krise steckt, handelt es sich durchweg um Dramen, die vor allem von einem jüngeren Publikum gut aufgenommen werden. Ihre Themen sind vorwiegend individualistisch, mehr oder weniger von einer subjektiven Betrachtungsweise der Welt geprägt. Darstellungen von individuellen Konflikten mit Strukturen, die von persönlicher Abhängigkeit gekennzeichnet sind und von Konflikten mit einer konfuzianischen Moral; letztlich also die Befreiung und Vereinzelung des Individuums - das ist das Grundthema in den meisten erfolgreicheren Stücken. Sprengung des alten Paradigmas, Ausloten des neuen - so könnten wir das hier zusammenfassen.¹⁰

Doch, wie gesagt, die Kämpfe wogen hin und her. Eins dieser Stücke wurde verboten, eins ist immer noch umstritten. Da es bisher noch nicht zur wirklichen Herausbildung einer rasonierenden Öffentlichkeit kam, deren Bestandteil ein fortschrittliches Theater sein könnte, unterliegt es immer noch dem kulturpolitischen Monopol der Partei. Doch läßt sich schon deutlich erkennen, wohin es gehen wird, auch wenn es einige seiner "chinesischen" Spezifika behält: Es wird die Spaltung der Kultur in einen "unterhaltenden" und einen "ernsten" Teil mittragen müssen, und der letztere wird in Richtung auf ein intellektuelles, relativ junges Publikum gehen, dessen Hauptanliegen sich im Rahmen des beschriebenen neuen Paradigmas bewegen. Denn seine Bedürfnisse werden von den starken monopolisierten Medien Fernsehen und Film nicht ausreichend bedient werden. Wie schnell das Theater auf diesen Weg kommen und sich von seiner notwendigen Krise erholen kann, ist von der Geschwindigkeit abhängig, mit der die Reformpolitik sich auch auf den politischen und kulturellen Bereich ausdehnt - das ist der 3. Faktor, von dem ich sprach. Die Chancen stehen zur Zeit nicht schlecht. Die Reformer wissen, daß mit einer konservativen Kulturpolitik, die den sogenannten Übeln der Marktwirtschaft gegensteuern will, ihre Reformen keinen wirklichen Erfolg haben können. Das brachte der erwähnte Artikel in "Economic Daily" in aller Schärfe zum Ausdruck.¹¹ Daß die Reformen nicht nur technischen Fortschritt und mehr Wohlstand, sondern auch Demokratie und Freiheit des künstlerischen Ausdrucks mit sich bringen - das ist die Hoffnung fast aller chinesischen Künstler.¹²

Nun ist ein Problem bei der Betrachtung von Kulturen, deren Kontinuität durch plötzlichen Eingriff von außen zerbrochen wurde, daß kein Phänomen rein vorkommt und sich innere und äußere Einflüsse kreuzen, überlagern, widersprechen oder gar bekämpfen. So auch hier in China, wo man auf der Bühne keineswegs nur individualistische Tendenzen finden kann. Oft in Verbindung damit sind auf der Bühne romantische und mystifizierende Darstellungen zu sehen, manchmal mit einer deutlichen Absage an jeden gesellschaftlichen Bezug. Sogar die ökologische Thematik, und damit ein Teil des neuen Paradigmas des Westens, stand schon einmal auf einer Pekingener Bühne.¹³ Absurde und abstrakte Tendenzen, die aus viel späteren Stadien der industriellen Gesellschaft stammen, signalisieren neben der Abkehr vom sozialistischen Naturalismus eine versteckte Opposition gegen die herrschende Kultur. Daneben lebt auch das relativ traditionell gemachte kritische Zeitstück weiter, das genug Publikum findet, wenn seine Anspielungen scharf genug sind. Diese kulturell äußerst disparate Situation ist in einem Land der Dritten Welt kein Wunder. Noch weniger, wenn man bedenkt, daß in China heute alle Begriffe ihre Gültigkeit zu verlieren scheinen und für viele, natürlich unausgesprochen, der Abschied vom Sozialismus auf der Tagesordnung zu stehen scheint.

Was heißt das für Brecht in China? Soweit er als sozialistischer Schriftsteller betrachtet wird, sind die Zeiten für ihn schlecht. Soweit er als Klassiker betrachtet wird, geht es ihm auch nicht besser, denn da sind für das aufkommende Paradigma Shakespeare oder auch Arthur

Miller oder selbst Peter Shaffer ("Amadeus") die besseren "Klassiker". Sie bieten die volleren Individuen und bedienen das Interesse am Innenleben der Menschen. Für den Brecht von *Mann ist Mann*, *Dreigroschenoper*, *Mahagonny* oder *Der gute Mensch* ist es dagegen meiner Meinung nach noch ein wenig zu früh, obwohl man das bald einmal probieren müßte. Noch stehen viel zu sehr die Segnungen des Geldes im Vordergrund: seine demokratisierenden und effektivierenden Potenzen, die die Menschen aus Subsistenzwirtschaft und Lethargie reißen. Selbst dem sogenannten "humanistischen" Brecht des *Galilei* oder des *Kaukasischen Kreidekreises* fehlen jene besonders lebensvollen, runden Individuen anderer bürgerlicher "Klassiker", mit denen man sich jetzt im Theater gern identifizieren möchte. Dieser Brecht liegt historisch nach dem Paradigma, das sich jetzt in China mühsam durchsetzt - ästhetisch wie gesellschaftlich. Für das breite, plebejische Publikum des chinesischen Theaters ist dieser Brecht kaum zu rezipieren.

Dennoch schafften es mit *Galilei* 1979 und *Schweyk* 1986 zwei Aufführungen, an ein breiteres Publikum heranzukommen, im letzteren Fall vor allem an ein jüngeres. Worin lag dieser Erfolg begründet? *Galilei*, Brechts erster Erfolg in China überhaupt, kam an wegen seines antidespotischen Gehalts. Aber vieles, was darin an Widersprüchen ausgebreitet war, wurde wegen seiner Opposition zu einer einführenden Haltung nicht verstanden oder von den Schauspielern nicht gezeigt. Auch die *Galilei*-Figur Brechts war noch zu sehr die große, volle Renaissancegestalt, als daß das Publikum gehindert gewesen wäre, sich letztlich positiv in sie einzufühlen.

Nicht anders war es bei der Aufführung des *Schweyk*: Das Stück war wegen seiner antidespotischen Aussage gewählt worden und kam deshalb beim Publikum auch an. Nur der antidespotische Brecht, der allgemein Formen der Unterdrückung bloßstellt, ist leicht verständlich. Dennoch sind die produktiven Wirkungen eines solchermaßen "eingeschränkten" Brecht nicht zu unterschätzen. In seiner Inszenierung gelang es dem Regisseur Lin Zhahua, auf der Bühne spezifisch theatralische, starke Bilder zu schaffen, die nicht hauptsächlich eine Atmosphäre erzeugten, sondern den Gestus der Szenen ausdrückten. So entstand ein interessanter, mit eigenen Mitteln verarbeiteter Brecht, der unterhielt und belehrte - trotz vieler Mängel der Inszenierung.

Doch woher rühren diese Mängel, auch bei diesem sozusagen einfachen, antidespotischen Brecht? Zunächst einmal wie beim *Galilei*: Die Schauspieler haben große Probleme, Figuren von ihrer gesellschaftlichen Beziehung, und das heißt von ihrer widersprüchlichen Seite aus zu begreifen und auf der Bühne so darzustellen. Bei Lin schlug dann noch eine Tendenz zur Abstraktion durch, die als Reaktion auf den platten "Realismus" der früheren Jahre zur Zeit auf der chinesischen Bühne in Mode ist. Dadurch ging vielen Figuren und Vorgängen ihre Plastizität verloren - bei Brecht eine besonders gefährliche Tendenz, da seine Figuren ja nicht sozusagen von innen "leuchten" - *Schweyk* wird ohnehin leicht eine Ein-Mann-Show, wie dann in Peking auch geschehen.

Also in China vorläufig nur der antidespotische Brecht, der das abdankende Paradigma mit angreift? Die Ziele seines Theaters und die spezifischen Kunstmittel, die er entwickelte, schränken das Publikum noch mehr ein. Brecht kann nur ein Publikum finden, das ein gewisses Vertrauen in die menschliche Vernunft hat, Denken zu einem ästhetischen Vergnügen machen kann und den mehr oder weniger klaren Wunsch verspürt, so der Lösung drückender Widersprüche näherzukommen. Der gegenwärtige Paradigmenwechsel ist jedoch - im Gegensatz zu dem in den industrialisierten Ländern - durchaus auch ohne ein solches Bewußtsein zu vollziehen. Wer von denen, die Geld machen, fragt schon, was Geld eigentlich ist? Erst wenn die ökologischen Grenzen des technischen und wirtschaftlichen Fortschritts und die in der Warenform des gesellschaftlichen Reichtums steckende Entfremdung des Menschen deutlicher werden, kann Brechts Theater breiter wirksam werden. Vorher kann er nur den Teil des intellektuellen Publikums ansprechen, der seiner Zeit voraus ist. Dies kann nur geschehen, wenn die angestrebten politischen Reformen diesem Teil des Publikums die Formierung einer begrenzten kritischen Öffentlichkeit erlauben, deren Bestandteile kleine Bühnen und Studententheater wären. Hier könnte seine Wirkung gar nicht hoch genug eingeschätzt werden. Aber als sogenannter "Klassiker des Welttheaters" wird er die Krise des chinesischen Theaters sicher nicht lösen können.

NOTES

1. Li Jianming, *Brecht and the Chinese Theatre in the 80's*; vergl. vor allem: 2. Difficulties confronted.
2. Frau Li hat die außerordentlich bühnenwirksame Übersetzung der *Schweyk*-Inszenierung 1986 im Volkstheater Peking erstellt und die (im chinesischen Theater normalerweise nicht existierende) Funktion des Dramaturgen mit mir zusammen übernommen.
3. Klaus Völker, "The Caucasian Chalk Circle", in: *Brecht and East Asian Theatre*, eds. Antony Tatlow and Tak-wai Wong. Hong Kong, 1982.
4. Vergl. Chen Yong in: *Beijing Rundschau* Nr. 41, 1985, S. 25.
5. Yan Jiaqi (Leiter des Forschungsinstituts für Politik, Akademie der Sozialwissenschaften) in: *China im Aufbau*, Beijing Nr. 11, 1986, S. 26.
6. zit. n. *China Daily*, Beijing, 19.11.86.
7. Vergl. meine ausführliche Darstellung "Modern Chinese Drama - Characteristics - Problems - Perspectives", in: *Theatre Research International*, vol. 8, Nr. 3, Autumn 1983.
8. Vergl. den Beitrag von Xue Dianjie zu diesem Symposium.
9. Vergl. auch Li Jianmings Hinweis auf die "4. Mai-Bewegung" 1919 in ihrem Beitrag.
10. Vergl. meine Beschreibung jüngerer Stücke und Inszenierungen in: *Bühne. Das österreichische Theatermagazin*, Wien, September 1985, S. 39ff. Oder: *Theater Heute*, Zürich/Berlin, Nr. 1, 1985, S. 22f.

11. In diesem Sinn äußerte sich zuletzt der Schriftsteller und jetzige Kulturminister Wang Meng bei einer Diskussion mit ausländischen Experten am 26.11.1986 in Beijing. Verg. *China Daily*, 27.11.86.
12. In einer beachteten und umstrittenen Inszenierung des Stücks *Der Wilde* (*Ye Ren*) 1985; Text: Gao Xingjian, Regie: Lin Zhaohua (Regisseur des Pekinger *Schweyk*).
13. Dieses Stück erlebte 1985 (ebenfalls unter Regie des in den letzten 3 Jahren ungeheuer produktiven Lin Zhaohua) eine sehr erfolgreiche Aufführung in Beijing.

Wolfram Schlenker. "Paradigm Change - also in China: new chances for Brecht on the chinese stage?"

After overcoming initial skepticism, the concept of paradigm change proves useful for analysing developments in China. The classic terms, capitalism/socialism, do not work so well. The Cultural Revolution paradigm, a continuation of peasant utopian thought, based on equality and a subsistence economy, preserved despotic relationships. It has been replaced by a paradigm of scientific-technological progress which works through the economic structures of a commodity economy. The development of forms of production replaces class struggle, and ideological is replaced by economic compulsion. What role might Brecht's theater have under such circumstances? Audiences are now interested in plays that show the conflict between the individual and society, the liberation and isolation of the individual. The traditional theater was uninterested in critical reflection and affirmed social structures. It is wrong to assume a relationship with Brecht's theater would develop it or help introduce his.

The "humanist" classic, or even socialist, is not now so opportune. Brecht as a critic of alienation in the money-centered commodity economy is post-paradigmatic, because money now functions as a reward and has a democratising impulse. The antidespotic Brecht is popular, responding to the intellectual concerns of a young audience. The actors still have difficulty embodying contradictory figures, yet in spite of a tendency toward abstraction, Lin Zhaohua showed the social gestus in his production of *Schweyk*. This Brecht, and for such an audience, proves very effective.

Wolfram Schlenker. "Changement du paradigme en Chine - quelques opportunités nouvelles pour la dramaturgie chinoise."

Une fois que le scepticisme initial est vaincu, la conception d'un changement de paradigme se révèle très utile pour l'analyse des développements en Chine. Les termes de l'analyse classique, capitalisme/socialisme, ont perdu leur force. Le paradigme de la Révolution Culturelle, qui représente la continuité d'une pensée utopique et paysanne, fondée sur l'égalité et une économie de subsistance, conserva les relations sociales du despotisme. Il a été remplacé par un paradigme du progrès scientifique et technologique, qui opère à travers les structures d'une économie de commodités. Actuellement, le développement des formes de production remplace la lutte des classes, et la contrainte idéologique cède devant les contraintes purement économiques. Quel rôle le théâtre brechtien pourrait-il jouer sous de telles conditions? Le public contemporain s'intéresse aux pièces qui montrent le conflit entre l'individu et la société, la libération et l'isolement individuels. Le théâtre traditionnel ne faisait preuve d'aucun esprit critique, se contentant de renforcer les structures sociales. On a donc tort de croire que l'instauration d'un lien

entre cette tradition et le théâtre brechtien aiderait à développer les formes de l'une ou à faire mieux connaître l'autre.

Considéré comme l'auteur d'une oeuvre "classique", ou même socialiste, Brecht ne s'adresse pas aux conditions actuelles. Il en est de même pour le Brecht qui critique l'aliénation provoquée par l'économie de commodités, où l'argent joue le rôle central, car l'argent fonctionne de nos jours comme récompense et représente une tendance vers la démocratisation. Le Brecht anti-despotique reste populaire, parce qu'il correspond aux intérêts intellectuels d'un public jeune.

Les acteurs éprouvent toujours quelques difficultés à incarner des personnages contradictoires. Pourtant, malgré des tendances vers l'abstraction, Lin Zhaohua réussit à faire ressortir le *gestus* social dans sa représentation de *Schweyk*. Ce Brecht-ci, présenté devant un public qui lui convient, garde encore une efficacité idéniable.

Wolfram Schlenker. "Brecht y el cambio de paradigma en China - algunas oportunidades nuevas."

Si se pasa por encima del escepticismo inicial provocado por el concepto de un cambio de paradigma, éste se revela muy útil para el análisis del desarrollo contemporáneo de China. Ya no son tan pertinentes los términos clásicos, capitalismo/socialismo. El paradigma de la Revolución Cultural, mera continuación de un modo de pensar campesino y utópico, arraigado en la igualdad y una economía de subsistencia, mantuvo en su lugar las relaciones sociales del despotismo. Ha sido reemplazado por un paradigma de progreso científico y tecnológico, el cual funciona por medio de las estructuras de una economía de comodidades. La lucha de clases es destituida por el desarrollo de las formas de producción, y la compulsión ideológica por la económica. En tales circunstancias ¿qué papel podría desempeñar el teatro brechtiano? El público de hoy se interesa en piezas que tratan del conflicto entre el individuo y la sociedad, la liberación y aislamiento del individuo. El teatro tradicional se despreocupaba de reflexiones críticas, y confirmaba el orden establecido. Es una equivocación suponer que una conexión entre este teatro y el de Brecht ayudaría el desarrollo del uno o la introducción del otro a un público más ancho.

Hoy día está fuera de propósito la obra brechtiana considerada como la de un autor clásico "humanista", y aun socialista. Podría decirse lo mismo de un Brecht crítico de la enajenación del hombre provocada por la economía de comodidades que hace todo depender del dinero, porque ahora el dinero funciona como recompensa y produce una impulsión hacia la democracia. Queda popular el Brecht antidespótico, pues corresponde a las preocupaciones intelectuales de un público de jóvenes. Los actores hallan difícil todavía representar personajes contradictorios, pero, a pesar de una tendencia hacia la abstracción, Lin Zhaohua hizo destacarse el *gestus* social en su realización de *Schweyk*. Este Brecht, delante de este público, no ha perdido su fuerza.

Characteristics of Narration Brecht and *Pingtān*

Li Jiayao

There is a common saying in China: "Up above, Paradise; down below, Suzhou and Hangzhou." It is, therefore, not fortuitous that *pingtān* has gracefully come into flower as a form of art nurtured in this land of waters, a region lying in the lower reaches south of the Yangtze (Changjiang) River known for its overall elegance of beauty.

Much to our regret, Mr. Bertolt Brecht did not have any chance to visit Suzhou or to appreciate a *pingtān* performance; otherwise, he would have discovered that as far as narration is concerned, *pingtān* and his dialectical plays have shared common points, even many more than the close resemblance between his art and Mei Lanfang's Beijing operatic performances.

Chinese *pingtān* is not drama, rather a sort of folk art under the general terminology *quyi*, which includes story-telling, ballad singing, comic dialogues, cross-talk, versified stories sung to the accompaniment of a small drum, clappers or any other instrument, etc. Apparently, it is totally unrelated to Brecht's dialectical drama. Nevertheless, there are indeed quite a few common features in the skill of expression and formula of performance, with astonishing similarities especially shown in the dialectics of form.

A further look into this genre of art reveals that the talker is at once an actor and a character. During a presentation, if speech is rendered in the first person, then the talker is an actor; if in the third, a character. So, the performer alternately shifts his function, now a player, now a role - very often one role this moment, another role the next moment. In this way there is tremendous freedom for a performer to, in the lively Chinese expression, "*tiaojin* (leap in) and *tiaochu* (leap out)", that is to say, to "enter into or step out of a character" at any time as required by the plot.

Pingtān lays stress on *ping*, which in Chinese means "remark, comment or even criticize as well as judge or appraise" as regards things or events "in the past or in the present". Then, when will *ping* punctuate the narration? The performer can at times break off in the middle of relating and make remarks on the development of the plot and the behavior or action of any character in the story, either thinking aloud (soliloquizing) or confronting the audience directly in a dialogue. In either case, he can raise a question or a query and then supply his own answer, even as far as voicing all sorts of controversy or objection on behalf of the audience, that is, making them partners in the action instead of just witnesses to it.

All those who are familiar with the narration-commentary feature of *pingtan* will not find the assertions of Brecht's dialectical plays so alien to them. So, the art of *pingtan*, in a practical sense, is a device of drawing the spectators by "dispelling theatrical illusions about life" to create a wonder equal to Brecht's "alienation effect" (*Verfremdungseffekt*), though in different approaches and ways.

In performance, *pingtan* also has some interesting features. Actions are simulative in nature. There is no need of setting, and props are very simple. The performer has only the audience side to face, the fourth wall being abolished. With the slapping of a gavel made of wood, there approaches "a cataclysm of Heaven collapsing and Earth breaking"; at the raising of a folding fan, a force of ponderous weight threatens. The spreading of a handkerchief symbolizes the presentation of a letter; the lifting of a palm facing upward signifies supporting a plate. Every single action can suggest all kinds of objects or things. And space shifts or mood changes accordingly at the pointing of a finger, the turning of an eyeball, the change of a face, and the moving of a body - all these not only convey various sorts of emotions but also leave the audience a latitude for imagination.

Pingtan is an oriental art of congregating into one whole Literature, Music, Image-moulding, Vocal Mimicry, etc. and fusing in one furnace Oral Expression, Amusing Words, Instrumental Music, Song and Performance - this is none other than the art Brecht had looked forward to for years in integrating rational judgment and emotional sensibilities on a high level. *Pingtan's* attempts happen to coincide with what Brecht formulated as "alienation effect", namely that the actor, the role and the audience all should have moments of estrangement to obtain a "distancing effect", so that the actors should from time to time force a critical detachment on the audience who may thereby ponder, explore, analyze and judge the content of the actors' performances.

Pingtan artists try to keep their distance from the roles they play and not to wholly identify themselves with characters (in the Chinese way of saying, not to "combine two into one"), which is in line with Brecht's advocacy of the "alienation effect". It is exactly for this reason that *pingtan* lovers will not be made to follow the lead of the plot all the time and get engrossed in stage representation or so infatuated with total empathy as to be "consumed of their own initiative".

But it should be noted that the *pingtan* art by no means totally rejects "sympathetic response" from the audience. When the actor performs a role in the third person, stress is also laid on reliving the character's emotions to achieve unison in response and "project himself into the plot."

Here, maybe a little explanation is needed. The word "art" in Chinese is represented by two characters *yi* and *shu*. In its ancient original complex form, *yi* is hieroglyphically topped with a "plant" and supported by a "cloud" with a "picking hand" in the middle. Its meaning is best described in a Beijing opera entitled *The Story of the White Snake*, in which the protagonist Lady White, to save her husband, ventures to steal a magic medical herb from a celestial land in the clouds. Here is an adventure that demands going through severe hardships and exerting

great effort or, in other words, requires skill born of hard work and training. *Shu* means a "method", a "device" with which to arouse the spectators' interest to appreciate the performance. The performing art of *pingtan* is, therefore, dialectical, involving both rational intellect and an emotional quality, and it is quite particular about its artistry as well as its method of appealing to the audience. A qualified *pingtan* performer should be able to master high-level techniques and especially the capability to maintain "vitality, vigor and spirit" throughout his presentation. Only in this way can he achieve lifelikeness "as if the character were tangible enough to be seen and heard, vivacious as well as dramatic in appeal" or likewise "leap into and leap out" at any moment and suspend his vicarious experience in order to awaken himself to reason or intellect in time.

As my mentor Huang Zuolin well said, "Brecht's 'alienation effect' by no means rejects performance with appealing vividness and substantive feelings. It is entirely a misunderstanding that Brecht has been usually regarded as one who does not advocate performances which can evoke feelings. There is no art in the world that fails to stir up feelings, and likewise, no good performances that fail to do so." So, in all the points so far enumerated, *pingtan* art and Brechtian art are in accord with each other.

As for the form of structure, *pingtan* shows its distinguishing features in its narrative process - "Things of the future be mentioned first while events in the past be recalled" as the talk goes on. A *shuoshu xiansheng* (storyteller) thus often informs the audience of the ending of his story first. Strangely, it is generally found that the audience does not mind so much being obviously told the ending, since it gets fully interested in the progress of the story that has happened. Almost in all cases, a long piece of *pingtan* may last a month, six months or even a year in serials, divided into chapters each of which is an episode relatively complete by itself. This feature is again similar to Brecht's frame of reference that "the audience should make his own judgment after an episode ends and before another begins." Because of this, he did not adopt the method of dividing a play into acts, only using the Arabic numerals of 1, 2, 3, 4 . . . to indicate the division in content.

Certainly, similarity does not mean sameness. True, there have been quite a number of foreign spectators who while enjoying *pingtan* would cheer: "It is Brecht!" And they would also many times in a natural way compare *pingtan* to the innovative ideas of Brecht. But German Brechtian plays and Chinese *pingtan* are, after all, not one and the same thing. Like the Beijing opera, *pingtan* as an Oriental art is characterized by the content and style and manner that typically belong to China while Brecht's theatre is a cultural manifestation of the West. There are bound to be differences between the two. As is known to all, Brecht's plays take their dialectical content as the essence and emphasize its dialectical and philosophical attributes. This is quite different from the "classic pieces" of *pingtan* adopted from the Chinese traditional stories and handed down to the *pingtan* artists as a legacy. Nowadays, of course, the creators of the new *pingtan* pieces have begun to be attentive to and set great store by the dialectical and philosophical

nature of content since content determines form and form serves content in all other genres of art. Nevertheless, this is in no way meant to say that the *pingtan* pieces and Brecht's plays fully agree in the aspect of stressing the dialectics of content. Even in form, they are different in some ways. For instance, *pingtan* is not limited to one single clue or thread of a story while being recounted; it provides several leads for proceeding with the story. During a single performance, a *pingtan* actor can play several roles and assume several functions even as far as "to summon wind and rain and control the forces of nature" if it is so desired by the plot. *Pingtan's* idea and way to give prominence to the entertainment value is not entirely the same as that of Brecht, and to a still greater extent displays the local flavor and human interest particular to China.

That here we are making a comparison between China's *pingtan* and Brecht's theatre in terms of their commonness in formal dialectics is solely for the purpose of turning ideas alien to us into intimate ones in the course of our attempt to understand this great German playwright. We think if we do not limit ourselves to viewing matters in one light, we may find it interesting and beneficial to introduce Brecht to the Chinese audience, make a study of his plays and produce them on the stage. And it will undoubtedly be equally interesting and beneficial if we let our theatre personnel get hold of the characteristics of our own art and enhance our own value through such a way of learning from and understanding Brecht. Truly, Brecht said: "It is impossible to employ a few technical terms and expressions to expound what a narrative drama is. Basically, it is perhaps due to the fact that a narrative drama stimulates the intellectual mind of the audience, rather than stirring up their feelings." We presume his words equally apply to *pingtan*.

With a view to explaining the matter in a better and more graphic way, we would like to avail ourselves of this opportunity to show bits of the *pingtan* art in the person of a famous *pingtan* actress of Shanghai - Jiang Yunxian, who is now among us today. She has found it a great pleasure to be able to attend this symposium, and I think she will also be kind enough to demonstrate *pingtan* as an interlude during my talk.

Ms. Jiang is going to perform a section of a chapter of *Tixiao Yinyuan* (*A Predestined Relationship of Tears and Smiles*), a long piece adapted from the novel of the same title by Zhang Henshui.

The setting for the story was the square called Tian Qiao (Heaven's Bridge) in Beijing in the twenties when China was under the misrule of various warlords. It was a center for trade, a marketplace pestered by heavy traffic, and crowds of people gathered here to do business and have a good time watching acrobatics, conjuring tricks and variety shows. In the middle of this scene of hustle and bustle was an old itinerant entertainer called Guan Shoufeng. With incomparable strength, he was superb in *wushu* (martial arts), able to manipulate nimbly heavy stone discs (like the huge barbell for weightlifting) and a stone lock (in the shape of a Chinese lock but of tremendous weight for cultivating strength). When two scoundrels, belittling street-performers, came over to humiliate Guan's pupils, the old man flew into a rage and by showing

his strength and skill brought disgrace on the humiliators. Now, let us watch Ms. Jiang's performance.

Well, after watching a *pingtan* performance, if we re-read Brecht's famous essay *A Scene in the Street*, it will not be too difficult for us to discover how close his art is to the art of *pingtan* in respect of the technique of writing narrative drama and the "emotional estrangement" required in its performance. And if we use the eye peculiar to a *pingtan* artist to view the car accident as narrated by Brecht, we will not be at a loss to comprehend that his way of relating the story does make it possible for the audience to form their own judgment. In Brecht's play, the eye-witness (the actor) relates (the stage performances) to the crowd of on-lookers (the audience) how the accident, which involves the driver and the victim (the characters), has happened; such a way of presentation, we think, will be well appreciated.

In our view, Brecht's theory ought not to be confined to a scholar's study, that is, to academic circles. It should be introduced into practice for the directors, players and stage designers, who are theater professionals. It should find its way into the rehearsal halls and the audience in the theaters. When we say China needs Brecht's art, we do not intend to turn ourselves into Brechts, but rather hope to draw on the experience offered by his theory and practice in order to see the development of our own values. Our efforts to introduce, study and put on Brecht's plays on the stage are oriented towards the Chinese audience. We have thereby found that to make a comparison with and comprehend Brecht in the context of our national stage art seems to be more practical and effective. In doing so, most of our theatre professionals can afford the time and energy to that end, and there is greater possibility to give scope for their talents, to get themselves trained and to attain a greater level of achievement through practice and study. In so doing, we learn from Brecht and, at the same time, enable ourselves to suggest new ideas and a new path for reforming and fostering modern Chinese drama so that it can characterize our own national traits.

Conclusions

As a result of the comparisons we have made today, we can probably state our conclusions as follows:

Firstly, Brecht ought, and is able, to find ever more spectators. We recognize that Brecht's theory and art pursuit are not new and strange to China. Our attempt to introduce, study and produce his plays, which belong to a Western school of drama, has had a happy outcome in China, and has helped us find common elements and meeting points in our traditional operas and folk art forms known as *quyi* (which include story-telling, comic cross-talk and ballad singing).

Secondly, to orientate towards the audience and integrate theory with practice can enliven dry theoretical studies and reap fruitful results.

Our attempt, mentioned in the preceding paragraph, is not only an abstract concern of theoreticians and theatre professionals, but also a matter of integration with practice, in order to produce creative works and orient theatre toward the audience. After the Shanghai Symposium on Brecht held in April 1985 under the guidance of Huang Zuolin, namely that we should "Turn towards the audience, follow up with performances", our studies of Brecht were very soon directed towards the world of amateur theatre. In July of that year, the Shanghai Amateur Art Center followed suit by holding a 3-day, more inclusive conference on "Brecht's Concept of Theater", which was attended by over 200 amateur dramatists and playwrights. They watched the video-films of the representative works of Brecht and had a heated discussion over them, displaying strong interest in the said concept. After that, they created and produced several plays by employing Brecht's theory and won popularity among the audience. The playwrights and actors of the Shanghai People's Pingtan Troupe have recently put on a medium-length *pingtan* piece entitled *Qiu Si* (literally, *Autumn Meditation*). The fruit of their study, characterized by integrating theory with practice, has won general acceptance and enhanced the enthusiasm of the young *pingtan* artists to study and learn from Brecht, thereby increasing their understanding of the features of their own art - *pingtan* - and further developing their own potential and talents.

Thirdly, the mutual permeation of Eastern and Western art is beneficial to the development of all art endeavors.

In some realms of art in China, there still exists the phenomenon of theoretical study being divorced from art practice. The art workers at large are not too happy about the situation of valuing practice more than theory. The introduction of Brecht's experience in theory and practice, therefore, has played and will continue to play a more positive role in promoting the Chinese theatrical art as well as the growth of *quyi*. We may say that East and West can complement and learn from each other in a necessary, and mutually beneficial exploration. Convening this International Brecht Symposium is no less a contribution to such developments and encourages us to investigate them further.

Thank you all for your willing attention.

Li Jiayao. "Formen der Erzählung - Brecht und Pingtan."

Brechts Theater ist Pingtan ähnlicher als der Beijing-Oper Mei Lanfangs. Pingtan ist ein erzählendes Theater, dessen Erzähler die verschiedenen Figuren selber darstellt, sie wie in Brechts *Die Straßenszene* gewissermaßen zitiert. Er evoziert Gefühle, ohne sich mit der Figur ganz zu identifizieren. Zuerst wird der Ausgang der Geschichte erzählt und die Zuhörer konzentrieren sich dann folglich auf den Gang dieser Geschichte. Der Wechsel zwischen den verschiedenen darstellerischen Methoden fordert eine kritische Aufmerksamkeit beim Zuschauer. Brechts ist eine dialektische Kunst im Gegensatz zu den traditionellen Pingtan-Geschichten. Jedoch helfen Brechts Ideen den chinesischen Künstlern, die eigene Praxis zu entwickeln und zu variieren.

Li Jiayao. "Formes narratives - Brecht et le Pingtan."

Le théâtre de Brecht a plus en commun avec le pingtan qu'avec l'opéra pékinois de Mei Lanfang. Le pingtan est un théâtre de narration, où le narrateur, comme dans *la Scène de la rue* par exemple, se met tantôt à l'intérieur de ses personnages, tantôt à l'extérieur, évoquant ainsi des émotions sans s'identifier complètement à celui qui les éprouve. Le narrateur raconte la fin de l'histoire au début, de sorte que le public s'intéresse aux détails de l'intrigue. L'oscillement entre les diverse modes expressives crée une espace qui facilite l'attention critique. Bien sûr, l'art de Brecht est dialectique, tandis que les histoires traditionnelles ne le sont pas; mais il n'en reste pas moins que les artistes chinois trouvent dans les idées diverses de Brecht un fonds utile pour l'adaptation et l'élargissement de leur propre pratique.

Li Jiayao. "Formas narrativas - Brecht y el Pingtan."

El teatro de Brecht tiene más en común con el pingtan que con la ópera pekinesa de Mei Lanfang. El pingtan es una dramaturgia narrada y, como en *Un Episodio de la calle* por ejemplo, el narrador entra y sale de la perspectiva interior de sus personajes, evocando así sus emociones pero sin identificarse a ellos. El narrador empieza al fin del cuento, y por eso el interés del público se fija en los detalles de la intriga. El movimiento sin cesar entre los varios modos de expresión da lugar a un espacio para la atención crítica: Claro, el arte de Brecht es dialéctico, y en eso difiere de los cuentos tradicionales del pingtan, pero los artistas chinos hallan en las ideas variadas de Brecht un fondo riquísimo para la adaptación y extensión de su propia producción.

Die Brecht-Rezeption in Japan aus dem Aspekt der Theaterpraxis

Iwabuchi Tatsuji

"Ändert Brecht dann, wenn ihr Brecht ändern könnt."

Ich möchte nicht mit der Brecht-Rezeption in Japan beginnen, sondern mit dem Eindruck, den ich bei Aufführungen von Brecht-Stücken in asiatischen Ländern bekommen habe. Natürlich genügen meine beschränkten Erfahrungen nicht, um endgültige Schlüsse zu ziehen, andererseits sind sie meines Erachtens sehr aufschlußreich für die Probleme der Brecht-Rezeption in Japan. Ich habe einige Brecht-Vorstellungen durch chinesische, indische, Hongkonger und philippinische Ensembles oder Gruppen auf der Bühne oder als Videofilm gesehen. Zuerst ein konkretes Beispiel aus einer chinesischen Aufführung des *Kaukasischen Kreidekreises* durch das Beijinger "Jugendtheater". Dort gibt es bekanntlich eine Szene, worin Grusche das Hohe Kind los sein will und es vor einem Bauernhof in der Hoffnung liegen läßt, daß eine gutmütige Bäuerin es aufnimmt. Und so geschieht es denn auch. Der Sänger beschreibt dann Grusches Gefühle:

Warum heiter, Heimkehrerin?
Weil der Hilflose sich
Neue Eltern angelacht hat, bin ich heiter.
Weil ich den Lieben los bin, freue ich mich.

Und warum traurig?
Weil ich frei und ledig gehe,
Bin ich traurig wie ein Beraubter,
Wie ein Verarmter.

Gerade hier habe ich in der chinesischen Aufführung eine unerwartete Darstellungsweise erlebt: Grusche beobachtet lauernd, ob die Bäuerin das Kind annimmt. Als sie gemerkt hat, daß diese das Kind ins Haus mitnimmt, klatscht sie in die Hände und beginnt springend und hüpfend einen freudigen Tanz zum Text der ersten Strophe. Dann stoppt die heitere Musik plötzlich mitten im Tanz und die Tanzende hält inne. Nun beginnt sie, begleitet von einer traurigen Musik, einen sehr statischen Tanz. Statt der Mischung aus Freude und Trauer zeigt man reichlich krass und lediglich illustrativ die zwei gegensätzlichen Gemütszustände. Hier sieht man ein ziemlich klares Beispiel für das Mißverstehen des Verfremdungseffekts in China oder, genauer gesagt, in dieser Inszenierung. Die Regisseurin, Chen Yong, hat lange in der

Sowjetunion die Stanislawski-Methode studiert. Deswegen hatte ich erwartet, daß sie auch Brecht naturalistisch inszenieren würde. Aber in Wirklichkeit war es ganz umgekehrt. Brecht wurde nach der Kulturrevolution und dem Abtritt der Viererbande wieder aktuell. Gerade jetzt, wo man in Europa von der Brecht-Müdigkeit spricht, ist er im chinesischen Theater zum Tagesgespräch geworden. Die Rezeptionsweise ist jedoch, soweit ich sie in dieser Aufführung erlebt habe, eben sehr problematisch, ja fast oberflächlich, obwohl ich im Bezug auf Brecht das Wort Formalismus eigentlich vermeiden möchte. Diese Aufführung erinnerte mich an ein ähnliches Mißverstehen in einer japanischen Vorstellung. Bevor Grusche auf die morsche Hängebrücke über dem Gletscher steigt, singt sie ein dreistrophiges Lied :

Tief ist der Abgrund, Sohn
Brüchig der Steg
Aber wir wählen, Sohn,
Nicht unsern Weg

Muß den Weg gehen
Den ich weiß für dich
Muß das Brot essen
Das ich hab für dich

Müssen die paar Bissen teilen
Kriegst von viere drei
Aber ob sie groß sind
Weiß ich nicht dabei.

Beim Singen dieses Liedes muß der Lauf der Handlung m.E. unterbrochen werden. Vielleicht beschreibt Brecht mit dem ganzen Lied den *stream of consciousness* in der Sekunde vor dem gefährlichen Besteigen des Stegs. Nach Max Frisch ist die Handlung des Dramas sozusagen eingefroren. Aber in einer japanischen Vorstellung sang die Schauspielerin, den Steg besteigend, das Lied. Die Musik untermalte ja nur den gefährlichen Gang und die Zuschauer konnten über den Inhalt des Lieds natürlich überhaupt nicht nachdenken. Das Wortgefecht zwischen Azdak und Simon wurde in Japan wie auch in China sehr schnell gespielt, so daß das Publikum keine Zeit hatte, über den Doppelsinn des Textes nachzudenken.

Im allgemeinen könnte man sagen: Der Aufführung des *Kaukasischen Kreidekreises* gelang es, die Parabel des Stückes im Brechtschen Sinne mitzuteilen, aber die Details wurden ziemlich vernachlässigt. Und gerade solche Details sind bei Brecht sehr wichtig, weil sie immer mit der ganzen Struktur und mit der Reflektion, auf die Brecht letzten Endes abzielt, zu tun haben. Ich habe noch eine Aufführung des *Kaukasischen Kreidekreises* diesmal durch die philippinische PETA-Gruppe gesehen. Hier wurde die Parabel auf die Insel Mindanao verlegt. Der Text wurde stark reduziert und viele Szenen wurden pantomimisch gezeigt. Diese Gruppe arbeitet nicht in einem gewöhnlichen Theater, sondern spielt manchmal auf freien Plätzen in

Slums. Sie wollte mit einer einfachen Parabel direkt auf die Massen wirken. Man könnte zwar sagen, daß das Stück damit auf das Niveau eines Agit-Prop-Theaters gebracht wurde; aber andererseits ist es ihr gelungen, dieses Ziel zu erreichen.

Als weiteres Beispiel nehme ich die Bearbeitung von *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* durch das Unity Theatre in Calcutta. Das Stück war hier nach Indien verlegt und mit dem Eigennamen *Pontu Laha* betitelt, der quasi ein heutiger Radscha ist. Die Parabel wurde geschickt in die heutige indische Gesellschaft versetzt. Die Verlobungsszene ist z.B. sehr folkloristisch und interessant gestaltet worden. Aber eine Szene störte mich sehr, nämlich die, wo nach der Prüfung der Ehe der Zorn Evas den Klassenunterschied deutlich werden läßt, nachdem ihr Matti scherzend einen Klaps auf den Hintern gegeben hatte. Im ersten Zornanfall wird Eva der Unterschied zwischen ihr und Matti bewußt, wozu sie durchaus fähig ist. Bei der indischen Vorstellung war Eva (hier hieß sie Rahda) leider nicht so klug. Sie verhielt sich wie ein dummes, naives bürgerliches Fräulein. Nach dem Klaps schrie und heulte sie hysterisch und lief einfach davon. Soweit ich verstanden habe, wurden die Worte Evas - "Ich glaube jetzt auch, daß meine Erziehung die falsche war. Ich glaub', ich gehe hinauf" - einfach gestrichen. Den Text so zu behandeln, heißt Brecht verflachen.

Die Versetzung der Situation des Originals ins Heimatland habe ich auch in einer Aufführung der *Gesichte der Simone Machard* von einer Hongkonger Schauspielschule erlebt. Statt der deutschen Invasion in Frankreich hat man hier die Invasion der japanischen Armee in Südchina. In den Traumszenen erschien statt der Heiligen Johanna eine Heldin aus der Peking-Oper. Aber außer den Szenen aus der Peking-Oper verlief die Bearbeitung gemäß dem Original und die Spielweise war sehr realistisch. Das Stück wurde durch die Versetzung in die eigene Situation dem Publikum näher gebracht. Als Japaner wurde auch ich durch diese Bearbeitung wegen unseres Schuldgefühls mehr betroffen als durch das Original. Dabei ging freilich einiges vom typisch Brechtschen verloren. Siegfried Melchinger berichtet in seinem Buch *Geschichte des politischen Theaters* von der Abänderung eines Brecht-Textes in Indien. Er zitiert den Barbara-Song aus der *Dreigroschenoper* in Bengali. Er lautet:

Ein kleines Mädchen war ich, lockenköpfig, ahnungslos.
 Trug kurze, buntgestreifte Saris und silberne Dschumurs.
 Und hatte frische Tamarindenblätter durch die Nase gesteckt.
 Auf den Schoß nahm mich jeder, mich zärtlich streichelnd,
 Das ist bei allen Kindern so.
 Bei der Mutter, war es doch genauso.
 Die sorglose Zeit, sie ist vorbei, verschwunden.
 Wie der Vogel über dem fernen Ozean in unendlichen Himmeln.
 Als ich älter wurde, da sagtest du mir:
 "Nun werden viele Männer kommen, beachte sie nicht".
 Die Männer kamen tatsächlich, Gebildete, Gelehrte
 und Vornehme.
 Hellhäutige und solche, die wunderbar redeten.

Jeden, Mutter, wies ich ab in meinem Stolz, usw.

Und dann am Schluß heißt es:

Was sollte ich da machen:

Mein Stolz und meine Stärke sind dahingeschwommen,
Kopfüber sprang ich in die Flut.

Für Melchinger ist diese Strophe ein positives Beispiel: "Das klingt wie ein Blumengebilde, aber Brecht hätte trotzdem wohl nichts dagegen einzuwenden gehabt, weil der kaltschnäuzige Sinn des Songs nicht angetastet wird."

Ich persönlich bin im allgemeinen auch nicht gegen eine radikale Bearbeitung von Brecht-Stücken für die jeweilige Situation eines Landes. Ich bin sogar geneigt zu sagen, daß Brecht in Japan manchmal zu korrekt und originalgetreu aufgeführt wird; gewissermaßen "vertragsgetreu", weil im Vertrag der Aufführungsrechte ein Artikel regelmäßig bestimmt, daß man für jede Veränderung und jeden Strich um Erlaubnis bitten muß. Auf den ersten Blick klingt dieses Reglement etwas widersprüchlich, wenn man bedenkt, daß Brecht eine solche "Laxheit in Fragen geistigen Eigentums" besaß und viele Stücke anderer kühn bearbeitet hat. Andererseits war Brecht gezwungen, seine Stücke und Spielweise vor jedem Mißverständnis zu schützen. Und jetzt spreche ich *off the record*. In Asien, wohin sich die Kontrolle der Brecht-Erben nicht erstreckt, spielt man Brecht ziemlich frei, ja sogar willkürlich. Außerdem gehört China nicht zu den Ländern, in denen die internationalen Urheberrechte gelten. Diese Situation mag aus der Sicht europäischer Theaterleute sehr beneidenswert erscheinen. In Asien hat man sozusagen eine bessere Chance, Brecht Brecht sein zu lassen.

Im glücklichsten Fall kann man Brecht in der Bearbeitung besser verstehen als im Original, wenn dadurch der Sinn des Originals nicht beschädigt wird. Aber einem solchen idealen Fall begegnet man selten. In Bezug auf Shakespeare hat Brecht bekanntlich gesagt: "Wir können Shakespeare ändern, wenn wir Shakespeare ändern können." Die Frage ist nun, ob man Brecht auch ändern darf, und somit wirklich weiterführen kann, wenn man ihn noch nicht richtig verstanden hat.

In Japan herrscht die allgemeine Tendenz, westliches Drama, auch Brecht, möglichst originalgetreu aufzuführen. Aber die originalgetreue Aufführung bedeutet nicht immer ein vollständiges Verständnis. Mißverständnisse entstehen ja auf einer sehr primitiven Ebene, nämlich durch falsche Übersetzung. *Die Dreigroschenoper* gehört in Japan zu den meistgespielten Stücken Brechts. Bei etlichen Aufführungen habe ich immer den gleichen Fehler erlebt. Im "Anstatt-Daß-Song" kommt eine in Deutschland recht gebräuchliche Wendung, "Extrawurst gebraten", vor. Die Stelle wurde in fast allen Bühnentexten wortwörtlich übersetzt. So nehme ich an, daß nicht nur die Zuschauer, sondern auch die Schauspieler überhaupt nicht imstande waren, hinter den Sinn des Textes zu kommen. In einer anderen Aufführung der *Dreigroschenoper* wurde dieser Song einfach gestrichen, was von der Struktur her

unmöglich ist, weil die spätere melodramatische Liebesszene zwischen Mackie und Polly hier antizipiert wird.

Außerdem macht sich jetzt auch bei uns eine andere Tendenz bemerkbar - die nämlich, Brecht ziemlich frei und japanisch zu bearbeiten. An sich bin ich nicht dagegen. Aber dabei darf man Brecht nicht vereinfachen. Zuerst muß man ihn gut verstehen, und dann erst kann man Brecht bearbeiten. Nun zur Rezeptionsgeschichte Brechts in Japan.

Schon vor dem Krieg war Brecht bei uns einigermaßen bekannt. *Trommeln in der Nacht* wurde Ende der 20er Jahre übersetzt, danach noch weitere Stücke. 1932 wurde *Die Dreigroschenoper* aufgeführt, deren Text aber nicht nach dem Original, sondern nach dem Drehbuch des Papst-Films frei bearbeitet und in die japanische Situation übertragen wurde. Dann verschwand der Name Brecht längere Zeit aus dem Vokabular der Japaner. Im Shingeki, wörtlich übersetzt "Neues Theater", dem seit 1910 aufkommenden, westlich geprägten Theater in Japan, hatte die Methode von Stanislawski seit den 30er Jahren die dominierende Rolle gespielt. Da sich das Shingeki im allgemeinen politisch links orientierte, war der sogenannte "sozialistische Realismus" Shdanower Prägung trotz der Unterdrückung des Militärregimes maßgebend. Bis zur Zeit der Zwangsauflösung der Shingeki-Theatergruppen im Jahre 1940 hatte man den Stanislawski-Stil gepflegt.

Nach der Kapitulation blühte das Shingeki wieder auf, und in der Schauspielkunst dominierte wieder der Stanislawski-Stil. Natürlich darf man dabei nicht übersehen, daß auch Stanislawski bei uns nicht methodisch-wissenschaftlich, sondern gefühlsmäßig und nur als Kunst des Einfühlens rezipiert wurde. Anfang der 50er Jahre begann man, neue Stücke von Brecht und seine neuen Theorien bekannt zu machen. 1953 wurde *Furcht und Elend des dritten Reiches* uraufgeführt von Senda, der ebenfalls Brechts Theaterschriften einzeln nach und nach übersetzte. Es ist leicht einzusehen, warum die Theaterleute in Japan Brechts Theorien sofort als krassen Gegensatz zu Stanislawski empfanden. Das bekannte Schema bei jeder Brecht-Rezeption, Ratio gegen Gefühl, wurde in Japan aufgefaßt als: Brecht contra Stanislawski. Gerade jetzt in China, wo Brecht sehr diskutiert wird, wiederholt sich genau das, was in Japan vor 20 Jahren geschah. Ist dies typisch für die asiatische Rezeption?

Wenn eine Theaterkapazität wie Senda Brecht nicht verteidigt und gefördert hätte, wäre er in Japan nicht so früh bekannt geworden.

Senda machte sich vorsichtig an die Arbeit. 1955 führte er mit den jüngeren Schauspielern den *Hofmeister* auf, da dieses Stück mit Hilfe des damals erschienenen Buches *Theaterarbeit* nach dem Modell des Berliner Ensembles bearbeitet werden konnte. Die Aufführung des *Galilei* 1958 unter der Regie von Senda war bezeichnend für die Wirkung und den Einfluß Brechts auf die japanischen Dramatiker. Bei dieser Aufführung wurde das letzte Bild nicht gestrichen, wie auch bei Brecht selbst. So kann man nicht leugnen, daß die Aufführung optimistischer wirkte als ohne dieses fünfzehnte Bild. Aber dennoch gab die widerspruchsvolle Verhaltensweise Galileis den japanischen Theaterleuten, die bis dahin nur die positiven Helden des sogenannten

Sozialistischen Realismus gewohnt waren, viele Anregungen zu einem neuen Weg.

Die *Galilei*-Problematik, besonders sein Verrat an der Erkenntnis bzw. seine Anpassung, machte viele Japaner betroffen. Im Krieg hatte kaum ein Japaner die Möglichkeit zur Emigration gehabt. Deswegen lagen die Probleme des Widerrufs bei uns etwas anders als in Deutschland. Bei uns hatten die Kommunisten oder Sozialisten, wenn sie ihr Bekenntnis nicht schon aufgegeben hatten, einen getarnten Widerruf vollzogen, der eine gewisse Ähnlichkeit mit dem Verhalten Galileis hatte. Deswegen wirkte in Japan die vom "Stückschreiber" beabsichtigte Verdammung Galileis vergleichsweise schwächer.

Natürlich erweckte *Galilei* sowohl bei den rechten als auch den linken Konservativen Unbehagen. Ein Theaterkritiker der KPJ, der die orthodoxe Linie vertrat, hegte den Verdacht des Formalismus gegen die Brechtsche Dramaturgie.

Aber durch solche Debatten sind Begriffe wie das "epische Theater", der "Verfremdungseffekt" in unserer Theaterwelt sehr bekannt geworden, obwohl man den Unterschied zwischen dem episch gebauten Drama und dem chronologischen Bilderbogen nicht genau erkannte und den V-Effekt vorwiegend formal auffaßte.

Das Jahr 1960 ist politisch besonders wichtig, denn aus Anlaß des Sicherheitspaktes mit Amerika gab es in Japan massive Proteste. An diesen Protestaktionen beteiligten sich nicht nur links orientierte, sondern auch bürgerliche Bewegungen, die danach nie mehr in solchem Ausmaß auftraten. In dieser Situation wurde *Die Mutter* aufgeführt und kam im damaligen politischen Klima sehr gut an. Im gleichen Jahr brachte das Haiyuza-Ensemble den *Guten Menschen von Sezuan* auf die Bühne. Für beide Stücke vertonte der Komponist Hikaru Hayashi die Songs und Lieder im Text. Obwohl er die Musik von Weill, Eisler und Dessau wirklich gut kannte, klingt seine Musik für mich nicht sehr nach Brecht. Im allgemeinen kann man sagen, daß japanischen Komponisten bei der Vertonung ein großer Fehler unterlief: Man vertonte *alle* Versteile. Bekanntlich gibt es in Brecht-Stücken zwei Arten von Kommentaren: gesungene und rezitierte. Die bekannte Wendung ans Publikum im *Guten Menschen von Sezuan* z.B. müßte man eher rezitieren als singen:

In unserem Lande
Dürfte es trübe Abende nicht geben.
Auch hohe Brücken über die Flüsse
Selbst die Stunde zwischen Nacht und Morgen
Und die ganze Winterzeit dazu
Das ist gefährlich.

Hier muß unbedingt eine Pause kommen, weil der Zuschauer selbst zuerst an den Grund denken muß. Dann kommt die Antwort:

Denn angesichts des Elends
Genügt ein Weniges
Und die Menschen werfen

Das unerträgliche Leben fort.

Man darf diesen Text m.E. nicht singen, sondern muß ihn rezitieren. Zwar hat Dessau diesen Text vertont, aber seinen Noten zufolge wird der Text nicht gesungen, sondern fast rezitativ gesprochen. Wenn der Text zu lyrisch-melodisch gesungen wird, kann das Publikum den Inhalt nicht reflektieren. Und in Japan behinderte die lyrische Gesangsart gerade eine solche Reflektion. In unseren Aufführungen haben viele Texte wegen der zu melodischen Vertonung ihre Funktion eingebüßt.

Nun zu einem anderen Beispiel aus der *Mutter*, das die besonderen Schwierigkeiten der Brecht-Rezeption in Japan erhellt. Ein Chor der *Mutter* endet an einer Stelle mit der Zeile: "Und er, der es begriff, begriff es auch nicht." Wir wissen, daß sich dieses "es" darauf bezieht, daß die Handlanger, Soldaten, Polizisten, die die Unterschicht direkt schikanieren, gerade aus dieser unterdrückten Klasse stammen. In Japan hat man die Zeile ungefähr so übersetzt: "Obwohl der jetzige Zustand ihm völlig klar ist, kann er ihn doch nicht akzeptieren." Dadurch wird der Satz leicht verständlich, büßt aber einen großen Teil seiner provokatorischen Schärfe ein. Übersetzt man die Stelle aber wortwörtlich, wirkt sie sehr steif. Ich habe übrigens diese Stelle in verschiedenen Übersetzungen in anderen Sprachen nachgeschlagen (*Lieder und Chöre aus Die Mutter in 9 Sprachen*, Aufbauverlag 1971) und fand, daß dieser Satz im Englischen und Italienischen einfach fehlt. Im Französischen lautet er: "Et lui, il comprenait et ne comprenait pas." Aber das Russische scheint nicht lakonisch genug: "I on kotoryj ponimal eto, v tozhe vremya i ne mog etogo ponyat'." Ich bin nicht imstande, die Übersetzungsprobleme in den europäischen Sprachen zu beurteilen. Jedenfalls ist die japanische Sprache sehr ungeeignet für die Lakonik, die sich Brecht von der lateinischen Sprechweise her angeeignet zu haben scheint.

Die Übersetzung der Song-Texte in Übereinstimmung mit der Originalmusik ist noch schwieriger. Man muß sich entweder mit einer Art inhaltlicher Kurzfassung begnügen oder eine neue Musik zu den übersetzten Texten komponieren. Dabei läuft man Gefahr, Brecht zu vereinfachen und zu verflachen.

Es gab später in Japan solche Versuche. Im Jahre 1966 (und Reprise danach 1983) führte man *Mutter Courage* mit der Musik von Paul Dessau auf, 1971 mit der Musik von Eisler. Ich habe mich bemüht, die übersetzten Lieder in die Noten von Dessau hineinzuzwängen. Die Arbeit war für mich fast wie ein Prokrustesbett.

Bei den von Kurt Weill vertonten Stücken, ist man verbindlich gezwungen, die Originalmusik zu benutzen. Dann nimmt man oft den leichteren Weg und schreibt zu der Musik einen ziemlich willkürlichen Text, der mit dem Original nicht viel zu tun hat. Das geht dann wirklich an die Substanz. Bei einigen Aufführungen war das der Fall. Nun komme ich auf die Rezeptionsgeschichte zurück.

Nach der sogenannten Niederlage im Kampfe um den Sicherheitspakt begann das bislang monolithische System des orthodoxen Kommunismus in Japan abzubröckeln. Die engagierten Theatergruppen, die bis dahin angesichts des gemeinsamen Zieles fest

zusammenhielten, verloren nun diesen Zusammenhalt. Die Spaltung und Zersplitterung des linken Lagers in verschiedene politische Gruppen spiegelten sich in der Theaterwelt. Das führte zum Sturz des sozialistischen Realismus als Dogma für die Theaterschaffenden. Die Fragestellung des Individuums gegenüber der Gemeinschaft im Lehrstück gab den engagierten Theaterleuten zu denken, war doch bis dahin die Auflösung des Ichs nicht so radikal durchdacht worden. Die Problematik der *Maßnahme* wurde bei den Jüngeren intensiv diskutiert. Ich nehme an, daß das Stück damals in kleineren Kreisen oft einstudiert, evtl. schwarz gespielt wurde. Aber man war noch nicht reif für eine solche Fragestellung und drängte auf die voreilige, einseitige Auslegung.

Mitte der 60er Jahre wurden relativ viele Brecht-Stücke aufgeführt. *Mann ist Mann*, *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe*, *Schweyk* u.a. kamen auf die Bühne. 1966, also zur Zeit des Vietnam- Krieges, zeigte das Haiyuza-Theater, wie schon erwähnt, die *Mutter Courage* in einer modellbuchgetreuer Inszenierung mit der Musik von Dessau. Die Probe dauerte fast vier Monate und die Begegnung mit der praktischen Umsetzung Brechts war für viele Schauspieler, die Brecht bislang von seinen Theorien her abstrakt verstanden hatten, sehr aufschlußreich. Der Verfremdungseffekt z.B. war und wird im allgemeinen immer noch nur als anti-illusionistische Methode verstanden, aber bei dieser Vorstellung haben zumindest die Schauspieler den Sinn des V-Effektes in der Praxis verstanden, was man vom Publikum nicht unbedingt sagen konnte. Die meisten Zuschauer konnten nicht umhin, mit der Mutter Courage zu sympathisieren und sie zugleich zu kritisieren. In der letzten Hälfte der 60er Jahre wurden bereits Stücke westlicher, an Brecht so oder so orientierter Dramatiker, gespielt, wie z.B. *Vietnam-Diskurs* von Peter Weiss, *In der Sache J. Robert Oppenheimer* von Kipphardt, Dürrenmatts *Die Physiker* usw. Damit erhob sich die Frage, wie man die Methodik Brechts weiterentwickeln kann und soll. Andererseits entstand gegen Ende der 60er Jahre schon das "andere" Theater oder, wie man in Japan sagt, das Angura-Theater. Angura ist eine Abkürzung der japanischen phonetischen Umschreibung für *Underground-Theater*. In diesem Angura-Theater gibt es eine derartige Vielzahl verschiedener Gruppen, daß man sie schwerlich unter einen Hut bringen kann. Gemeinsam ist ihnen lediglich die Ablehnung und das Aufbegehren gegen jegliche Autorität und der Charakter eines alternativen Theaters. Einige standen im Zeichen des absurden Theaters, andere unter dem Einfluß des Theaters der Grausamkeit und wieder andere waren vom kultischen Theater oder vom Happening beeinflusst. Vorherrschend war gerade die umgekehrte Richtung: Die Entwicklung zum Irrationalen und Emotionalen. Einige dieser Gruppen lehnten sich jedoch an Brecht an, aber hier wurde Brecht entstellt. Eine etwa ähnliche Entwicklung im Westen war die emotionale Aufführung der *Antigone* Brechts durch das *Living Theatre* aus den USA, die ich als eine symptomatische Erscheinung in der Geschichte der Brecht-Rezeption überhaupt betrachte. Die stimmliche und körperliche Exzessivität dieser Gruppe läßt sich m.E. gar nicht mit der Wiedergabe von Brecht-Stücken vereinbaren. Bei solcher Geringschätzung der Texte kann man

Brecht nicht inszenieren. Oder aber öffnet sich eine Möglichkeit der emotionellen Brecht-Rezeption?

Im Grunde neigen die Japaner zur Emotionalität. Unser traditionelles Theater zeigt, daß das Publikum nicht gewohnt war, gesprochene Worte rein logisch und dialektisch zu erfassen. Der Darstellungsstil war immer wichtiger als der Inhalt des Textes. Erst die Shingeki-Bewegung versuchte seit Anfang des Jahrhunderts, das logisch gebaute westliche Drama nach Japan zu verpflanzen. Obwohl Brecht das Paradigma des bisherigen westlichen Theaters stark veränderte, lag Brecht in Japan immerhin auf der Entwicklungslinie des Shingeki.

Der Auftritt des *Underground-Theaters* bedeutet eigentlich eine Rückkehr zum emotionellen Theater. Diese Neigung der Japaner ist geradezu ideal für die Aufnahme des neuen visionären Theaters mit seiner Betonung der Körpersprache aber wohl weniger geeignet für das Verständnis eines vernunftbetonten Theaters auf der Grundlage einer logischen Dialektik. Ob diese Tatsache negative Auswirkungen für unsere Brecht-Rezeption hatte und hat, kann ich nicht mit Sicherheit sagen. Auf alle Fälle sollte man die sinnlichen Komponente im Theater überhaupt noch einmal neu überdenken.

Parallel zur Revoltezeit in Europa 1968 gab es auch in Japan eine zweite Periode politischer Bewegungen. 1970 kämpfte man wieder gegen die Verlängerung des Sicherheitspaktes mit Amerika. Gleichzeitig gab es die Studentenrevolte. Der Kampf nahm jedoch einen ganz anderen Verlauf. Es gab keine Solidarität und keine Volksfront mehr wie 1960. Die Studenten zersplitterten sich in immer kleinere radikale Sekten. Die Folge war einerseits die Isolierung der Radikalen und andererseits die Enttäuschung und Entpolitisierung bei breiten Schichten der Bevölkerung. Während bei der Jugend die Tendenz zur Entpolitisierung um sich griff, trat das Phänomen der "Reemotionalisierung" immer stärker in den Vordergrund. Auf dem Gebiet der Literatur sprach man von dem Trend zur Wiederverinnerlichung. In einem solchen Klima verlor Brecht für die jüngere Generation nach und nach seine Anziehungskraft. Natürlich ist diese Bilanz relativ zu sehen. Die Brecht-Pflege wurde auch in den 70er Jahren fortgesetzt. Das Haiyuza-Theater brachte Brecht-Stücke in "großem Format" Stück für Stück auf die Bühne: *Arturo Ui*, *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*, *Puntilla* u.a. Und einige kleinere Theaterensembles, Laien- und Arbeitertheatergruppen spielten immer wieder Brecht-Stücke, besonders Lehrstücke. Bemerkenswert ist, daß in den 70er Jahren fast alle früheren Stücke (vom *Baal* bis zum *Leben Eduards des Zweiten von England*) aufgeführt wurden.

Gemessen an der Gesamtzahl der Theatergruppen und Vorstellungen sind die Brecht-Aufführungen in den 70er und 80er Jahren zahlenmäßig zurückgegangen. Die sogenannte Brecht-Müdigkeit, von der beim Brecht-Dialog 1978 in Berlin zum ersten Mal die Rede war, findet man auch in Japan. In unserem Fall liegt aber der Grund m.E. nicht darin, daß sich die Methode Brechts erschöpft hat, sondern eher in der Haltung des Publikums, besonders der jüngeren Generation, die sich immer weniger für die gesellschaftlichen Probleme interessiert. Ihre neue biedermeierliche Lebensweise fordert vom Theater kein

politisches Engagement mehr. Man erwartet bloße Unterhaltung oder die Flucht in eine exotische Welt. Einige *Underground*-Theater, die früher zumindest eine kritische Haltung zur etablierten Gesellschaft hatten, dienen nun nur noch der Flucht in eine kuriose Welt. Der Eskapismus, der zur Erhaltung der jetzigen Zustände beiträgt, erschwert auch momentan die Aufnahme Brechts. Zwar gibt es im westlichen Theater viele Arten des sinnlichen Theaters, ob sie sich nun Theater der Körpersprache, Theater der Vision, Theater mit Urerlebnissen oder wie auch immer nennen. Die Besessenheit, Obsession mit okultischen Tönen, oder seichte Slapsticks, die jetzt in unserem Theater Mode sind, haben jedoch nicht die Härte eines Artaud, Grotowsky oder Heiner Müller.

Das Nachlassen des Interesses an Brecht während der letzten Jahre in Japan hat m.E. nicht die gleichen Ursachen wie in Europa. Brecht hat in Japan noch nicht die "durchschlagende Wirkungslosigkeit eines Klassikers" erreicht, weil er, wie schon erwähnt, entweder zu oberflächlich-schematisch oder zu kompliziert und unverständlich (teilweise wegen der unkorrekten Übersetzung) bzw. politisch zu simpel gespielt wurde. Es ist bei uns noch relativ wenig bekannt, daß Brechts Stücke Nachdenken und Vergnügen zugleich bereiten können.

Was wir heute von Brecht lernen können und sollten, ist hauptsächlich seine Haltung. Alle Stücke Brechts entsprechen der jeweiligen Zeit und Situation, in der sie geschrieben wurden. Wenn man sie einfach so spielt, wie Brecht sie geschrieben oder aufgeführt hat, werden sie grobenteils ihre Aktualität einbüßen. Mir scheint es wichtig, die Parabelform der Stücke weiter zu entwickeln. Brecht parabolisiert in den meisten Stücken die Probleme seiner Zeit auf genußvolle Weise. Aber die aktuellen Probleme, die Brecht in Parabelform aufdecken wollte, sind andere als unsere heutigen. Es ist notwendig, den Bezug zu den heutigen Problemen in der Parabelform des Originals aufzuspüren. Erst dann sind wir imstande, neue Parabeln im Sinne Brechts zu schaffen. Dabei haben wir jetzt einige Schwierigkeiten. Wir Japaner leben in einer Scheinprosperität, die gewisse Folgen hat. In einigen Stücken hat Brecht die Armut und die dadurch verursachten Verhaltensweisen meisterhaft beschrieben. Unsere Generation, die im und nach dem Krieg alle Not erleben mußte, versteht dies, aber die jüngere Generation kann solche Bilder nicht nachvollziehen. Die Welt des *Mahagonny* ist daher eher verständlich, wo man alles darf, solange man über Geld verfügt. Den Verlust der Menschlichkeit in der spätkapitalistischen Gesellschaft versteht man bei uns besser als die Armut, die die letzte Spur eines Menschen vertilgen kann. Dies wurde mir durch die Äußerung einer Oberschülerin schockartig klar: nach der Lektüre des *Augsburger Kreidekreises* sagte sie, Anna sei in der Erzählung sehr egoistisch, weil sie dem Kind die Möglichkeit zu einem Leben in Wohlstand versperrt habe. Natürlich wäre sie einem solchen Irrtum nicht erlegen, wenn sie den *Kaukasischen Kreidekreis* gelesen hätte, wo ein Song im Stück deutlicher den Sachverhalt erklärt:

Ginge es [das Kind] in goldenen Schuhn
Träte es mir auf die Schwachen

Und es müßte Böse tun
Und könnte mir lachen.

Ach zum Tragen, spät und frühe
Ist zu schwer ein Herz aus Stein
Denn es macht zu große Mühe
Mächtig tun und Böse sein.

Dieses Beispiel zeigt gerade, wie nur das "angenehme Leben" maßgebend für unsere Jugend ist.

Den Sinn der Parabel im *Guten Menschen von Sezuan* kann man freilich gut verstehen: in einer unmenschlichen Gesellschaft muß man ein gespaltenes Leben führen. Aber wenn die Anpassung und die Erhaltung des jetzigen Zustandes bejaht wird, ficht die versteckte Lehre des Stückes, die Notwendigkeit der Veränderung der Welt, einen nicht an. In der dritten Welt ist die Wirkung Brechts heute ganz anders als in Japan. Dort versteht man sehr genau die Notwendigkeit einer Veränderung und Brecht bleibt anregend und aktuell.

In Japan vergißt man oft, den Bezug zu uns deutlich herauszuarbeiten. Wenn das Publikum bei Brecht-Aufführungen ein Alibigefühl hat, dann muß man diese Aufführungen schon kulinarisch bzw. klassisch nennen.

Über unser Gastspiel *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* beim Hongkonger Brecht-Symposium im Dezember 1986 haben die meisten westlichen Teilnehmer die Ansicht geäußert, daß die Vorstellung zwar schön und korrekt, aber etwas snobistisch sei. Ein westdeutscher Kritiker hat gesagt, das sehe wie eine Brecht-Vorstellung in Deutschland vor 20 Jahren aus, sei aber nicht neu und provokatorisch genug. Vielleicht hängt dies damit zusammen, daß unserer Aufführung gerade die klare Bezugnahme zu uns selbst fehlte.

Gestatten Sie mir hier als Beispiel, meinen Versuch zu erwähnen. Ich habe einmal *Im Dickicht der Städte* inszeniert. (Ich inszeniere ab und zu ganz nebenbei.) Den Anlaß dazu gaben mir die Aufführung dieses Stückes im BE unter der Regie von Ruth Berghaus und - vielleicht werden Sie lachen - Thomas Manns *Der Tod in Venedig* in der Verfilmung von Visconti. Offen gestanden war ich ganz enttäuscht von der Aufführung im BE, weil mir das Regiekonzept, oder sagen wir mal der Bezug zum Jetzt und Hier undeutlich schien. Bei der Lektüre des reichhaltigen Programmheftes konnte ich nur herauslesen, daß die Grausamkeit und die Unmenschlichkeit im Stück nur die Widerspiegelung der kapitalistischen bzw. amerikanischen Gesellschaft sei. Das stimmt natürlich. Aber wo ist dann der Bezug zum heutigen Publikum, das in der nichtkapitalistischen Gesellschaft lebt? Als Begründung der Aufführung finde ich die Erklärung des Programms nicht überzeugend. Durch den furchtbar ästhetischen Film von Visconti habe ich eine Idee zu meiner Inszenierung bekommen. In der meisterhaften Erzählung von Thomas Mann, den Brecht nicht leiden konnte, fand ich eine Figur, die als Ansatzpunkt zur Annäherung an das Brecht-Stück dienen kann, nämlich Aschenbach. Damit möchte ich nun keinerlei Hypothese aufstellen, daß Brecht als Gegenentwurf zum *Tod*

in *Venedig Im Dickicht* geschrieben hätte. Nur behandelte ich die Figur Shlink, als ob er eine Gegenfigur zu Aschenbach wäre. Aschenbach ist ein Self-made-man der Bourgeoisie. Durch Fleiß hat er es zu seinem Ruhm als Schriftsteller gebracht. Seine korrekte Lebensweise schwankt aber plötzlich, als er der verführerischen Sehnsucht nach dem Süden folgend nach Venedig reist und dort den schönen Jungen Tazio trifft. Shlink im *Dickicht* ist ein Self-made-man in der Unterwelt, er hat es durch harte Arbeit zum Direktor des Holzhandels gebracht. In einer unmenschlichen Gesellschaft hat er sich die unmenschliche Härte dermaßen angeeignet, daß seine Haut gegerbt ist. Seine harte Lebensweise kommt ins Wanken, als er irgendwo irgendwann den weißen Jungen Garga sieht, obwohl im Stück diese fatale Begegnung gar nicht geschildert ist. Dann beginnt der Kampf zwischen Shlink und Garga, aber der Kampf Shlinks bedeutet hier Kontaktsuche in einer entfremdeten Welt. Shlink wird sozusagen vom Amoklauf der menschlichen Liebe überfallen. Die Regeln dieses Duells sind manchmal auch deswegen unkalkulierbar, weil der hartgesottene Shlink ab und zu den Regeln des *fair play* folgt: Zum Beispiel die Übergabe seiner Firma an Garga, seine Unterstützung der verlassenen Familie Gargas, die Ablehnung der Liebe Maries usw. Solche Verhaltensformen sind sogar seinen Anhängern unverständlich. Sein Gegner Garga ist im Gegensatz zur Figur Tazio im *Tod in Venedig* ein echter Antagonist. Am Anfang des Stückes ist er ein Naturbursche, der sich mitten in der Großstadt nach dem Naturleben in Tahiti sehnt. Aber während des sich entfaltenden 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, bis er die Liebe zu Garga bekennt, während Garga Shlink ganz kaltherzig verläßt und ihn der lynchenden Bande überläßt. Shlink muß Selbstmord begehen.

Im letzten Bild erscheint Garga als verhärteter Mann, der auch der unmenschlichen Gesellschaft gewachsen ist. Sein nächstes Ziel ist nicht Tahiti, sondern die Großstadt der Großstädte, New York. Um dieses Konzept zu konkretisieren, ließ ich Shlink am Anfang in der dicken Haut erscheinen. Zum Schminken benutzte ich die Schönheitsmaske als Haut, die er vor seinem Selbstmord vom Gesicht abreißt. Garga hingegen trägt dieselbe Hautmaske erst nach der Entlassung aus dem Gefängnis. Und seine Haut wird gegen Ende immer dicker.

Damit wollte ich den Prozess der Entmenschlichung und der Anpassung Gargas zeigen. Die Verwandlung Gargas am Schluß erinnert mich fast an die Heldin des "fremden Freundes" von Christoph Hein. Wir Japaner leben heute in einer Gesellschaft, die scheinbar sehr menschlich aussieht, aber in Wirklichkeit sehr inhuman ist. Unsere Massenmedien trösten die Leute durch rührseligen Kitsch, als ob die Rettung ohne Veränderung des gesellschaftlichen Systems allein durch die Güte des Einzelnen möglich wäre. Angesichts solcher Manipulation müßte man vielleicht "der Wirklichkeit ins Auge sehen", wie der Pavian im Stück sagt. Im *Dickicht* wurde oft als ein absurdes Stück betrachtet. Ich wollte durch meine Aufführung zeigen, daß es nicht einfach absurd

und abstrakt ist, sondern einen Bezug zur heutigen Anpassungsform in der entfremdeten Gesellschaft hat.

Nun komme ich nach dieser Abschweifung zum Thema zurück und zu den zukünftigen Problemen der Brecht-Rezeption in Japan. Im letzten Jahrzehnt bemerkt man im japanischen modernen Theater den allgemeinen Trend, immer weniger ausländische Stücke aufzuführen. Früher hat man im Rahmen des Shingeki vorwiegend westliche Stücke gespielt. Waren früher zwei Drittel der aufgeführten Stücke westliche, sind es jetzt höchstens noch ein Drittel. Dieses Phänomen hängt hauptsächlich damit zusammen, daß sich die Art des neuen sinnlichen Theaters nicht auf den Text, sondern auf die Spielweise konzentriert und deswegen unbedingt zu ihrer Vorstellung eigene Autoren (sie sind manchmal zugleich Regisseure) braucht. Immerhin ist der Statistik zufolge in Japan Brecht fast der zweitmeistgespielte Dramatiker nach Shakespeare. Interessant ist, daß sich in den letzten Jahren besonders im Arbeiter- und Laientheater ein verstärktes Interesse für Brecht abzeichnet. Hier, wo man in der Alltäglichkeit den Gegenstand des Theaters sucht, entdeckt man bei Brecht manchmal einen Ansatzpunkt. Leider haben wir in Japan keine Tradition des unsentimentalen Volksstückes, wie bei Horváth, Fleißer oder Kroetz. Hier könnte man auch über Brecht zu einem neuen Theater der Alltäglichkeit gelangen. Eine genaue Studie des Gestus bei Brecht könnte dabei von großem Nutzen sein. Obwohl die heutige japanische Jugend großenteils keine besondere Neigung verspürt, die "geordnete Unordnung aufzudecken", gilt es gerade deswegen, mit der richtigen Anwendung des V-Effektes (besonders im Text) die Neugier des Publikums zu erwecken und das neue Publikum zu organisieren. Die Tatsache, daß die Tendenz zur Entpolitisierung gerade bei der Jugend eine Verringerung des Interesses für Brecht zur Folge hatte, beweist wieder einmal deutlich, wie eng Brechts Theater mit der Politik verbunden ist. Gerade die schlimmste Zeit der Brecht-Rezeption läßt dialektisch einen Wendepunkt erwarten. Einige positive Entwicklungen zeichnen sich schon ab. Während die Vertreter des gefühlsbetonten Theaters Brecht als altmodisch-realistisch und aufklärerisch abtun, wird andererseits die Weite und Vielfalt seines Realismus gewürdigt.

Iwabuchi Tatsuji. "Brecht's reception in Japan from the perspective of theatrical practice."

Iwabuchi notices interesting parallels between the Chinese and Japanese reception of Brecht. In both countries, whose societies are so distinct, western dramatic style was for a long time equated with the "method" of Stanislavsky and Brecht seen as an anti-Stanislavskian dramatist, thus impeding appreciation of his work. There seems a similar tendency to flatten the contradictions and doubleness in Brecht's plots into an easier sequential mode. He gives an account of Brecht's theater in Japan from Senda's *Threepenny Opera* production to the present, in relation to the development of Japanese theater, with interesting suggestions to explain impediments and envisage new approaches.

Iwabuchi Tatsuji. "La réception de Brecht au Japon du point de vue de la pratique théâtrale."

Iwabuchi fait des remarques pleines d'intérêt sur la ressemblance entre les réceptions chinoise et japonaise de Brecht. Dans chacun de ces deux pays, dont les sociétés sont pourtant si différentes, la "méthode" de Stanislavski a été longtemps considérée comme représentative du style dramatique occidental en général, et le fait que Brecht y était vu comme un dramaturge anti-stanislavskien empêchait une appréciation valable de son oeuvre. Il semble que ces deux pays partagent une tendance à aplatir les contradictions et les intrigues à double sens de Brecht, pour les transformer en une mode linéaire qui rend leur compréhension plus facile. Iwabuchi raconte l'histoire du théâtre brechtien au Japon, depuis *L'Opéra de quat' sous* mis en scène par Senda en 1932, jusqu'au présent; il met cette histoire dans le contexte du développement du théâtre japonais; il propose des explications intéressantes des obstacles confrontés par le théâtre brechtien, et il suggère quelques nouvelles directions pour l'avenir.

Iwabuchi Tatsuji. "La recepción de Brecht en el Japón desde el punto de vista de la práctica."

Iwabuchi nota paralelos interesantes entre la recepción de Brecht en China y el Japón. En ambos países, cuyas sociedades son tan distintas, el estilo dramático occidental se consideraba durante mucho tiempo como homólogo al "método" de Stanislavski. Ya que Brecht tenía la reputación de ser un escritor opuesto a Stanislavski, resultó casi imposible cualquier apreciación adecuada de su obra. China y el Japón paracen igualmente inclinados a allanar las contradicciones y los sentidos dobles de las intrigas brechtianas, convirtiéndolas en secuencias más fáciles de comprender. Iwabuchi presenta la historia del teatro de Brecht en el Japón, desde la *Opera de tres centavos* de Senda en 1932 hasta el presente, refiriéndola al desarrollo del teatro japonés en general. Hace observaciones interesantes a cerca de las dificultades que tuvo que enfrentar, y sugiere nuevas direcciones para el porvenir.

Brecht In Pakistan

Miriam Dessaive

Der Umgang mit Brecht in den Ländern der Dritten Welt steht in einem seltsamen Gegensatz zur Brecht-Kulinarik an deutschen Bühnen. Zunächst als sozialistischer Autor öffentlich boykottiert und heimlich verehrt, wurden Brechts Stücke im Zuge zunehmender Liberalisierung des Kunstbetriebes allmählich "salonfähig" gemacht und gehören inzwischen zum Repertoire aller öffentlichen Bühnen. Sie erfreuen sich derzeit überdurchschnittlicher Publikumsgunst, wie etwa die Verkaufszahlen der Frankfurter Inszenierungen von der *Dreigroschenoper* und *Mann ist Mann* zeigen. Ein bißchen Revolution als Abendunterhaltung gefällig? Max Frisch sprach mal von der "durchschlagenden Wirkungslosigkeit des Klassikers" Brecht, das Publikum im Anzug und Krawatte bzw. dem kleinen Schwarzen freut sich herzlich des Klamauks und versteht Komödienstadel. In den Slums der Dritten Welt freuen sich anscheinend andere an Brechts Stücken, und anders. Gegen den Widerstand der Mächtigen werden sie nachgespielt, adaptiert, produktiv gemacht - hinzuweisen wäre da auf die geplante Veröffentlichung des Brecht-Jahrbuchs zum Thema "Brecht und die Dritte Welt". Brecht tot? "Schreiben Sie, daß ich unbequem war und es auch nach meinem Tod zu bleiben gedenke. Es gibt auch dann noch gewisse Möglichkeiten." (*Berliner Zeitung*, 16.8.56)

Im Februar war ich in Karachi, mit sieben Millionen Einwohnern die größte Stadt Pakistans - um die Jahrhundertwende war's noch ein Fischerdorf. *Die Ausnahme und die Regel* sollte im städtischen Art's Council als Teil eines Kulturfestivals aufgeführt werden. Am Vorabend wurde die Vorstellung abgesagt, da es der Truppe nicht gelang, eine Aufführungsgenehmigung zu erhalten. Karachi befindet sich im Ausnahmezustand, seit es im Dezember des letzten Jahres in den Vorstädten zu Massakern zwischen Pathanen und Mohajirs gekommen war im Gefolge der neuen Welle von "Zugereisten" aus den Unruhegebieten im Norden des Landes, mit allen soziokulturellen und ökonomischen Gleichgewichtsstörungen: eine Schattenwirtschaft, die auf Rauschgift- und Waffenhandel beruht, und die traditionelle Korruption der Verwaltung, die inzwischen die Qualität einer Farce gewinnt, wenn der Bürgermeister der Stadt eine Demonstration gegen die Provinzregierung anführt, ins Gefängnis geworfen wird und einen Streik der Stadtverwaltung auslöst, was der öffentlichen Unordnung wieder Vorschub leistet, etc. Jedenfalls, das generelle Versammlungsverbot gilt noch immer und scheint sich als vielseitiges Steuerungsinstrument zu bewähren. Die Mächtigen des Landes haben offenbar kein Interesse an Brechts Stück *Die Ausnahme und die Regel*. Brecht ist auch in Pakistan kein Unbekannter.

Die Aufführung kam während meines Aufenthaltes in Pakistan nicht mehr zustande, aber die Gruppe erklärte sich zu einem Gespräch mit mir als Brecht-Studentin aus Deutschland bereit, eines Nachmittags nach der wöchentlichen Probe in der Wohnung des Leiters Aslam Azhar.

Dastak, der Name der Gruppe, bedeutet auf Urdu soviel wie anknöpfen, anstossen. Sie wurde 1982 in einer Phase zunehmender Islamisierung von sechs Leuten gegründet, die anfangen, sich Brechts Theatertheorie und Stücke zu erarbeiten. Inzwischen besteht die Gruppe aus 65 Mitgliedern, Männer und Frauen jeden Alters, aus allen Schichten und den unterschiedlichsten Berufen, die alle zur Linken im weiteren Sinne gehören und sich politisch der Demokratisierungsbewegung zuordnen, einer Oppositionsfront gegen die herrschende Militärdiktatur. Warum gerade Brecht, wollte ich wissen, warum spielten sie keine Stücke aus dem eigenen Kulturkreis? Aslam, bißchen pakistanischer Galileo, der mit einer Feministin verheiratet ist und wegen seines Engagements für den Sozialismus in seinem Metier, dem Kulturbereich, eine Stellung nach der anderen verliert, begreift alle große Kunst als Metapher für gesellschaftliche Zustände, deren Haltbarkeit an ihrer vielseitigen Anwendbarkeit sich erweise. Wo Brecht seine Stoffe verfremdet habe, um Strukturen der Probleme seiner Zeit zu zeigen, ließen sich diese Strukturen gerade dank der Verfremdung mühelos auf heutige "Entwicklungsgesellschaften" und deren Widersprüche übertragen. Brechts Theater sei in einer Phase gesellschaftlichen Umbruchs entstanden, wie sie in allen Entwicklungsländern derzeit erlebt werde, stehe aber in der Tradition europäischer Aufklärung, die hier kein Pendant habe, wo eigenständige Kulturen schon seit Hunderten von Jahren unterdrückt bzw. kolonisiert werden. Brechts "Theater des wissenschaftlichen Zeitalters" als Gegengift zur Reinstallierung des Islam in seiner aktuellen Nutzenanwendung einer quasi-feudalen, herrschaftsstabilisierenden Ideologie. "Alles ist veränderlich", zitierte er mit sichtlichem Genuß.

Den Mitgliedern der Gruppe stellte ich die Frage, warum sie neben ihren Berufen und Alltagsverpflichtungen noch Theater spielten? Ein junger Mann, der sich selbstbewußt als Stahlarbeiter vorstellte (aber doch eigentlich keiner mehr sei, wie einige aus der Gruppe entgegenhielten), sieht den Prozeß seiner Bewußtseinsbildung im Laufe seiner Gewerkschaftsarbeit in der Theaterarbeit bestätigt und gleichzeitig für andere fruchtbar gemacht. Ein Student, der mit einer Gruppe Gleichgesinnter in einem der Slums Abendschulen für Kinder und Erwachsene betreibt und eine Kinder-Theatergruppe auf die Beine gebracht hat, die Stücke des Grips-Theaters auf Urdu spielt, sieht in der Theaterarbeit einen der möglichen Ansatzpunkte zur Veränderung der Köpfe. Der Erfolg ihrer Arbeit hänge damit zusammen, daß zum ersten Mal Theater für Arbeiter gemacht werde, das ihnen von Eigenem spreche. Theater auch als Forum sozialer Selbstverständigung, meint ein junger Arzt, der in einer psychiatrischen Klinik arbeitet und gerade die Ausnahmen als Symptome der Gesellschaft zeigen möchte. Die Lebendigkeit, das Engagement, das diese Gruppe vermittelt, ist vielleicht der Tatsache zu verdanken, daß sie alle Theater-Laien sind, außer den beiden Mentoren Aslam und Mansoor, der die Übersetzung

macht. Für traditionell ausgebildete pakistanische Schauspieler wäre jedenfalls der Zugang zu Brecht sehr schwer. Vielleicht liegt's auch an der gegenwärtigen Situation sozialer Gärung - der eine der saturierten Befriedung gegenübergestellt werden könnte.

Das erste Brecht-Stück, das die Gruppe aufführte, war *Die Ausnahme und die Regel*, es folgten *Der Jasager und der Neinsager* und *Leben des Galilei*. *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* als letzte Brecht-Produktion wurde vor 5000 Industriearbeitern auf der Straße aufgeführt zum letztjährigen May-Day-Centennial der Gewerkschaft. Der Erfolg der Aufführung, nach den Berichten der Gruppe, war beeindruckend: immer wieder wurden Parolen der Demokratisierungsbewegung laut; als bei einer Vorstellung der Strom zehn Minuten vor dem Ende ausfiel, antwortete das Publikum mit einem Sturm an Ja-Rufen auf die Frage, ob sie trotzdem den Rest noch sehen wollten, spontan richteten sich die Scheinwerfer einiger Autos auf die Bühne, damit wenigstens für Licht gesorgt sei. Während der Demonstration am nächsten Tag, an der sich die Truppe beteiligte, wurde der Slogan "All workers are brothers" erweitert um den Zusatz "... and sisters." Nusrat, die Johanna-Darstellerin, sah darin eine Wirkung des Stückes: Die Frau als Mitstreiterin, keine Selbstverständlichkeit mehr, da die Ansätze der Frauen-Emanzipation von ihrer traditionellen Rolle der Re-Islamisierung wieder zum Opfer gefallen sind. Einer, der im Stück ein Arbeiter gewesen war, wurde trotz seines bürgerlichen Habitus am nächsten Tag umstandlos mit seiner Rolle identifiziert und von den Arbeitern aufgefordert, mit ihnen einen Tee trinken zu gehen.

Obwohl erst *Die heilige Johanna* als Straßentheater aufgeführt wurde, hält die Gruppe diese Form für die wirksamere, trotz mancher Umsetzungsprobleme bei komplexeren Stücken wie dem *Galilei*: das Theater wird denen gebracht, die nicht gewohnt sind, ins Theater zu gehen, mehr Menschen werden erreicht, es entsteht mehr spontane Kommunikation zwischen Spielern und Publikum. Straßentheater ist zudem die Form, die den Möglichkeiten der Gruppe entspricht. Die Mitglieder arbeiten unentgeltlich, die Einnahmen an der Theaterkasse, mit nominellen Eintrittspreisen bei Arbeiterpublikum, und aus dem Verkauf von Programmheften müssen die Kosten für Saalmiete, Technik, Werbung decken. Lediglich das Goethe-Institut unterstützt Brecht- und Grips-Aufführungen. Da ist besonders bedauerlich, daß das Projekt, eine Radioversion des *Galilei* auf Urdu über die Deutsche Welle auszustrahlen, an den hohen Lizenzgebühren des Suhrkamp-Verlages scheiterte, wie Aslam erzählte. Der *Galilei* ist bereits auf Sindhi aufgelegt, die bisher benutzte Urdu-Übersetzung ist jedoch noch unveröffentlicht, ebenso eine Übertragung von Brecht-Gedichten ins Punjabi. Die Gruppe hat sich inzwischen mit Mansoor eine eigene Übersetzung ins Urdu erarbeitet, auf der Grundlage der englischen Version von Desmond Vesey von 1960, die dem deutschen Original näher kommen soll als die englische Vorlage, nach Aussagen von Kennern aller drei Sprachen. Aslam spekulierte über die Verwandtschaft des Deutschen mit dem Urdu und zitierte wieder genußvoll einige Sätze aus dem Urdutext.

Dastak versteht sich als Teil und Auslöser einer Theaterbewegung. Seit ihrer Gründung haben sich viele ähnliche Gruppen in anderen Städten gebildet, selbst in Karachi noch einige mehr, ehemalige Mitglieder rufen Ableger ins Leben, wie die Gruppe *Ajooka* (heute) in Lahore, die den *Galilei* dort nachspielen wird. Theaterspielen ist für sie eine Form sozialen Engagements, in der die Theaterarbeit selbst nach dem Vorbild der Lehrstücke bewußtseinsbildend wirkt und in der jede Aufführung - auch - eine politische Veranstaltung ist. Obwohl jedes Stück zwei Zensurstellen passieren muß, bevor es zur Aufführung freigegeben wird, sind die Mitglieder der Gruppe vor plötzlichen Verhaftungen nie ganz sicher, dennoch können Aufführungsgenehmigungen unter Vorwänden verweigert werden, wie bei der geplanten Aufführung von *Die Ausnahme und die Regel*. Was Brecht gern von seinem Vers gehört hätte, gilt hier für seine Stücke: "Die Schlechten fürchten deine Klaue/Die Guten freuen sich deiner Grazie." Die Konflikte zwischen ethnischen Gruppen und das Massaker vom Dezember waren der Anlaß dazu, daß die Gruppe als nächste Produktion eine pakistanische Version der *Rundköpfe und Spitzköpfe* plant, um über die Nützlichkeit von Rassenhaß für die Herrschenden aufzuklären. Daß die Erfahrungen des Dritten Reiches trotz "Wiedergutmachung" und offiziellen Kniefällen das gegenwärtige Verhältnis Deutschlands zu "Asylanten" aus der Dritten Welt nicht verhindert haben, kann Aslam nicht von seinem Optimismus abbringen. Die gegenwärtige Zuspitzung der Lage in Pakistan berge den qualitativen Umschlag in sich, den Keim der Besserung, Druck und Gegendruck in ausreichendem Maße, auf gut materialistisch. Anders als in Deutschland.

Miriam Dessaive. "Brecht in Pakistan."

Over the years, Brecht's gradual acceptance into the mainstream of Germany's cultural establishment has made him the most frequently produced German dramatist. At the same time, this process has largely taken the edge off his political message, reducing his theater to hardly more than complacent and popular evening entertainment. Not so in the Third World, where lingering socio-economic tensions still seem to provide the energy to release the vitality and potential of Brechtian theory and practice. Miriam Dessaive reports about the work of theater-groups in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, where corruption and abuse of power are rampant. Here the 65-member amateur troupe *Dastak* has been trying since 1982 to emulate Brecht's epic theater and invigorate the democratic resistance against the current military dictatorship. According to Aslam and Nusrat, two leading figures of the group, it is particularly the *Verfremdungseffekt* that makes his plays flexible and suitable for adaptation in Third World countries on the threshold of profound socio-economic change. Brecht's "theater of science" is seen to help stem the tide of reactionary Islamic revolution as well as to provide an independent forum for communication and heightened class-consciousness. Since the targeted audience - the underprivileged - is not part of the regular theater-going public, and also to facilitate interaction between actors/activists and audience, *Dastak* has been forced to scale Brecht's intricate plays to the more mobile and down-to-earth level of street theater: plays like *St. Joan of the Stockyards*, *Life of Galileo*, *The Exception and the Rule*, etc. in Aslam's translations/adaptations have met with the most enthusiastic response from the public.

Despite continuous censorship and harassment from the authorities, *Dastak's* enduring success has encouraged the formation of many other independent groups in Karachi and other major cities and provinces throughout Pakistan.

Miriam Dessaive. "Brecht au Pakistan."

Au fil des années, la promotion progressive de Brecht dans les courants dominants et saturés de l'institution culturelle allemande a refoulé largement l'importance de son activisme et a réduit son théâtre à un spectacle d'amusement. Ceci n'est pas le cas dans le Tiers Monde où les tensions socio-économiques semblent toujours produire assez d'énergie pour développer la vitalité et des possibilités différentes pour la théorie et la pratique brechtienne. Ainsi, à Karachi, la ville la plus importante du Pakistan, où la corruption et les abus du pouvoir sont évidents, une troupe de théâtre amateur, *Dastak*, tente depuis 1982 de mettre en scène le théâtre épique de Brecht pour activer la résistance démocratique. Selon Aslam et Nusrat, les deux directeurs de la troupe, le *Verfremdungseffekt* propre aux compositions brechtiennes fait que ses pièces soient flexibles et compréhensibles même dans une adaptation faite au Tiers Monde. Le théâtre de la science de Brecht et son questionnement intellectuel pourraient aider à arrêter la vague

réactionnaire de la Révolution Islamique et à produire un lieu indépendant pour la conscience de classe. Puisque le public visé, qui est un public de non-privilegiés, n'appartient pas au public habituel des théâtres, *Dastak* a été forcé d'abaisser le niveau des pièces de Brecht pour les aménager sous la forme d'un théâtre de rue, mobile, et touchant de près les problèmes quotidiens: des pièces comme *Sainte Jeanne des abattoirs*, *Vie de Galilée*, *Celui qui dit oui, celui qui dit non*, *l'Exception et la règle*, traduites par Aslam, ont reçu une réponse très enthousiaste de la part du public. Malgré la censure et les représailles des autorités, le succès de *Dastak* a encouragé la création de beaucoup d'autres petits groupes indépendants à Karachi et dans d'autres villes au Pakistan.

Miriam Dessaive. "Brecht en el Pakistan."

Con el pasar de los años, la promoción progresiva de Brecht en las corrientes dominantes y saturadas de la institución cultural alemana redució su teatro de importante vehículo de activismo político a un mero espectáculo de diversión. Eso no ocurrió en el Tercer Mundo, donde las tensiones socioeconómicas aportan suficiente energía par revitalizar las diferentes posibilidades de la teoría y de la práctica brechtianas.

Miriam Dessaive ofrece una evaluación del trabajo de grupos teatrales en Karachi, la ciudad más importante del Pakistan, donde la corrupción y el abuso del poder son evidentes. En Karachi, desde 1982, un grupo compuesto de 65 aficionados y dirigido por Selon Aslam y Nusrat - el *Dastak* -, trata de seguir el ejemplo del teatro épico de Brecht para activar la resistencia democrática contra la dictadura militar del Pakistán. El teatro científico de Brecht y su cuestionamiento intelectual podrían ayudar a detener la ola reaccionaria de la revolución islámica y a producir un sitio independiente para la formación de una conciencia de clase.

Puesto que el público al cual la obra está dirigida - los desfavorecidos - no está acostumbrado a frecuentar el teatro, *Dastak* simplificó las obras de Brecht bajo la forma de un teatro móvil de calle para poder ser realmente efectivo. Obras como *Santa Juana de los mataderos*, *Galileo Galilei*, *El que dice si*, *El que dice no*, *La Excepción y la regla*, traducidas por Aslam obtuvieron inmenso éxito popular. A pesar de la censura y de las represalias de las autoridades, el éxito del *Dastak* promocionó la creación de otros muchos grupos independientes en Karachi y en las otras ciudades del Pakistan.

Brecht In Hindi: The Poetics of Response

Vasudha Dalmia-Lüderitz

Much has been said and written about the importance of Brecht for the countries of the so-called Third World. It has even been suggested that the two-dimensional dance-theater of Asia, with no experience of realistic or realistic-naturalistic depiction could approach Brecht straight as it were.¹ On the other hand there are complaints that Brecht's theater has been "culinarized", commercialized, not understood. Yet the wide-spread belief that traditional theater forms are peculiarly suited for adaptation of Brecht, that Brecht offers incentive to revive and use meaningfully these very forms, persists and is voiced again and again. Certainly there is no denying the factuality of Brecht's presence in the form of repeated productions and adaptations of his plays and this increasingly in folk and even dialect versions. Obviously, there is need of Brecht's theater. And perhaps the question of "why Brecht" can provide us with an answer to the question of "how Brecht".

After a brief historical survey of theater aesthetics and drama, as far as it appears relevant in the context of Brecht on the modern Indian stage, I shall focus primarily on the similarities posited between the conventions of Indian folk theater, here restricted to one North Indian form as traditionally practised, and Brecht's epic theater, dealing only in passing as it were, with the "naturalistic" tradition as it developed in India in transaction with the West.²

Poetics and Drama

The principle of *rasa* around which a whole system of aesthetics was to evolve, appears for the first time in a treatise on drama, the *Nāṭya Śāstra* in its present form from about the sixth century of the Christian era, in its oldest parts going back to the second or third century before Christ.³

Rasa is "sap", "essence", "taste", and it is the principle which holds together the disparate parts which go into the making of a drama.⁴ The *Nāṭya Śāstra* maintains that the eight generally existing dominant states, *sthāyībhāva*, correspond to the eight *rasas*. These states are complex and appear in association with causes, effects and concomitant states. When these last three appear as elements of poetic expression, as *vibhāva*, determinants, i.e. persons and situations forming constellations which determine the course of action, *anubhāva*, consequents, i.e. the corresponding theatrical expression and finally, *vyabhiçārībhāva*, accompanying transitory states, they bring about the

aesthetic experience corresponding to the respective dominant state and known as *rasa*.⁵

The *rasa* and *bhāva* concepts were closely interlinked with *itivr̥tta*,⁶ the structural scheme or plot of drama on the one level, on the other with *abhinaya*, the language of gesture, of interpretation.⁷ In the *Nāṭya Śāstra* therefore *rasa* was contained within an elaborate structure, linking dramatic composition with actual performance techniques in theater.

The *bhāva* and *rasa* principles were further developed to become universally applicable to all forms of artistic creation in the ninth and tenth centuries. Central categories of these new interpretations were *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*, generalization, the aesthetic state of consciousness which is distinct from the experience of everyday life and thus completely independent of any individual interest, and *camatkāra*, wonder, astonishment, as the quality of the moment when the viewer perceives the latent impressions of the mind (*vāsanā*) in a density not experienced in everyday life. Further, the concept of *sahṛdaya*,⁸ the partaker of aesthetic experience, as one whose sensibility and perception had been trained and prepared for reception, circumscribed aesthetic experience as limited to those thus privileged.

Hereafter, theater aesthetics were absorbed into general poetics with distinctly spiritual affiliations.⁹ By this time what has come down to us as classical Sanskrit drama had ceased to be performed, both through lack of patronage and through the emergence of modern language, though popular drama and lyric flourished.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *rasa* became explicitly linked with religious and personal devotion. *Śṛṅgāra*, the erotic *rasa* was accorded the highest status amongst the *rasas* and was identified as the state of being, as well as the response of the devotee to Kṛṣṇa, the God with the flute, sporting with the milkmaids on the bank of the river Yamunā. It is in this form that the *rasa* aesthetics survive up to the present day, as part of the theology of the religious movements which came into existence then,¹⁰ as also in continuation of the traditional scholarly exposition of poetics, used as analytic tools in the exegesis of Sanskrit and Sanskritic literary composition.

Folk Theater

While *rasa* was becoming increasingly theological on the one hand and secularized in erotic court poetry on the other¹¹ there is some evidence of folk-religious theater, in the court-chronicles of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, who reigned from 1556 to 1605. Towards the end of Mughal rule, whether as a consequence of official policies of suppression or of political upheaval, drama seems to have suffered practical extinction, surviving as performance on the outskirts and borders of the Mughal empire, in Nepal, Mithila and Assam. It surfaced again in the early nineteenth century under British rule. Its emergence in the oral-narrative tradition can be reconstructed on the basis of the tales

collected by Sir Richard Temple in the Punjab.¹² From the Punjab it spread eastwards.

The play, *svāṅg*, as it developed in the heartland of North India, was of inordinate length, the performance lasting from ten to twelve hours or for several consecutive nights. Composed in traditional verse forms, it was recited or sung by a company of male actors. These could be professional or amateur, the practice developed according to different local traditions.

To this day, the *svāṅg* troupe comprises a cross section of the village community, both Hindu and Muslim. The audience similarly consists of the "people", but it is patronized and supported by landowners and the village as a community.¹³ In its organizational and cognitive principles it is firmly rooted in the feudal countryside.

While the folk play is obviously not a deliberate construction in accordance with classical Indian aesthetic theory, it exhibits a degree of correspondence with the rather diffuse interpretations which have developed during the course of the last century as part of an effort to reconstruct a national tradition, so that it is generally interpreted as the prototype of traditional Indian aesthetic creation in performance, a procedure fraught with hazards, as I hope to demonstrate in the last section of this paper.

Interaction with the West: Popular Urban Theater

The first contact with Western theater, which was to have far-reaching consequences for popular urban theater took place in Bombay. The Bombay Amateur Theater (1776-1818) was, as its name implies, an unprofessional theater for the amusement of the British civilian population as well as for the officers of the East India Company's regiments. The note of sentimentality pervading literature in England was reflected in the excessive sensibility of the Bombay audience, whose choice was automatically narrowed to contemporary melodrama, comedies, farces, and burlesque.¹⁴ Set within the conservative ideological framework of the emerging urban middle class in England, the plays manipulated emotions, created pleasurable suspense and were designed to reduce social tension. The stage set-up was spectacular and illusionistic, and histrionics were the order of the day. This was also the beginning of the star-system on Indian soil.

The Pārsī Theater¹⁵ which sprang up through this contact and spread to all parts of North India from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, was a hybrid form. It took over all the stage practices of melodrama, the histrionics, the attempts to create suspense and illusion, and imposed all this on folk forms which were largely musical, which revolved around well-known episodes, with long drawn-out action, and with the relatively slow building-up of emotion.

The Pārsī Theater flourished for well over a century, the last theater of the kind, the Moonlight in Calcutta, closed in 1962. Though literary urban theater resisted the Parsi model, as it was the only successful

urban theater it remained a force to contend with. The direct material as well as conceptual heir of this theater was the commercial Hindi film.

Urban literary drama in Hindi

Bhāratendu Hariścandra (1850-1885) of Benaras sought in a bold move to establish a new aesthetic basis for literary drama by combining Western concepts of character and plot development with the *rasa* base of Indian theory. In practice his plays remained preliminary, experimental; it was not possible to create a structure which freed itself from a demonstrably Pārsī model.

The beginning of this century saw drama acquiring a new density and sophistication. Jaiśankar Prasād (1886-1937) of Benaras sought to establish an Indian point of view in literary and dramatic criticism and a link with the past, thereby distancing himself sharply, both aesthetically and thematically, from Ibsen and his brand of realism. At the same time, he projected a new subjectivity and tried to achieve social reform. This was a crowded programme, structurally still bound to the Pārsī theater. But with Prasād the language of individual feeling entered drama.

It was after Independence, in the early Fifties, that there was closest correspondence to the dramatic structure as it had developed in Europe.¹⁶ This was what in the Indian context has been termed "naturalism": the individual in his relationship with other individuals forming the core of the play. This drama freed itself entirely from Indian aesthetics and reflected the problems of the urban middle class. Mohan Rākesh (1925-1972), the best known Hindi playwright of his day, was confronted in his final play with problems that the West had encountered much earlier, loss of individuality and communication, and to resolve these he had to resort to Western models again: Beckett and Handke.

Though drama, theater-as-text, had undergone the developments here indicated, generally referred to in India as "naturalistic" theater, it is worth noting, firstly, that it was literary theater of the highly educated middle classes and reflected their alienation and sense of loss, and secondly, there had been no parallel movement in stage practice; the actors had no tradition of anything like Western stage-acting behind them.

Literary drama found a stage for performance only in the Fifties and Sixties of this century. The "naturalistic" form which Rākesh finally developed was a relatively young movement. Stage acting could not develop in pace with it and generally remained a mixture of attempts at naturalistic character portrayal coupled with clichéd theatricality as inherited from the popular Pārsī theater and observable in the commercial Hindi film.

Political impulses

Yet another motivating force in the performing arts was provided by movements which had gathered momentum in the Thirties and Forties,

partially spontaneous but largely generated by the activities of the Communist Party of India. The progressive Writers Association (PWA) and a little later the Indian People's Theater Association (IPTA) were concerned with establishing communication with workers and peasants for a political-patriotic purpose. The two immediately motivating factors were the fascist aggression of World War II and the colonial domination of the country which was increasingly regarded as imperialist exploitation.

It was a Pan-Indian movement, and for the first time it cut through class barriers. Though urban drama continued to use the naturalistic form as it had developed up to this period for these new purposes, folk forms gained a new significance, both as a sign of a new respect for indigenous forms of the "people" and as a natural means of establishing effective communication with them. These were to be endowed with contemporary relevance. At this stage there was no conceptual realization of how this was to be achieved and what kind of synthesis was to be sought with urban theater.

After Independence in 1947, IPTA was left without a clear-cut line of orientation and was never again able to mobilize such wide-spread support. The Sangeet Natak Akademi (1953) established by the central government took over the burden of supporting and encouraging theater activities. Though "naturalism" remained a strong force from the Seventies onwards there was an increasing tendency to use traditional forms with contemporary relevance in an effort to create a national idiom for theater. There are obvious connections here to the world-wide youth movements in the Sixties and the Seventies which in addition to social-revolutionary aspects displayed a nostalgia for "folk". In this urban patronage of "folk" in an at least partially romantic reaction to the "decadence" of the West, in the renewed efforts to integrate folk forms into a Pan-Indian tradition, the *rasa* theory proved its elasticity once again. Practical help was offered by theater-makers who had derived their original impulse from IPTA in the Forties. But at that time urban directors and playwrights attempted to graft elements of folk theater on the often imperfectly assimilated Western models without always being able to evolve a coherent framework. The ideological confusion in a post-colonial situation and the generally diffuse character of experimentation was reflected in a lack of critical and evaluative terminology. It was here that Brecht bridged the gap, both as theorist and playwright, by providing an apparently firm political-aesthetic basis for utilizing folk-theater forms in an urban context, thereby for all apparent purposes endowing them with contemporary relevance.

Folk Theater and Brecht

In respect of the repeated claims that Brecht's theater bears similarities to the folk traditions in India,¹⁷ a typological comparison between the two can be attempted. In the nature of "elementary juxtaposition", some features of the Indian folk play as represented by *svāṅg* and considered to correspond with classical Indian aesthetic

norms¹⁸ are set beside similar formal-aesthetic features of Brechtian epic theater and contrasted with their functions. This is necessarily schematic and with regard to Brecht restricted to the intentions of his theater. This needs to be emphasized: only the intentions of Brecht's theater are treated here since in practice diverse functions can combine, co-exist but of course also remain at odds with each other.

The Narrator

The *svāṅg* is held together by the narrator, *rangā*, who is both the representative of the poet - his lines are inscribed *kavi kā* - and the director. He is the story-teller, responsible for carrying the action forward, such as it is. Apart from this, he also participates in the fate of the chief characters. The most important function of the narrator is that he invites the onlookers to uncritical identification with the good characters. He himself laments their misfortunes and participates in their triumphs. Thus, though the figure of the narrator mediates between the players and the onlookers, he is in fact there to bridge the distance and invites total empathy with his own emotional and ethical standpoint. He is not a distant observer, he asks the listener to approve the good and condemn the evil figures in the play.

The folk play does not distance by comment from "outside" the story, it invites empathy instead of inviting critical judgement, and finally it does not convey unspoken thoughts, since the figures of the *svāṅg* react directly to the situations in the play.

Brecht's narrator or the chorus or title-projection, combined with the expository narratives of the figures of the play seek less to bridge the gap between episodes or that between player and onlooker, their function is rather "to clarify the determining relationships in historical processes." [die bestimmenden Zusammenhänge der geschichtlichen Verläufe aufzuhehlen. (GW 15. 466)]

The Figures of the Play

The figures of the folk play are ideal in that their character suffers no modification which is not explicitly indicated, and in this sense there is no development or unfolding of character.¹⁹ The meeting of the figures is ruled by convention. It is not conceived as an exploration of possible relationships between sharply differentiated individuals. The figures themselves evince no desire to be understood as different from others of their kind. They speak in set metrical conventions and this itself provides a formal framework for the exchange of dialogue, they fulfill mutually the functions and the expectations aroused by their position in the story. They are not life-like, they are larger than life.

Here the classical Indian aesthetic conception of *sādhāranīkaraṇa* or generalization can be pressed into service, "freed from all distinctions in time and space and therefore from individual relationships and practical interests."²⁰

According to Brecht, plays were to be regarded as raw material and the interpretation of character was to go beyond the information

contained in the text-roles, for the features which helped compose an individual character were to be derived not only from the information available in the play and in the world of the poet but from their correlation with the real world known to the actor. The figures thus composed have a concrete, unique position: concrete enough for the character to act differently, given other societal boundaries. The figure was thus to forfeit his self-evident character and to be depicted as a social phenomenon, historically explicable. The player, in his interpretation of character, was not to leave out those clearly discernible features which seemed contradictory and did not coalesce easily with the conception which seemed central to the player. It was precisely these contradictory features, which were to be used to build the figure. This was to take place in co-operation with the critical evaluation of the "utterances" [Äußerungen] of the play's other characters. Most important of all: the relationships of the characters to each other were to be determined by the social *Gestus*.²¹

Conflict

The folk play presents conflict, but the established order is not finally questioned, ethically or socially. The conflict is not that of an individual pitted against social or metaphysical odds. Rather it consists of a situation, often created by the machinations of a villain. The characters act and react within a given situation. The individual "I" is not presented in conflict with a group "We". The "I" and "We" together form a unity or co-exist in plurality.²²

In Brecht's theater the intention is similarly not to present individual conflict or for that matter individuals in their individuality, "for the smallest social unit is not man but two people" [denn die kleinste gesellschaftliche Einheit ist nicht der Mensch, sondern zwei Menschen (GW 16. 688)]. But the attitude of the two figures to each other is not to be determined so much by individual, personal, domestic conflict as by the social *Gestus* - master/ slave.

Identification, Illusion

The player in the *svāṅg* makes no attempt to identify totally with the figure in the play and in costume and manner preserves the characteristics of his own person. He accepts the role of the figure he is playing and attempts to fit the role.

This is said to conform to the concept of the player as a *pātra*, a vessel, merely conveying the role to the spectator. Further, this corresponds once again to the notion of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*, for the player plays a part which is to transcend individual existence and represent an aspect of character common to all men.

Brecht's expectations of the player are complex. In his well known description of the Chinese player²³ he had pointed out that the player not only demonstrates the behavior of human beings but also that of the actor - the played and the playing, and he does this in such a way that the situation becomes an object of criticism for the onlooker. Imitation

reproduces the observed alone, "epic" playing is to be accompanied by opinions and intentions. These can only be acquired outside the theater, by obtaining the knowledge of the times about "daily social relations" [menschliches Zusammenleben] and by participating in the struggle of the classes.

Scenic Structure

The body of the folk play consists of a series of dialogues of uneven length and having as their kernel an emotional moment, the information received or exchanged is secondary. The emotional occasion can be repeated a number of times, each time with some variation. Together these dialogues or scenes (so-called because they take place at one scene of action and not because they are a division thus foreseen) cumulate to build up an emotional moment, which could correspond to the theory of dominant states; the possible explanation of the origin of *svāṅ* in a narrative form with high emotional content is also a worthwhile consideration. Since the stories were well-known there was no suspense as to the ending which had a definitive character and restored social order, the tensions of the play being fittingly resolved.

The structure of Brecht's epic theater is also episodic. Each episode, however, has a *Grundgestus*. The story or the fable as the center of the theatrical performance is "the ensemble of all gestic events, including communications and impulses, and which now should be the source of the audience's enjoyment." [die Gesamtkomposition aller gestischen Vorgänge, enthaltend die Mitteilungen und Impulse, die das Vergnügen des Publikums nunmehr ausmachen sollen. (GW 16. 693)]

As Walter Hinck showed years ago, Brecht's late plays do not have a definitive ending enforced by the structure of the play.²⁴ They demonstrate the possibility of, even the necessity of "continuability" [Fortsetzbarkeit] after the play is over, as in the epilogue of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*.

The Songs

The songs in the *svāṅ* have a clearly emotional function. They serve to highlight a moment already apparent in the play. They do not exist independently but as part of the overall tone of the play. Considered from the *rasa* aspect, they can of course be regarded as contributing to the creation of a dominant state.

The songs of the Brechtian epic play, according to Walter Benjamin expressly "gestische Konvention", were to be regarded as an independent element of theatre art and to be structured into the play so as to retain their distinctive function.²⁵

Rasa

It is probable that contemporary efforts to reclaim *rasa* to explicate the folk play are part of a strategy to re-locate the folk play in an urban

setting and integrate it into an encompassing, unified national tradition, which is even now in the process of being formed.

Together, the generalization of character and situation and the exemplary nature of the plot, all of which do not detract from surprise or suspense, the comments of the narrator which invite empathy, the scenes which repeat themselves with slight variations and which together can be said to form a cumulative climax - all combine to create an aesthetic experience, which is generally compared to the classical concept of *rasa* so that in having recourse to the folk form it is hoped that lost ground might yet be recovered. The equation folk - *rasa*-aesthetics - Brecht is then nothing short of a rediscovery and reaffirmation of a grand national heritage in terms compatible with modernity, which inevitably overlook the peculiarities of specific folk forms as well as of Brecht's theater and deny the poetics of *rasa* any historicity.

At this stage it seems necessary to recontextualize *rasa* - if it is to serve any practical evaluative and analytic function - since it has lost its precision and concrete application and tends to be used indiscriminately and diffusely. The aspects of folk theater explicated by *rasa* could also be accounted for in other ways, even at the risk of losing the eternally unchanging Indian countryside, which has retained tradition without being aware of the ancient aesthetic principles involved.²⁶

Conclusion

For all their aesthetic-formal similarity the devices of folk theater and Brecht's epic theater in their intentions contradict each other. Indian folk theater is rooted in a largely feudal countryside. In spite of occasional satire, ideologically it remains essentially conservative. On the urban middle class stage it has yet to develop roots.

In 1936 Brecht had written that he did not believe that his theater could be practised everywhere: "Apart from a certain technical standard, it assumes a powerful impulse in social life which is interested in the free discussion of vital questions with a view to solving them and can defend this interest against all forms of opposition." [Es setzt außer einem bestimmten technischen Standard eine mächtige Bewegung im sozialen Leben voraus, die ein Interesse an der freien Erörterung der Lebensfragen zum Zwecke ihrer Lösung hat und dieses Interesse gegen alle gegensätzlichen Tendenzen verteidigen kann. (GW 15. 272)]

Of his own attempts to realize the intentions of his theater in post-war Europe, he is quoted as saying in 1954: "I must admit that I did not succeed in making it clear that the "epic" in my epic theatre is a social and not a formal aesthetic category." [Ich muß zugeben, daß es mir nicht gelungen ist, klar zu machen, daß das Epische meines Theaters Kategorie des Gesellschaftlichen und nicht des Ästhetisch-Formalen ist."²⁷] Thus the two-dimensional dance-theater of Asia is not necessarily a shortcut to Brecht. The case becomes further entangled

once folk theater is moved to the urban stage and "expanded" where the expansion cannot be registered as such, since the awareness of traditional performance modes, heritage of theatrical history, will be lacking as well as the expectations deriving from knowledge of other performances.²⁸ Moved to a domain where the folk-play is at all levels a pleasing curiosity, and there "psychologized" or "politicized", theater tends towards popular middle-class entertainment, where a few social evils are exposed in a way already familiar through the other media.

In this context to speak of the expansion of *rasa* serves no useful purpose, apart from invoking "eternal" categories which cover up, rather than uncover, the intricacies of reception. Theoretically it should be possible for *rasa* to be "progressive", to absorb and encapsulate newer modes of aesthetic experience rather than become a tool for interpreting the latter in traditional terms alone.²⁹ But for this a collective re-assessment is called for and that is a task which we still have to cope with.

On the whole then, as expected, the reception of Brecht's ideas takes place in a restricted sense. The folk tradition on its own premises is not particularly receptive to critical analysis as a formal element of theater, and the urban middle class is restricted by a concern for its own values and status. For the possible political reception of his ideas in a country torn by communal strife and moving towards various forms of ethnic nationalism, the present political climate is not particularly favorable. Bengal in the Seventies was a notable exception but even there Brecht did not make much headway, despite the fervent allegiance he inspired.³⁰

At this point, however, certain qualifications need to be made. The conventions which link folk theater with Brecht are not only to be regarded as a trap for the unwary theater practitioner. However tenuously, they do still provide him with a certain access to Brecht's theater and through this to his theater aesthetics, for the form has to bend and stretch in order to accommodate Brecht, even a Brecht partially understood. And, willy-nilly, something novel is taking place; however imperfect the synthesis on the reflective plane (for a certain amount of eclecticism is inevitable), new patterns are emerging and new horizons of expectations are being created. For Brecht's theater is transformed in performance, it too can emancipate itself from orthodox interpretation, Marxist or otherwise. And traditional folk theater can grow to meet urban needs as it has indeed on its own initiative in urban industrialized centers like Bombay,³¹ though workers' theaters there have yet to discover Brecht in any significant way. Occasionally, however, there are attempts which break through urban-rural and class barriers and provide models, and for these Brecht's theater remains stimulating, perhaps even necessary.

NOTES

1. Latest in a long series, Peter von Becker: "Wo Märchen wieder wahr werden. Beobachtungen zwischen Kalkutta und Peking. Der freie Brecht-in Asia, da sieht man ihn," in: *Theater heute* 2/87, p. 17.
2. The theses presented in this paper are treated more exhaustively in my forthcoming book.
3. In the following brief summary only the barest possible outline of the complex philosophical and theological systems which developed during the course of two thousand years can be suggested.
4. Edwin Gerow offers a brief, lucid account of this early stage in *Indian Poetics*, vol. V, Fasc. 3 of Jan Gonda (ed.): *A History of Indian Literature*. Wiesbaden, 1977, pp. 245-250.
5. The translation of the Sanskrit terms which follow can only be approximate. The eight dominant states are: Delight (rati), Laughter (hāsa), Sorrow (śoka), Anger (krodha), Heroism (utsāha), Fear (bhaya), Disgust (jugupsā) and Wonder (vismaya). The eight corresponding *rasas* are: the Erotic (śṛṅgāra), the Comic (hāsyā), the Pathetic (karuṇa), the Furious (raudra), the Heroic (vīra), the Terrible (bhayānaka), the Odious (bībhatsa), and the Marvellous (adbhuta). Later a ninth dominant state and *rasa* were added, Serenity (śāma) and the Quietistic (śānta) respectively. The above translations stem from R. Gnoli. (See note 8).
6. See M. Christopher Byrski: *Concept of Ancient Indian Theater*. Delhi, 1974. Specially pp. 101-161 for the intricate linkages of plot with *rasa*.
7. The relationship between *rasa* and *abhinaya* is explored by Angelika Heckel, "Untersuchungen zur Rasa-Lehre im Nāṭya Śāstra und in Abhinavaguptas Abhinavabharati", unpublished Master's Thesis, Tübingen, 1987. Here one finds also a discussion of the *bhāva* concepts as part of the communication model of theatre.
8. All three concepts are depicted in their context in Raniero Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta*. Varanasi, 1968. (Rome, 1956).
9. The tenth century philosopher Abhinavagupta likened the tasting of *rasa* (rasāsvāda) to the experience of the absolute (brahmāsvāda). The difference lay primarily in the impermanence of the former. See Gnoli, preface, and Gerow, p. 268.
10. See S.K. De, *Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal*. Calcutta, 1961 and Edward C. Dimock Jr, *The place of the Hidden Moon. Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava-Sahajīya Cult of Bengal*. Chicago, 1966.
11. See G.H. Schokker, "Kesavadeva's Method of Basing Braj-Kṛṣṇa Lyrics on the Tradition of Literary Aesthetics", in: M. Thiel-Horstmann (ed.), *Bhakti in Current Research 1979-1982*. Berlin, 1983.
12. *The Legends of the Punjab*. 3 vols. 1884-1901. (Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1977). Temple's collection contains at least two tales, *qissā*, and three plays, *svāṅg*, which could be regarded as predecessors of the present form. They are all composed in verse and the tales *qissās* are embryo plays, for within the narrative portions there are large stretches of dialogue, lively and well-developed, which are however not played but spoken by the story-teller. Conversely, the play, the *svāṅg*, dispenses with the story-teller, though it contains narrative portions. These are incorporated by the players into their speeches. In short, the narrative and the play-acting are initially treated as mutually exclusive activities, to fuse again in a later form, where the narrator wins an independent role as one of the players and is present on stage to sing and recite the narrative portions.

13. The social organization of the troupe is documented by Ved Prakash Vatuk and Sylvia Vatuk, "The Ethnography of Sāng, A North Indian Folk Opera", in: *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. XXVI-1, 1967, pp. 29-51. In this paper I have provided no references in Hindi, judging them to be linguistically inaccessible for most non-Indian readers.
14. They played besides some Shakespeare, the plays of Thomas Morton and George Coleman the Younger with their didactic treatment of themes such as gambling and repentance: *The Mountaineers, The Heir-At-Law, The poor Gentleman, John Bull*, and *Speed the Plough*. (All available in: Inchbald (ed.), *British Theater*, 25 vols, London, 1808ff.).
15. So-called because it was managed and owned by the Pārsis, a business community, originally from Persia, which settled in parts of Western India.
16. For the developments in European drama see Peter Szondi, *Theorie des modernen Dramas 1880-1950*. Frankfurt a.M., 1973.
17. Too numerous and scattered to be cited here individually.
18. In the framework of this paper it is not possible to offer a more concrete view of the svāṅg. A general account of this and other forms of Indian folk theater is available in Balwant Gargi, *Folk Theater of India*. Seattle, London, 1966. For translations into English the inadequate, if pioneering, effort by Temple (see note 12) can be referred to. The following account is based on the survey of a number of such plays and a detailed analysis of one particular play as being specially popular, having been selected for revival on the urban stage and also as the basis of a Hindi film: *Amarsingh Rāthor* by the prolific Nathārām Sharmā Gaur (1874-1947) of Hathras, credited with having composed 146 plays. These plays as well as many others are available as cheap reading-matter on the pavements of most North Indian cities. Interesting basis for comparison is supplied by the material analysed by Roger Chartier, "Culture as Appropriation. Popular Cultural uses in Early Modern France", in: S.L. Kaplan (ed.), *Understanding Popular Culture*. Berlin, New York, Amsterdam, 1984, pp. 229-253.
19. Useful in this context are the distinctions made by Darko Suvin between "type" and "character". Prof. Suvin defines "types" "as classified by sex-cum-age, by nationality, by profession, by social estate or class, by physiology and moral philosophy . . . often by what we could feel are combinations of the above categories (Diderot's *conditions*, e.g. father or judge, seem to contaminate profession, class, and social role), etc." (p. 120). Further: "What seems to me constitutive of any type is that it possesses a relatively small number of traits (I have not found more than half a dozen in any so far examined, but this remains a field to be investigated), which are all culturally congruent or compatible. This compatibility should in every particular historical case be explainable as the result of a feedback interaction between the social reality from which the traits are taken and the criteria of verisimilitude of the social addressees for whom the text is intended." (p. 122) "On Fiction as Anthropology: Agential Analysis, Types, and the Classical Chinese Novel", in: J. Hall, A. Abbas (eds.), *Literature and Anthropology*. Hong Kong, 1986.
20. Gnoli, Preface. (See note 8).
21. GW 16, pp. 688-690.
22. See S.H. Vatsyayan: "Conflict as a Bridge. Some Aspects of the Fiction of Modern India", in: *Diogenes*, 45, pp. 49-65.
23. GW 15, pp. 427-8.
24. *Versuche über Brecht*. Frankfurt a.M., 1978, pp. 37-8.
25. *Die Dramaturgie des späten Brecht*. Göttingen, 1977.
26. The existence of "genuine" India in the peasant country-side was described most graphically and classically by the German indologist F. Max Muller

- (1823-1900) in his book: *India, What Can It Teach Us*. London, 1883, p. 54ff. For the dilemma that modern Indian writers faced with problems of identifying the Indian tradition and the nature of its continuity see U. R. Ananthamurthy: "Search for an Identity. A Viewpoint of a Kannada Writer", in: S. Kakkar (ed.), *Identity and Adulthood*. Delhi, 1982.
27. Cited by Manfred Voigts, *Brechts Theaterkonzeptionen . Entstehung und Entwicklung bis 1931*. München, 1977, p. 178.
 28. These last three expressions have been lifted from the models of theatrical communication as drawn up by Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theater and Drama*. London, New York, 1980, pp. 57-62.
 29. Norvin Hein after a long period of study of the cycle of religious Kṛṣṇa plays thus justifies the use of aesthetic categories long out of use: "The rāsdhāris themselves do not classify these dramas in any explicit and widely accepted manner. They are not familiar with the ancient science of dramaturgy and its theory of dominant *rasa*. However, the ancient Indian way of cultivating traditional types of feeling lives on in their work, even in the absence of the ancient self-consciousness about the matter. The recognizing of these dominant emotions is the natural method of classifying the plays. In naming the categories, we can do no better than to bring into use some of the terminology of traditional Indian dramaturgy. *The Miracle Plays of Mathura*. New Haven, London, 1972, p. 164.
- Similarly Edwin Gerow, otherwise so analytically astute, is averse to acknowledging any break or change in tradition: "Can we identify a vehicle that will bring the *rasa* from the seventeenth century to our own day? . . . The answer is to be sought in the relation between *rasa* and character, both literary and psychological. The *rasa* has always been determined as a way of experiencing. Therefore it would not seem difficult to postulate its perpetuation as a habit - a form of perception that structures reality and life. Indeed, the classical psychology proposes such a vehicle to account for the transmigratory soul: *vāsanā*. This disposition or propensity to experience, brought slightly up to date, would also serve to characterize the *rasa* and account for its psychological potentiality, as well as its crystallization in certain works of contemporary fiction." (p. 248-249) "Rasa as a Category of Literary Criticism. What are the limits of its Application", in: R. Van M. Baumer, James R. Brandon (eds.), *Sanskrit Drama in Performance*. Honolulu, 1981. In contemporary Indian scholarship this traditional, reductionist trend is if anything even more pronounced at times and does not seek to justify itself.
30. Rustom Bharucha, *Rehearsals of Revolution. The Political Theater of Bengal*. Calcutta, 1983. Specially the section entitled "Brecht in Bengal", pp. 191-201.
 31. G.P. Deshpande: "Some Perspectives on the Theater of Tomorrow", in: *Journal of Arts and Ideas*. Delhi, October-December 1982, pp. 47-57 discusses the cleavage between the "elite" and the "rebel" theater in Bombay.

**Vasudha Dalmia-Lüderitz. "Brecht auf Hindi:
Poetik der Resonanz."**

Dalmia-Lüderitz diskutiert Brechts Theaterästhetik aus der ungewohnten Perspektive der Theaterpoetologie des Sanskrit und stellt eine ganze Reihe ästhetischer und konzeptioneller Parallelen fest. Eine wichtige Charakteristik ist hierbei die organische Verbindung zwischen dem Drama und der Präsentation. Die Kontinuität in der Geschichte traditioneller indischer Theaterformen wird unterbrochen durch die kulturellen Überlagerungen und Überfremdungen, besonders die einseitige "Literarisierung" des Theaters, die der westliche Kolonialismus im 18. Jahrhundert in Indien berührt. Eine Verbürgerlichung des Theaters nach westlichem Muster zeigt sich besonders in der Entwicklung des Stadttheaters, wie sie in Bombay zu beobachten war; das änderte sich zunächst auch nicht nach der indischen Unabhängigkeit: Kritik an den Strukturen des kolonialen Erbes, das nicht gänzlich abgeschüttelt war, bediente sich hauptsächlich noch des Diskurses westlicher Kunst, so galten beispielsweise Beckett und Handke zunächst als Vorbilder kritisch/politischen Theaters.

Die ursprüngliche Einheit zwischen Drama und Präsentation wurde erst ganz allmählich im Gefolge verstärkter anticolonialistischer und patriotischer Rückbesinnung neu entdeckt und durch zeitgemäße politische Bezüge modernisiert. In Brechts Meisterschaft, Folkloristisches in eine zeitgemäße Form zu bringen, liegt eine der Anregungen, die für das moderne indische Theater bestimmend waren, und die Dialektik in Brechts Verbindung von Dramaturgie und Theaterästhetik, von Schreiben und Inszenieren, ähnelt im Prinzip der traditionellen indischen Fusion von Text und Theater. Berührungspunkte finden sich auch in der Spaltung zwischen Spieler und Rolle, der Entindividualisierung der dargestellten Konflikte, und der Einarbeitung von musikalischen Elementen, die zwar unabhängig, aber trotzdem strukturell integriert sind.

Trotz dieser formalen Gemeinsamkeiten besteht ein entscheidender Widerspruch in den ideologischen Grundlagen beider Formen: Brechts Ausgangspunkt ist ein sozialrevolutionärer, das tief im Wertsystem des Feudalismus wurzelnde indische Volkstheater ist dagegen reaktionär. Die Tendenz zum kritischen Denken findet sich ironischerweise eher im "unbrechtschen", bürgerlichen Stadttheater fortgesetzt. Die Möglichkeit, alle drei Formen produktiv zu amalgamieren, scheint jedoch zu bestehen und eine Aufgabe der Zukunft zu sein.

**Vasudha Dalmia-Lüderitz. "Brecht en hindou:
la poétique de la réponse."**

L'affirmation d'une corrélation entre le théâtre épique de Brecht et le théâtre populaire hindou doit être replacée dans l'histoire de l'esthétique dramaturgique hindoue. L'esthétique dramaturgique, énoncée au sixième siècle dans le *Nāṭya Śāstra*, est dominée par l'élément synthétique du *rasa* (la sève). Le principe du *rasa* disparaît pour réapparaître au dix-neuvième siècle dans la forme théâtrale du *svāṅg* dans le Pendjab. Ce théâtre populaire du Nord de l'Inde est examiné ici

dans le contexte de la réinterprétation du principe dramaturgique traditionnel (le *rasa*) dans un effort de reconstitution d'une tradition nationale et dans d'intégration du théâtre populaire dans un théâtre urbain. Le théâtre urbain, initialement destiné à un public anglais, apparaît au dix-huitième siècle et se répand dans le Nord de l'Inde. Hariścandra (1850-1885), Prasād (1886-1937), Rākesh (1950) essayent d'intégrer au théâtre urbain le principe du théâtre populaire, le *rasa*. Rākesh, pour sa part, traite des problèmes occidentaux tels qu'ils apparaissent chez Beckett et Handke. Poussées par un mouvement pan-indien, les formes populaires regagnent une importance croissante qui culmine dans les années soixante-dix. Ce parrainage qui reste urbain, démontre l'élasticité du *rasa*. Brecht fournit alors un fondement solide, poétique et esthétique, à l'utilisation urbaine d'un théâtre urbain. L'analogie entre le théâtre brechtien et la tradition hindoue n'est que formelle, parce que les éléments dramaturgiques que l'on vient d'examiner ressortent de deux traditions tout à fait différentes. Le recours au principe du *rasa* fait partie d'une stratégie pour replacer le théâtre populaire dans un contexte urbain, en l'intégrant dans une tradition nationale. L'équation peuple - *rasa* - Brecht n'est rien d'autre que la redécouverte et la réaffirmation d'un héritage national dans des termes compatibles avec la modernité.

**Vasudha Dalmia-Lüderitz. "Brecht en hindú:
la poética de la respuesta."**

El autor examina las semejanzas entre el teatro épico brechtiano y las convenciones del teatro popular hindú del norte de India.

Data del siglo VI el *Nāṭya Śāstra*, un tratado sobre la estética dramática cuyo concepto central, el *rasa*, funciona como elemento de síntesis en la obra teatral. Esta estética sólo sobrevivió en la teología de ciertos movimientos religiosos y en la poesía erótica que la secularizó. Con la ocupación inglesa en el siglo XIX se produce una reconstitución de esa tradición nacional en el *suāṅg*, obra compuesta en verso tradicional que dura de diez a doce horas.

Hariścandra (1850-1885), de Benares, intentó establecer una síntesis entre los conceptos occidentales de personajes intrigas y el *rasa*. Al principio de este siglo, Prasād (1886-1937) se alejó del realismo de Ibsen para intentar una aproximación temática y estética al pasado.

En los años 50, la aproximación más marcada al occidente se refleja en la dramaturgia de Rākesh, la cual aborda los problemas occidentales de la falta de comunicación y del individualismo cuyos modelos son Beckett y Handke.

En los años 60, las formas populares tienen la prioridad en el esfuerzo para constituir una especificidad nacional a través del teatro. Allí entra Brecht que ofrece una política y una estética sólidas para la utilización del teatro popular en un contexto urbano.

Las comparaciones entre la tradición popular hindú y el teatro brechtiano se imponen. La ecuación pueblo - *rasa* - Brecht es sólo el redescubrimiento y reafirmación de una gran herencia nacional en términos compatibles con la modernidad.

Brecht's Relevance: A Thai Perspective

Chetana Nagavajara

In December 1984, the Drama and Music Department of Silpakorn University organized a panel discussion on modern drama in Thailand. Those taking part were two professors of drama and two veteran actor-producers. All the four discussants bemoaned the almost total demise of professional stage drama and admitted that the cinema and television had not produced works of real quality. The influence of Western performing arts was brought up for discussion, and Saw Asanachinda, famous producer and doyen of professional actors, gave a warning against the possibility of coming under the impact of Brecht. He was openly against *Verfremdung*, for to sacrifice *Einfühlung* would be tantamount to robbing drama of its power to captivate the audience and to draw it over to "our side". In a truly patriotic vein, he propagated the idea that the theater should be used to inculcate loyalty of the people to the nation, religion and the monarchy. In this sense, Brecht's dramaturgy would prove to be too liberal to be useful in a political education. If Brecht can become a threat, he must be relevant.

In the present paper, I propose to give a critical account of the Brecht productions which have taken place since 1976, the most recent being *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* which had its last performance on December 8, 1986. It must be admitted that, at first sight, the choice of Brecht's works for stage productions in Thailand so far may appear somewhat haphazard. Almost all the producers are academics who have studied Brecht as part of the standard repertoire in Departments of Drama in Western, but non-German speaking countries and who now in turn have to initiate their students into Brecht's works. But as I hope to be able to demonstrate, the results have not been mere academic exercises, and a mainly urban, and admittedly youthful, public has been exposed to the Brechtian drama. Strangely enough, in spite of the markedly academic elements in our Brecht reception in general, it is less his dramaturgy than his relevance to our contemporary social and political problems that lies at the center of our interest. It is, however, precisely this point that accounts for an inner contradiction that characterizes the Thai reception of Bertolt Brecht. Can one appropriate the message of his drama without subscribing to his dramaturgy?

Of our first encounter with Brecht in 1976, which proved to be an experience of unrivalled intensity, I have already reported in a previous essay entitled "Brecht's Reception in Thailand: The Case of *Die Ausnahme und die Regel*,"¹ and I shall restrict myself here to a brief summary. Brecht's idea on the *Lehrstück* seems to have found a fertile nurturing ground in Thailand, since certain aspects of the Thai indigenous theater were favorable to the Brechtian drama. The staging

of *Die Ausnahme und die Regel* was more than a transfer of experience: it contributed towards revivifying a local tradition, and the resultant synthesis even confirmed the viability of certain of Brecht's theories that might not have been fully explored or realized at the time of their genesis. For example, Brecht's conception of the *Lehrstück* being an "unfinished work" was put to the test, whereby "Thai scenes" depicting contemporary Thai life were woven in, alternating with the original. This proved to be very effective, the original and the newly created scenes interacting with each other in a lively manner. The Thai scenes were semi-improvised, responding again to one of Brecht's prerequisites for a *Lehrstück*, and the acting on the whole was marked by a bent for improvisation, which was in any case a Thai traditional heritage. The same could be said about Brecht's ideal concept of the *Große Pädagogik* in which there would no longer be a sharp dividing line between actors and audience. This was again a familiar feature of the Thai traditional theater where audience participation was always encouraged, and the "wandering troupe" playing *Die Ausnahme und die Regel* knew very well how to create such an atmosphere of familiarity and conviviality. The cast consisted entirely of amateurs, thereby conforming to another of Brecht's prescriptions concerning the "Kleine Pädagogik". At all events, the astounding success of *Die Ausnahme und die Regel* could not be solely ascribed to affinities in terms of theatrical conventions or aspirations. It has to be admitted that the social and political climate in Thailand at that time was favorable to the introduction of this Brechtian *Lehrstück*. But the "democratic boom" did not last long. When all is said and done, one important point has been proved: Brecht was relevant artistically as well as spiritually.

The impact of *Die Ausnahme und die Regel*, which was truly of a "popular", not to say, "populist", kind, naturally found no immediate echo during the period following the coup d'état of October 1976 which ushered in an ultra-conservative government that even the military could not tolerate for long. A voice like that of Brecht had to be stifled for obvious reasons. When he emerged again, it was in an academic garb. The Department of Drama of Chulalongkorn University was experimenting with the staging of Western plays of various periods and styles within the framework of a research project entitled "Problems in the Staging of Modern Dramas". "Realistic Drama" was represented by Strindberg, the "Theater of the Absurd" by Albee, and the "Epic Theater" by Brecht. *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* was performed in an intimate atmosphere of the small theater of the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, in November-December 1979 and was very much enjoyed by the audience. It was a different world from *Die Ausnahme und die Regel*, and considering the social and political climate at that time, this interpretation, which probably did not go down well with Brecht scholars among the Thai germanists, did much to keep Brecht alive, and one has to be grateful for that. To the producer, who was also head of the Department of Drama, Brecht's relevance was not to be questioned, but it was relevance of a different kind from what one usually expects of Brecht. In the Programme Notes, the drama professor elaborated her skepticism about Brecht's political aim as well as his dramaturgy. She

was not keen on following Brecht's doctrine of *Verfremdung*,² which concept had, in her opinion, given rise to innumerable confusions and misunderstandings. She was frank enough to state that she did not believe that Brecht's plays could create the kind of political impact that Brecht himself had intended. The greatness of the Brechtian theater lay more in the art of characterization, development of plot, literary language, scenic effect and music, and it was precisely these virtues that accounted for the universal acclaim bestowed upon Brecht as one of the leading dramatists of the modern world. In this particular respect, the Thai stage could learn a great deal from the German master, hence his relevance. As for Brecht's utopian aspiration to work for social change through the theater, the Thai professor did not think that he had had much success.

This somewhat "defeatist" approach propounded by a Thai professor of drama could well be called a "zeitgemäße Betrachtung". The shifting from *Inhaltismus* to *Formalismus*, a dichotomy about which Brecht was not too happy,³ was apparently not motivated by any political circumspection, but did serve as a disarming device, which in itself was *zeitgemäß*. But to de-politicize Brecht and to tame *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* into an academic exercise was no easy task. What emerged was, strangely enough, not at all a dry academic reading, but a very vivacious performance that moved between high comedy and "comédie larmoyante." Sometimes one could not help being reminded of the young Victor Hugo's dramaturgy with its advocacy of a *mélange des genres* put forward in the famous *Préface de Cromwell* of 1827. In consonance with the underlying skepticism about Brecht's theory, this interpretation exhibited an unequivocal commitment to the principle of *Einfühlung*, the epitome of which came in Scene 7 where a poor child searched a garbage-can for food. On the whole, this was a production in which Shen Te did outshine Shui Ta, and Shen Te's last speech was given a heart-rending delivery in an equally touching Thai version that must have been the pride of the translator. On the lighter side, the proximity of Chinese life to Thai society gave occasion for interesting experiments, whereby some actors, for comic purposes, adopted Chinese accent and Chinese gestures and gait, thus relocating Brecht's Sezuan to the heart of the Bangkok Chinatown, an innovative exercise in what could be called "diminished" *Verfremdung*. It was no surprise that the Epilogue put the audience in disarray, since it had not been mentally prepared for the kind of serious "homework" at the end of the play. It has to be admitted that under the circumstances prevailing in Thailand at that time, the social and philosophical message of the work did not come through in full. It appears that the young people who were exposed to this Brecht play in 1979 took a long time to digest that message. But the television drama under the title *The Fallen Deva* televised during the course of 1986 amply demonstrated how the Brechtian impact had been constructively assimilated over the years, whereby inspirations drawn from the film *E.T.* and from *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* conspired to create quite an interesting drama about the plight of "a good person" in a corrupt modern society. Seven years were not too long for such a process of "productive reception". As for the

original encounter in 1979, *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* provided a moment of respite which accorded well with the hiatus in our striving for a social and political enlightenment. Brecht was still, in a particular way, relevant. He never advocated that a good theater should not also entertain. The question is *how*.

A big gap set in between the staging of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* and the next Brecht production, namely that of *Die Dreigroschenoper* in 1984. While not ignoring the philosophical and ideological potentialities of the Brechtian drama, (*Die Ausnahme und die Regel* having more than sufficiently demonstrated that we could be literate if we wanted to), our producers knew that to play up the "culinary" side of Brecht was not a bad policy, for the profound messages could take care of themselves. The director of *Die Dreigroschenoper* wanted it to be known that her ambition was to present a "musical." The play was acted by an amateur group consisting of students and lecturers of Thammasat University and a number of distinguished invited guests. As we all know, even a straightforward reading would yield a social message of such potency and universality as to make this "musical" suspect in any traditionalist society. The Victorian setting of the Brecht original would have proved unfamiliar to the Thai audience, and to put it in a Thai setting would have rendered the parallels too obvious. So it was decided to relocate it to pre-World-War-Two Shanghai. But whatever be the devices of "displacement", this production was characterized by a curious inner contradiction that was never resolved. On the one hand, the amateur actors were not sufficiently responsive to the sharp edges of the Brechtian social criticism; on the other hand, the director found Brecht's diatribes against the bourgeoisie so irresistible that she could not help coming up with anti-establishment digs of her own. Brecht was too relevant to be comfortable. This was what the Director had to say about the principle that governed this production of *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

I want . . . to use the theater as a "stage of truth" in order to expose the plight of man in the modern society which is devoid of humanity, justice, goodness, love and faith . . . In such a society where the stronger crush down the weaker, is there a glimpse of hope for tomorrow? We leave it to the audience to think it out.

The last sentence is unmistakably an echo of the Epilogue of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*. In spite of such clear directions given by the producer, the Thai version of *Die Dreigroschenoper* managed to leave the audience baffled, and precisely its "musicality" became problematic. This was not a Noel Coward or a Rogers and Hammerstein that an amateur group could try its hand on. *Die Dreigroschenoper* is a "musical" of a different kind. The roughness and coarseness of texture and manners, the irony and acerbity of tone, above all, the indescribable sauciness demanded a certain level of "professionalism" that the Thai amateur group did not have. The songs, translated into Thai with the

original music of Kurt Weill being retained, came off rather tame. So was the acting on the whole, for the cast, consisting of well-bred university students and distinguished members of the "haute bourgeoisie," could not assume the roles of pimps, prostitutes, beggars and robbers with much conviction. This was where an amateur theater stood at a disadvantage. The sympathy for Brecht was there; his social message was highly relevant; but the right kind of vehicle to carry that message could not be found. Some members of the audience could enjoy only the delightful pageantry and the exquisite costumes.

Perhaps the original Brecht-image transmitted through *Die Ausnahme und die Regel* had never been totally obliterated, and it was difficult for serious minded theatergoers to stomach what they found to be a wayward piece like *Die Dreigroschenoper*, for some might even think that Brecht's serious message should be delivered through an equally serious vehicle: after all, not very serious tidings did come out of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* either. In this respect, their subsequent encounter with *Leben des Galilei* was an eye-opener. The play was performed by an amateur group called "Troupe '28" (28 being the founding year B.E. 2528 or A.D. 1985) in November-December 1985. Coming out of one of the performances, I was approached by a colleague, an ardent theatergoer, with the following question: "Since you teach German literature, can you tell me to what extent the original text has been re-written so as to make the piece relevant to the Thai context? The parallels with the contemporary Thai scene are so striking as to make me suspicious." I had to reply that this was just a straightforward reading of the original, and whatever be its merits or demerits, the confidence in the Brechtian text was not to be questioned. Some German members of the audience (who could not understand Thai), familiar with more daring interpretations of the Steins or the Peymanns, went away at half-time complaining that it was too prosaic and pedestrian, whereas those who understood Thai stayed on till the end and said they enjoyed it tremendously. One important point should be noted in this connection: It is the Brechtian text that first and foremost communicates with the Thai audience. Besides, the Thai language is an adequate instrument to carry the Brechtian message.

This production of *Leben des Galilei*, which turned out to be a box-office success, offers a number of points that merit our attention. First, this was amateur theater, a *Galilei* without a star-studded cast, although it was reported that the audition was stringent and the rehearsals were thorough. The role of Galilei was played by an architect who had not acted on the stage before and had neither a commanding personality nor a commanding voice. It was a low-key performance which was in accord with the overall interpretation that could be described as "unheroic." The key to this rendering was Galilei's remark "Unglücklich das Land, das Helden nötig hat",⁴ which figured prominently on the posters! The Thai public, of course, could not help thinking of their current political leadership whose resilience and remarkable art of survival bore a striking resemblance to Brecht's creation.

Another point worth noting was that the staging of *Galilei* was taken in some quarters as an occasion to celebrate the greatness of the "father of modern science." Besides the Goethe-Institut (which naturally knew what it was all about), the Science Association of Thailand also offered its sponsorship, the first performance being attended by the Minister of Education and other dignitaries. Brecht was found to be relevant again to the current campaign to promote science and technology as part of national development. Busloads of school children came in for matinee performances. What they saw on the stage was a different Galilei from the hero of their science textbooks, a highly critical treatment of the life of the great scientist. Scene 14 containing the lengthy self-accusation by Galilei was given uncut. The issue concerning the responsibility or irresponsibility of the scientist came through very clearly. This was educational theater of a different kind from what they had been used to and all the more invigorating for that. Reactions in the press and in other circles rather confirmed that the message was heard. A panel discussion was organized at Thammasat University on the subject of the play's relevance to contemporary Thailand, and one discussant, a professor of Philosophy, gave clear warning: "Developing countries, unfamiliar with scientific culture in the Western sense, are mistaking science as their only salvation, not knowing that they might end up with a new tyranny."⁵ In the daily "Matichon" of December 6, 1985, the well-known writer and historian Suchit Wongthes wrote: "*Galilei* means a great deal to Thai society which is now being caught up in a new craze for science and technology. People are demanding that we move forward with the back-up of science and technology, but to what purpose are our scientists directing their efforts?"⁶ Brecht might have been pleased with such a critical reaction provoked by his *Leben des Galilei*.

From an artistic point of view, the staging of *Galilei* proved to be a revelation to the extent that other Western dramas had not quite achieved (the existing Shakespeare translations having proved to be unplayable!). This Brecht play has driven home the point about the supremacy of the text in so far as actors and producers are concerned, and "the pleasure of the text" as far as the audience is concerned. To the Thai translators, producer and actors, Galilei represents the dramatic text at its most challenging. The hidden irony, the bent for the didactic and especially the quasi-proverbial mode of expression reminds one of traditional Thai verse drama as well as folk drama, although spoken drama in the Western sense was alien to the indigenous Thai theater. The scene with which the translators and the director had to struggle very hard was Scene 7, in which Galilei and Cardinal Barberini exchanged very lively repartees. This was very much enjoyed by the audience in spite of those few biblical allusions. Another interesting encounter between Brecht and the local Thai performing arts occurred in Scene 10, the *Fastnachtszene*, which was improvised by the actors themselves during rehearsals and still retained a markedly improvised character. The role of the *Balladensänger* was given to a well-known Thai poet and singer, Surachai Chanthimathon, a "ballad singer" in his own right whose political verse and songs are very much

admired by the progressive sector of the Thai public. After studying the Brecht play, Surachai came up with his version of the songs, thereby putting an effective local artistic and intellectual vehicle at the service of the German bard while at the same time assimilating him into a progressive movement within the framework of Thai contemporary art. But on the whole, *Leben des Galilei* was taken as an exemplary act of writing and a well-made play, and demands have since been constantly made that Thai writers should take up writing original spoken dramas. On another front, in anticipation of what is still to come, one Drama Department has decided to relax its requirements for a drama thesis: instead of having to come up with an original text and to stage it, the candidate can now put on a production of an existing play, which could be a translation or an adaption of foreign work. It is known that the decision was made as a result of the impact of Brecht's *Galilei*. It would appear that for educational purposes, it would be more advisable to go to the Brecht school, if you could not write like him! One could here speak of relevance with a vengeance.

In spite of the overall success of *Leben des Galilei*, colleagues in Drama Departments felt that this production was still too much of a "literary" reading in which the theater remained too subservient to the text. They would have loved to see a more theatrically exciting Brecht. The next Brecht production responded to this demand. Ostensibly staged as a contribution to the International Year of Peace 1986 with part of the proceeds going to charity, *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* presented by the Drama Department of Chulalongkorn University could be described as a "grand spectacle." Given a theater with a capacity of 1700, namely the newly renovated Chulalongkorn University Auditorium with its gilded proscenium and sumptuous interior that strives to outdo the *Musikvereinsaal* of Vienna, this version of *Mutter Courage* had to amplify itself in almost every way, the actors themselves having no choice but to rely on wireless microphones. In order to do justice to the grandeur of the locale, *Mutter Courage* decided to become a musical and not a bad musical at that. The music composed by an American musician and composer, a long-time resident highly recognized by the Thai themselves as an expert on Thai music, was masterly performed by top-notch brass players from the University Music School with the composer at the electronic keyboard. So powerful and so captivating was the music that it stole the show altogether. The songs adapted into Thai and set to a rather demanding music of the order of *Westside Story* could not be managed by the actors on the stage who had to resort to lipsinging. Moreover, the choreography designed by an ex-Broadway choreographer was so lively that the public found *Mutter Courage* and Eilif dancing a "cha-cha-cha" rather attractive. In spite of this musical overbalance, the anti-war message was not completely lost. But that message did not come through in the Brechtian dramatic text, nor in the dialogue: it came across in an impactful and pleasurable way in the music and songs, if one listened attentively enough. Brecht was still relevant to a society in which the military remained in the consciousness of every citizen. The military parade at the end, an appropriate finale to a musical, should drive home this point, although

faithful Brechtians could not help feeling that the style of acting could have been more *verfremdend*. In all fairness, could one expect that kind of impact from a cantata, for after all, this *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* was a cantata à la *Carmina Burana* with text by Bertolt Brecht? Artistically speaking, this latest Brecht production has probably advanced beyond Brecht. The German master was intent on moving from the "dramatic" to the "epic". His Thai interpreters have turned the Brechtian "Epic Theater" into a "théâtre lyrique".

In conclusion, we may have to admit that our rather limited experience with the staging of Brecht has shown up a disturbing phenomenon, namely that relevance and real understanding may be two different things. Brecht has proved to be useful and even usable in some ways, the linking of *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* with the International Year of Peace being a good example. When all is said and done, the august beginning heralded by *Die Ausnahme und die Regel* has not been matched by subsequent attempts, perhaps with the soothing and sober exception of *Leben des Galilei*. One cannot resist the temptation to indulge in a kind of generalization that, in Thailand at least, Brecht can be effective only when the social and political environment proves to be favorable. In other words, Brecht works best as re-enforcement of a highly liberal social and political order that already exists. If we were to revive *Die Ausnahme und die Regel* now, it would probably turn out to be a *Lehrstück* in the sense of a dry academic exercise. Put in more simple terms, this has so far proved to be a theater of the faithful, by the faithful and for the faithful. The youthful audience that comes to a Brecht performance in 1986 most probably takes him as an antidote against the existing political doldrums, and it cannot be denied that some of the Brecht productions have either confused or misled them. We shall need a great deal more time and energy, especially intellectual energy, to make this a theater of the future, a work of art that can lead the way to a new social and political awakening.

It may now be worth examining some major constraints besetting our Brecht reception, which may be summarized as follows:

First, in spite of whatever Brecht may say about the virtue of amateur theater in his early theoretical writings, his later works require "professional" treatment. As mentioned earlier, Thai professional actors have emigrated to television studios and they will need thorough recycling before they can seriously tackle Brecht, for the subject-matter as well as the style of acting prevalent in our television dramas are totally alien to Brechtian theater. The involvement of academics in the world of television has so far not brought about significant change. On the contrary, there have been regular invasions of T.V. histrionics into academia, and some of the Brecht productions presented by Drama Departments have suffered thereby. In the name of relevance Brecht may have been used to attract progressive young audiences, but it is doubtful to what extent the faith in Brecht is anchored in real knowledge of, and sympathy with his work and his dramaturgy.

Secondly, the contemporary Thai theater has not been able to benefit from a strong critical tradition, theater criticism being probably

the weakest. Drama Departments have so far concentrated too much on producing practitioners and not critics or scholars, and the little help that has been forthcoming from the sister-discipline of Germanic Studies has been considered by actors and producers as too "literary". Whatever one may say about spiritual or intellectual affinity, the Brechtian theater in Thailand could have fared better on a more solid foundation of scholarship. In this respect, his interpreters in the various Schools of Drama have relied too heavily on their own intuition which, alas, has not proved infallible. In a country so remote from Brecht's own, it is not likely that Brecht can thrive without Brecht Studies.

Thirdly, it is unfortunate that no Thai translation of his works has yet reached the public. Producers have so far depended on translations from the English versions of his plays, and curiously enough, have not been willing to publish their own stage versions, probably for fear of being accused of distortion. It has to be admitted that in the absence of a "reading public" and without acquaintance with his work as literature, the Brechtian theater has to communicate directly with the audience. Since productions are few and far between and some have not really captured the Brechtian spirit, his impact naturally cannot be very great. In this sense, one is tempted to draw an analogy from *Die Mutter*: Pelagea Wlassowa begins to acquire basic literacy as soon as she has decided to espouse a revolutionary cause. How could there be, one might ask, widespread Brecht reception without basic "Brecht literacy"? There is a great deal we have to catch up on, not only in terms of his dramatic works, but also of his theoretical writings, poetry and prose. On nearer and even deeper acquaintance, we shall certainly find him even more relevant. At the time of writing, a group of Thai Germanists is preparing an edition of selected Brecht plays in Thai translation.

Our investigation of the question of Brecht's relevance has more than confirmed that Brecht does not date so easily as some of his own compatriots might think. It has also become evident that there is no other way of getting to the essence of his work save by great labour and efforts. My only quarrel with some colleagues in Drama Departments is that they do not take Brecht seriously enough. To play up a few parallels with contemporary problems in Thailand or to use Brecht simply as an excuse for juicy entertainment is to belittle his real potential. *Die Ausnahme und die Regel* more than sufficiently demonstrated that playing an explosive work with a cool head could lead on to further constructive critical thinking of your own, as the "Thai scenes" did show. *Leben des Galilei*, again played with intellectual sobriety, could captivate the Thai audience without the weighty message being lost. It is only fair to say that our knowledge of Brecht is still at an elementary stage, and there remain other works and other aspects of his thinking that await further exploration. For example, our amateur groups have much to benefit from his *Lehrstücke* some of which can serve as an "exercise" for play writing, staging and acting. I am thinking in particular of *Die Horatier und die Kuriatier*. An anti-war piece like *Das Verhör des Lukullus* is certainly more easily manageable by an amateur theater than *Mutter Courage*. On a more intellectual front, our progressive thinkers and artists have been advocating that the arts should serve to

inculcate and strengthen the spirit of self-criticism. Brecht can certainly be thought-provoking in this respect. Even the anti-Nazi plays can be interesting, for they can demonstrate a kind of self-criticism that eventually takes on the form of a supra-national allegiance to the cause of humanity. Another aspect of Brecht's work worth investigating is his treatment of historical subjects, for he knows how to use history as an instrument to penetrate critically into the present. Some Thai artists and writers are moving along the same line and may find such works as *Die Gesichte der Simone Machard* and *Die Tage der Commune* relevant to their own preoccupation. As far as Brecht's dramaturgy is concerned, it would be meaningful for Thai theater people to keep on experimenting with his proposed methods, for some of these are akin to Thai indigenous acting techniques. And now that the original bewilderment created by the Epilogue of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* has subsided, people are ready to accept indeterminacy of meaning as a criterion of artistic quality, since Thai contemporary writers themselves are practising this art with increasing dexterity, especially in what is known as "literature of social consciousness."⁷ *Leben des Galilei* has proved that Thai audiences could appreciate the kind of theater that Roland Barthes has described as "théâtre des signifiants" (as opposed to "théâtre des signifiés"), a theater bent on creating a "representation of reality with a view to influencing it."⁸ The contact with Brecht's theater should, hopefully, lead on to closer acquaintance with, say his poetry, for a number of young Thai poets are moving in a similar direction whereby poetry and songs strive to evoke a sense of social responsibility and sympathy for the oppressed. As mentioned earlier in connection with *Leben des Galilei*, the encounter between Brecht and Thai poet singer Surachai Chantimathon can be considered as a happy occasion.

All in all, a number of Thai actors, producers, musicians, poets, critics, and scholars have been actively involved in an artistic and intellectual pursuit which may be christened "Brecht our contemporary." They may not have achieved much in ten years, but with more experience, they should be able to do better.

NOTES

1. Published in *Monatshefte*, Vol. 75, No.1, 1983
2. The Thai rendering of *Verfremdung* is closer to *distanciation* than *alienation*.
3. Bertolt Brecht: *Gesammelte Werke*, XIX, p. 301.
4. *Leben des Galilei*, Scene 13.
5. Quoted from a transcript made by the Students Literary Club.
6. *Matichon*, December 6, 1985.
7. See: *Thai P.E.N. Anthology: Short Stories and Poems of Social Consciousness*, Bangkok 1984.
8. *Brecht on Theater*, translated by John Willett, London, 1978, p.225.

Chetana Nagavajara. "Brechts Bedeutung - aus thailändischer Sicht."

Brechts Kunst hat es schwer in einer Gesellschaft, für die Kunst im Dienste der Religion, des Patriotismus und der Monarchie zu stehen hat. Trotzdem wird Brecht in Thailand inszeniert - doch wird der ideologische Inhalt stets fein säuberlich von der allgemein bewunderten handwerklichen Fertigkeit des Theatermannes Brecht getrennt. Lange Zeit waren seine Stücke daher wenig mehr als Übungsstücke für die Studentenbühnen gewesen, Musterbeispiele dramatischer Handlungsführung, für Charakterentwicklung, für die Fähigkeit, theatralische Mittel, Musik, Song und Tanz aufs effektivste miteinander zu verbinden. Ein Umdenken, eine Assimilierung Brechts setzte zwar durch eine sehr erfolgreiche Inszenierung von *Die Ausnahme und die Regel* ein, wurde aber durch die Freisetzung ultrakonservativer Stömungen nach dem Staatsstreich im Oktober 1976 wieder zum Verstummen gebracht. Brecht überlebte ohne Ideologie, auf einen dekorativen Formalismus reduziert.

Erst eine Inszenierung der *Dreigroschenoper* im Jahre 1984 bemühte sich um die Entfaltung des kritischen Potentials, und um die Ideologiekritik nicht zu direkt zu gestalten, andererseits aber keine zu große kulturelle Distanz aufzubauen, wurde die Handlung aus dem viktorianischen England nach Shanghai am Vorabend des zweiten Weltkrieges verlegt. Es zeigt sich dabei unter anderem auch, daß Brechts Theater durch Laienschauspieler sehr von seiner potentiellen Wirkung einbüßt, da diese selbst vom Charme der Figuren zu sehr hingerissen sind, als daß sie eine dialektische Distanz aufbauen könnten. Eine etwas kritischere Reaktion hinterließ die *Galilei*-Inszenierung von 1985 durch zweierlei: Die schonungslose Erscheinung des Unheroischen in der Figur des Galilei, sowie durch Stimulierung eines besonders in Asien latent vorhandenen Skeptizismus der westlichen Verwissenschaftlichung der Gesellschaft gegenüber. Der ideologiekritische Ansatz blieb offenbar unbemerkt, überdies wurde Brechts *Leben des Galilei* als zu literarisch kritisiert. Ein größerer Erfolg blieb einer Inszenierung von *Mutter Courage* vorbehalten, die durch eine neue amerikanische Vertonung und Choreographie mehr dem Massengeschmack entgegen kam. Im wesentlichen identifiziert Nagajavara drei Faktoren, welche die Brecht-Rezeption bislang beeinträchtigt haben: die Inszenierung durch Amateurtheater, die schwach ausgeprägte literatur- und gesellschaftskritische Tradition und nicht zuletzt der Umstand, daß Brecht kaum übersetzt und daher der Öffentlichkeit ziemlich unzugänglich ist.

Chetana Nagavajara. "La Pertinence de Brecht: une perspective thaïlandaise."

L'histoire des mises en scène de Brecht en Thaïlande (1976-1986) tend à montrer les limites de la réception brechtienne dans ce pays. En effet, ces mises en scène ont lieu pour la plupart dans le contexte

académica des départements de langues étrangères. La réception de Brecht qui ne fonctionne que dans un contexte socio-politique extrêmement favorable, reste limitée par l'absence d'un théâtre professionnel (malgré les affirmations du jeune Brecht sur le non-professionalisme des acteurs), l'absence d'une critique théâtrale qui favoriserait la compréhension de la création brechtienne travail de Brecht, l'absence de traductions, exceptées celles traduites à partir de l'anglais, et l'absence d'une diffusion adéquate. La représentation de *L'Exception et la règle* en 1976 qui n'a pas eu d'écho à cause du coup d'état militaire, a donné à la conception brechtienne du théâtre comme *Lehrstück* et comme *Grosse Pädagogik* un terrain propice. Certaines scènes de la vie thaïlandaise encouragent la participation du public. Les représentations de *La Bonne âme de Se-tchouan* (1979), de *l'Opéra de quat' sous* (1984), et de la *Vie de Galilée* (1985) dénotent toutes une difficulté dans la compréhension du théâtre brechtien. La dernière représentation a bénéficié d'une réception plus large dans un contexte politique où la question du pouvoir se posait de manière insistante, ainsi que du soutien de l'Association des Sciences.

Chetana Nagavajara. "La relevancia de Brecht: una perspectiva tailandesa."

El autor desarrolla un relato crítico de las diversas realizaciones de las obras de Brecht, en Tailandia, desde 1976 hasta diciembre del 1986 (*Madre Coraje*). Las adaptaciones son académicas y ubicadas en un contexto de departamentos de idiomas extranjeros. La obra brechtiana se halla disminuida por una recepción en tal ámbito social, porque su fuerza depende de su importancia en los ojos del pueblo.

El primer reencuentro con Brecht fue la experiencia intensa de una representación de *La Excepción y la regla* en 1976. Tanto la concepción de la obra de teatro como *Lehrstück* cuanto la eliminación de los límites entre público y actores encontraron suelo fértil en Tailandia.

Después del golpe militar y del establecimiento de una dictadura superconservadora, esta representación no encontró más eco. Solamente en 1979 *El Alma buena de Sechuan* fue puesta en escena en la Universidad de Chulalongkorn. Según las palabras de la productora, no son ni la dramaturgia ni los contenidos sociales los que tienen importancia, sino la calidad literaria del texto.

En 1984, la realización de *La Opera de dos centavos* acentúa el lado "culinario" de Brecht: fue obvia la contradicción entre los actores poco receptivos a la crítica social de Brecht y la superdeterminación de este contenido por el escenógrafo director.

La recepción de Brecht sólo funciona en un contexto sociopolítico favorable. Entre los factores que perjudican tal recepción se encuentran: la ausencia de un verdadero teatro profesional (contra las afirmaciones del joven Brecht sobre el estado no profesional de los actores); la ausencia de traducciones excepto aquellas que parten del inglés, y la total ausencia de difusión.

Brecht and the Philippines: Anticipating Freedom In Theater

Maria Luisa F. Torres

In the Filipino people's ongoing collective struggle for hegemony, sustained by their nationalist and democratic aspirations, Brecht's theater has found fertile ground for growth and development.

Over three centuries of Spanish colonialism and about fifty years of American rule have made Philippine culture, in general, and theater, in particular, reproduce through a complex operation of ideological mystification, a fundamentally feudal and colonial system perpetuated by the colonizers in structural complicity with the ruling elite.

The dominant culture during the centuries of direct colonial subjugation in the Philippines manifested in the rituals (as in the feasts or *fiesta* sponsored by the *hermano mayor*), in the shared religious and secular images (God is also King), in the folk theater (*komedya*, *panunuluyan*, *sinakulo*, among many others), in the kinship ties (the extended family system is basically hierarchical), and many other cultural expressions and practices characterized by a system of *padrino*, a complex of patriarchal relations mystifying an essentially oppressive, class-delineated and colonial order in the guise of the ethics of good and evil, divine destiny and the unchanging universal order of society.

The popular theater forms during the Spanish colonial era, when dominated by the *sinakulo*, *komedya*, *tibag*, *panunuluyan* and other religious drama forms and rituals, displacing the indigenous rituals and native theater of the pre-colonial times, even as those forms integrated elements of the indigenous drama. The *sinakulo* is essentially based on the *pasyon* (The Life and Passion of Christ) adapted into drama, presented during Lent, in which one finds the suffering Christ in the midst of all temptation and evil; the more he suffered, the more he became God. The image of Christ as found in the *sinakulo* survives all the nuances of change in the social formation in the Philippines; in the Philippine film today, elements of the *sinakulo* have been transplanted into the usual plot, emphasizing the need to suffer to deserve salvation and a happy ending. The *komedya* of the 18th century Philippines derives from the European metrical romances set in some never-never land in which characters are clearly delineated to represent good and evil. As in its Spanish sources, it idealized the society of the conquistador, embodying the virtues useful to colonization. As presented in the 19th century Philippines, Muslims invariably were the forces of evil and the Christians were saviours. In the context of centuries of Spanish efforts to subjugate the predominantly Muslim Southern Philippines, it is easy to understand how the *komedya* was

made popular then. This form is characterized by a lot of presentational gestures and stylized movements, action being largely a demonstration of the ancient Filipino martial arts called *arnis de mano* and a lot of sword and dagger fights, called *batalla*. The *tibag* and *panunulyan* are religious dramatizations performed during the Holy Week which formed part of the overall effort to christianize the natives.

American colonialism beginning in 1898 found in this theater elements that could make subjugation easier and more effective in the interest of global economic expansionism. But while Spain used religion as a major instrument of domination, the United States used the educational system it so eagerly set up right at the start for its own hegemonic end. And while they both used coercive power to pacify the Filipinos, the US used more sophisticated strategies of colonization, specifically, through the introduction of the English language which would soon become the country's official language. The Filipinos were taught to value everything American: A is for Apple, G is for Grapes, bringing in an alien culture and creating new artificial needs to perpetuate a lopsided economic relationship in which the Philippines became the traditional exporter of raw materials and importer of surplus finished goods from the US. American colonialist strategy found the ideological mystification of the Spanish era only too useful so that it reinforced the same ethics of the good and evil, the universal order of society even as that same colonialist strategy embodied its own historical Victorian impulses. With the muchballyhooed pronouncements like "Manifest Destiny" and "Benevolent Assimilation" among the major slogans of the American expansionists, the mystification of imperialist domination was clearly at work. The *sarsuwela*, which supplanted the *komedya*, became popular during the early years of American colonialism although it had been introduced in the Philippines by the Spaniards in the late 19th century. It revolves around the intricacies of domestic life, usually revolving around a love story which focuses on a big-hearted hero and a heartless villain. The *drama* is usually of a smaller scale in relation to the full-length, whole-day, non-stop dimension of the *sinakulo*, *sarsuwela* and *komedya*. Either comic or melodramatic, the drama is characterized by improbable twists and turns in the fate of the kind, trusting, pure, faithful but betrayed hero. In the *bodabil* (from the French and American vaudeville) which became one of the dominant entertainment means in the early years of American rule, Philippine audiences were regaled with a hodgepodge of skits, songs and dances reminiscent of the earlier *sarsuwela*, or even the *komedya*. Through the *bodabil*, the audience were not only kept in touch with the latest in fashion in songs, dresses and dances from the US; by its sheer dominance in the social life of the people, the *bodabil* displaced the revolutionary spirit that had energized them only a decade ago or so. The *bodabil* could not have been a mere replication of the French or American vaudeville: it integrated elements of the traditional dramatic forms and embodied the impulses of earlier theater genre as in the *drama*. Thus, the theatrical traditions of a feudal mode ultimately rooted as they were in the communal pre-colonial rituals of a self-sufficient economy, served the ends of foreign domination, mystifying

the Spanish and American colonial regimes and masking the economic exploitation of the Filipino masses. In the post-Pacific War years, the communal character deriving from the pre-colonial sources, Spanish and American influences would remain in the folk or popular theater forms, but what would assert dominance would be clearly elitist in orientation and direction under the neo-colonial set-up in the Philippines.

By the post-war years, following the so-called granting of Philippine independence by the US, the colonial system of education had made its mark in major areas of Philippine life, guaranteeing a more effective ideological conditioning of the dominant culture so that neo-colonial relations could be maintained and strengthened. American one-act plays, European drama, and later, original Filipino plays in English, Hollywood movies, television canned shows imported from the US created image of life in the west, specifically, in the Big Apple, masking the hardships that Filipinos undergo as colored migrant workers in the plantations in California and the second-class status of Filipino workers elsewhere in the US, which Filipino writers of that time like Carlos Bulosan clearly depicted in their works. It became the Filipino dream to live the life of the American middle-class, as portrayed in the plays and the movies they had seen. Through academe and the media, colonial values were perpetuated. While the Filipino aspiration during the Spanish era, given its colonial structure, was to become a priest, during the American colonial and neo-colonial rule, it became an honor to be a "pensionado" or a Filipino scholar in the US or to be sent on a grant to the American universities; for the others, it was dream-come-true enough to be "The Elvis Presley of the Philippines", or earlier, "The Greta Garbo of the Philippines", and so on. It is no exaggeration to state that for many years, even after the granting of Philippine independence, the Filipino knew much more American history than his own; worse, his own history was seen through American eyes, the biggest historical lie being that the Filipinos welcomed the American colonization with open arms, grateful for the chocolates and the public school system, disguising the reality that what transpired during the first few years of American rule was indeed a bloody war between Filipino revolutionaries and American soldiers. All this concealed and continues to mask the reality of a lopsided economic and military relationship between the Philippines and the US, the trampling of the Filipino people's sovereignty, the domination of multinational corporations in the Philippine economy, the possibility of being caught in a nuclear holocaust with two of America's biggest bases overseas on Philippine soil, the global economic capitalist system to which the Philippines has been tied and by which it continues to be exploited.

Neo-colonialism in the Philippines since independence has been incorporated into the dominant culture. This constitutes in its feudal and colonial components, a strong elitist orientation. This orientation is embodied in the establishment theater and in some forms of popular and folk theater which imbibed the ideological mystification of the past and present. The so-called legitimate stage in the 1960s presented western classics and modern plays, Broadway musicals and popular American

dramas which told of the individual angst of the western world, the alienation of modern man, the human dilemma in a capitalist society, while, by and large, the folk theater continued to survive, using basically the same traditional forms, although now relegated to the village communities and the rural areas. As in the western models, the categories dichotomizing high and low culture, theater forms, art and literature, became the norms against which theater was measured. Expressionism, Realism, Avantgardism - Philippine theater had them all. Even Brecht was not spared especially in the academe in which his plays were seen as "classics" in the sense of the trappings and spectacles of high art. So, there was supposedly Brechtian acting, staging, movements, understood quite confusedly, which were all transplanted into the legitimate stage where they represented some kind of novelty waiting to become a fad. The elitism was most pronounced in plays presented in which the more "novel" and the least easy to comprehend the play was - due partly to stylistic excesses - the more it met the standards of bourgeois aesthetics which was held paramount. As the legitimate theater, derived from the western world of the 20th century, entertained a small coterie of Filipinos who had been trained and educated in the American universities, the majority of the Philippine population who live in the rural areas were entertained by essentially the same theater forms they had known for many years.

Yet, while the hegemonic discourse of colonial and neo-colonial Philippine society in culture found expression in those theater forms, they, too, embodied the counter-hegemonic struggle for national emancipation and freedom. As theater reproduced the existing social relationships, it also subverted the very status quo. The feudal and colonial order of the society showed its cracks even in its seemingly solid structure. The metrical romance from which was derived the *komedya*, for example, also embodies the very contradictions in the society, divided as it is in cultural, economic political, and sectoral interests, to underscore the unevenness in the mode of production and the inequality in the existing social structures. In Balagtas's *Florante at Laura* (ca. 1838) these cracks would become the very basis of demystification, itself becoming a demystifying strategy. While the usual *komedya* portrayed the Muslim Filipino as the villain and the Christian, the hero, in Balagtas' work the Muslim is not the devil incarnate, nor is the Christian the epitome of all that is holy and good and messianic. In his epic narrative, Aladin, the Muslim, saves Florante, the Christian, from imminent death, and fights with him in toppling down an oppressive and tyrannical ruler. Understandably, his work symbolized for many generations of Filipino nationalists, including the Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal, the Philippine resistance during the Spanish regime. As it exposed the contradictions in Philippine society under Spain, it also expressed the people's desire to become sovereign and build a more egalitarian society.

The complex ideological processes at work in traditional theater can be further suggested by the transformation of the *sarsuwela* in the early years of American rule. As in the work of Balagtas, the *sarsuwela* became a political allegory with the characters representing ideas

juxtaposing nationalism and collaboration. Called the "seditious drama" by the American colonizers and for which the writers were imprisoned, the characters represented, on one hand, the Filipino freedom fighters and, on the other hand, the old and new colonizers and their local partners. In *Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas*, and *Tanikalang Ginto*, for example, the heroes are the Filipino nationalists and revolutionaries, while the villains are the Filipino collaborators and their colonial masters. In this theater, we find not only literary convention subverted but the colonial order as well, even as it also calls upon all Filipino patriots to continue with the revolutionary struggle. At a time when the Anti-subversion Law, the Anti-Flag Law, and many other repressive decrees were like swords of Damocles hanging over the heads of all Filipino nationalists, certainly the numerous successful productions of these plays became a big political issue.

Filipino nationalists and democratic theater workers down the post-war years, especially during the dark days of the Marcos era, took their cue from theater history. In trying to understand how their culture and their various theater forms work, whether residual or dominant or emergent, the cultural/theater workers tried to utilize and reinvigorate traditional theater forms as well as the modern theater to expose the basic ills of the society. Brecht's theater would in time be integrated into this whole effort in the Philippines.

In the 1960s, when Americanization of the Filipino had long been underway, the nationalist movement in the Philippines saw its resurgence. In academe, the bastion of the establishment where Americanization was most evident, nationalism became the battlecry of the Filipino intelligentsia who marched in the streets of the city along with the other sectors of society, to protest the growing subservience of Philippine life, economy and politics to American interest. During the First Quarter Storm years which were characterized by mass rallies attacking the basic evils in Philippine society as captured in such slogans as "Down with imperialism, feudalism, bureaucrat capitalism!" or "Down with fascism!" the new theater emerged. Although the period was also characterized by experimentation by the avantgarde in theater especially in academe and high society, it was also at this time that the so-called agit-prop theater and the first Brecht plays began to be produced. At this time, the emerging theater forms were manifest in the production of activist and nationalist groups such as Kamanyang, Panday Sining, Gintong Silahis and other student and workers' groups who mounted plays for programs during rallies, and portable agit-prop plays during marches in the streets. The influence of Philippine folk theater, some aspects of modern theater and the theater of the Chinese Cultural Revolution became evident; their influence could be seen in the plot that invariably ends in a moment of triumph in the gestures of the activist plays. Formalist norms of the Neo-Aristotelian variety from the west began to be questioned even as Mao Zedong's "Yenan Forum" began to displace the dogma of the art-for-art's-sake; committed theater, literature, art and journalism became the new norms of the emerging counter-culture.

It has been said that the most enduring legacy of the nationalist movement in the 1960s is the revival of Philippine theater, particularly, political theater. As such, theater sought to raise the level of awareness of the Filipino audience in response to the perceived needs of the society then. *Pulang Tala* (1972) by Kamanyang tells of how a student became a guerilla fighter; *Barikada* (1971) by Gintong Silahis dramatizes the historic Diliman Commune; *Welga* (1972) by Panday-Sining depicts the need for the unionized workers to raise the level of their demands from the economic to the political. The impact of the activist theater could only be gauged by the long-term effects it had during the martial law years which followed the activist years.

Along with the activist theater productions, the 1960s gave birth to the first productions of Brecht's plays. *Mother Courage and her Children* was mounted in English by Repertory Philippines in Manila in 1968, and the Philippine Educational Theater Association produced *The Good Woman of Sezuán* in English in 1970 and in Pilipino in 1971.

The 1970 production was directed by a Czechoslovakian director, Ladislav Smocek, and the second was directed by Brooks Jones, an American director.

But in the midst of the westernization of the Filipino, on the one hand, and the political turmoil, on the other, the reception of these first productions of Brecht's plays was understandably ambivalent. By PETA's own assessment, the key concept of the V-effect was understood as "grotesque stylization in production and performance."

Consequently, what was then referred to as Brechtian theater was expected to have white clown faces, vocal orientalism, masks, among others. Along with the confusion was the fact that before Martial Law was declared, the main political arena was the streets. Thus, it was difficult enough to mount Brecht's plays on stage; it would have been even more difficult to do Brecht's plays in the marches. So, as PETA's own evaluation would have it: "For the political activists of the time, the characters and plot of *Sezuán* might have been too non-committal, even if the second production was already in Pilipino; and for the experimentalists, the execution might have been too subtle, or not shocking enough to warrant a theater vogue for them to apply in their own work. For many others, the two productions must have remained an intellectual and literary curiosity."

Martial Law was declared on September 21, 1972 in response to the growing militancy of the protest movement and to insure the domination of US imperialism and the rule of then President Marcos. At this point, the Armed Forces of the Philippines became the dominant force in keeping the people subjugated, exercising brutality unknown for many years as may be gleaned through the hundreds and thousands of cases of arbitrary arrest, tortures, disappearances, extra-judicial executions or "salvagings" and massacres. It has been documented that in the first years of Martial Law alone over 50,000 people were arrested, detained and tortured without charge or trial. From a regular force numbering 57,700 before Martial Law, the military soared to 275,000 a few years before Marcos was ousted. The repressive military, aside from the regular forces, had the Barangay Brigade, the citizens army reserves,

various intelligence agencies, which were all somehow linked into the regular chain of command and assigned to provincial, regional or special commands whose accountability to any superior remained dubious. Examples would be the Integrated Civilian Home Defense Force (CHDF) which operated a militia throughout the country, numbering about 75,000, including criminals and personal bodyguards of local warlords or even irregular paramilitary groups consisting of religious, political and criminal characters. In Mindano, it has been reported that paramilitary groups operated with government sanction such as the Black Christ, the Lost Command, and the Rural Reformist Movement. Whether or not Martial Law was eventually lifted, the US-backed Marcos dictatorship had already safely institutionalized dictatorial rule with over 2,000 presidential decrees. Further, the National Security Code and the Public Order Act empowered Marcos and the Defense Ministry to order the preventive detention of progressive forces who were considered enemies of the state. Thus, the military, besides being the main coercive instrument of the regime, took over important industries, like the steel industry, with unprecedented control of government institutions as well as private and semi-government business. There were documented in 1983 about 350 cases of hamlet centers, reminiscent of the Vietnam war, in 11 provinces of Mindanao with some 250,634 individuals, aside from the numerous safehouses and other secret places where political dissenters and suspected rebels were tortured and killed.

What largely sustained the dictatorship, of course, was US military assistance, propped up by three military agreements between the US and the Philippines which were aimed at crushing insurgency and insuring US control of Indochina, Africa and the Middle East.

Militarization during the dictatorship which lasted for over a decade underscored the need to find alternative ways by which the people could express their dissent and organize themselves into meaningful and powerful pressure groups. From the agit-prop street theater of the early seventies, political theater developed more fully incorporating diverse influences from the traditional theater to Brecht and Boal, as the conditions demanded. The writers were confronted with the problem of censorship, even with self-censorship, to avoid the wrath of the military and powers-that-be. There were clearances to be acquired from the military for all types of publication, including the publication of comics. Playwrights could only express their ideas during writing competitions, but even then, there were guidelines that stifled meaningful expression and the production of their plays was never guaranteed, except for a handful of sponsoring institutions. Cinema was also closely watched by the government by encouraging the production of films that praised the regime and discouraging "subversive" films which allegedly showed the seamy side of the society. Prime time television programs were about 85% imported from the US with such programs as "Knots Landing," "Three's Company," "Charlie's Angels," "Dynasty," or "Dallas." Newspapers were especially controlled; erring journalists were either summoned for interrogation by the military for possible leftist links, were asked to resign from their posts, or else, as in the provinces, they were

simply "salvaged." The state, of course, consistently claimed that nobody, but nobody had been imprisoned for his art; it argued, that the artist was allegedly free to create.

Yet, it was clear that unless the artist was in complicity with the dictatorship, then he remained unfree to create. The people, therefore, could not rely on the media for information; rumors became the source of hard facts. Establishment theater would not present the facts of life in the Philippines, so alternative theater was born in this context and Brechtian theater began to emerge.

Although the encounter with Brecht's theater in the Philippines began before the declaration of Martial Law, it was during the dark days of the dictatorship that it began to take root. Since then, Brechtian theater has become inextricably rooted in the complex and dynamic demystifying strategy of the people's ongoing collective project. Beginning with modest but crucial efforts to use theater forms that would contribute to the overall thrust of raising the level of awareness, organizing and mobilizing the citizenry into the mainstream of the culture of resistance, the production of a few of Brecht's plays notably by such theater groups as PETA and through its outreach program and the national network of cultural groups, evolved into what is referred to in the Philippines as Brechtian theater, a theater phenomenon that embodies the basic principles, techniques and devices, and more crucially, the dialectics and science of Brecht's theater. In the community theaters, especially, one can see the varying degrees of influence of Brecht's theater.

In the 1970s, theater proved to be the most important medium for communicating messages that could not be expressed in the establishment theaters; of the literary forms, it proved to be most effective and most dynamic. As staged by the theater and cultural workers, theater expressed the key issues and urgent tasks for Philippine society. Under Martial Law and after, political theater specifically, picked up from the agit-prop theater of the late sixties and early seventies to evolve into a more developed, more artistic, more pleasurable, more potent response to repression and oppression. Although it has been very difficult to document all of the Brechtian productions in the entire Philippines considering that the country is composed of over 7,000 islands, we can cite a few of the major productions which had varying degrees of influences from Brecht's theater: *Oratoryo ng Bayan*, PETA, depicts how the regime has violated human rights identified by the U.N. Charter to which the Philippines is a signatory; *Pilipinas: Circa 1907*, PETA, examines the truth behind the Philippine-American relationship; *Sakada*, Negros Theater Guild, depicts the lies being belted out by the regime's propaganda machinery about the province of Negros; *Juan Tambo*, PETA, analyzes the problems in society caused by the abject poverty of the people; and *Life of Galileo*, PETA, the production of which would be the source of many lessons and inspiration in Brechtian theater for the community cultural groups in various parts of the country.

In all these, plus many other productions, unprecedented in number and activity in Philippine theater history, a variety of forms, devices and

techniques have been utilized manifesting the integration of the essentials of Brecht's theater into the other elements of Philippine theater among which are the use of drama-poem (*dula-tula*), a versatile fusion of poem and drama, portable and inexpensive and very effective during marches and rallies; the use of folk materials as in the folktale, to provide the framework for unfolding a narrative about specific social problems; the use of partial or full chorus, to narrate the lives and activities of the characters and to comment on the events; the use of multi-media devices as in slides and cinematic techniques to juxtapose scenes of brutality and lies of the government and the military and the social realities; the maximization of gestures in dramatization as in the mime drama to show the processes of exploitation among the basic classes; the use of skits of little narratives and songs as in the traditional theater forms which string together spoofs or caricatures of government propaganda and showcases; stylization in movements and aspects of scenic design to highlight the excesses of the regime; and most notably, the suggestive use of space, instead of the realistic, also in scenic design, as in most of Brecht's plays. Perhaps, the most important element that weaves together Brecht's theater and the political theater in the Philippines is the foregrounding of the contradictions in the society, the emphasis on the dialectical and historical process in which the narrative, that is, the drama is made to unfold.

These productions reject the elitism in the establishment theater utilizing both familiar and new elements in theater, thus, freeing the artist from the elitist norms of the so-called high art, at the same time that he reaches out to a wider audience to be able to depict the realities about the society. Taken as one, the vision of these productions is to pursue a cultural movement linked with the people's organizations and basic communities in their struggle for liberation. To achieve that goal, the plays give the audience a critical analysis of the local and national problems as well as the analysis of social forces, unmask false consciousness in order that truth might prevail, and state the need to fight oppression by linking with the other democratic forces in society, even as the audiences themselves provide input in the productions and discussions.

Indeed, the production of Brecht's plays, including what is called Brechtian theater in the various regions of the country, have been made possible under conditions of extreme poverty, blatant violation of human rights and neo-colonial domination. In the tradition of the so-called "seditious drama" in Philippine theater history, it braved the wrath of direct and indirect suppression, to be able to play an active role in the larger arena of the culture of resistance and liberation. As presented in translation in different Philippine languages or in adaptation for various Philippine audiences, as well as in other productions which try to embody the Brechtian *gestus*, viewed in the Philippine context, Brechtian theater has told of the people's sufferings, indignation and protest against the US-backed Marcos dictatorship. In the theater halls, in academe, in the streets of the city, in the remote islands in the countryside, Brechtian theater speaks of the people's oppression and their own liberation. Indigenized and set against the backdrop of

Philippine realities, the scenic design, the narrative, the acting, the character, the direction and motivation combine to underscore the theme of tyranny and injustice and point out the need for actors and audience alike to be part of the organized effort to achieve social transformation.

To date, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* alone has been done in at least six versions to our knowledge, based on earlier translations and adaptations in other places in the country. It has a PETA version, which was translated in Pilipino and produced in 1977, a community version in Davao, which was adapted in 1980, a Mindanao version, a Cebuano version, a children's version, a version performed by such groups as Ugnayan, and a Surigao version. *Life of Galileo* has had several versions, too, first by PETA, translated in Pilipino and staged in 1981, which became the basis of other adaptations, like the Cebuano version, based in part on the Manheim translation. *Senora Carrar's Rifles*, too, has had several versions, the Visayan version, the production in Davao, and the 1985 version in the regional congress of Bayan, an alliance of nationalist and democratic organizations.

Except perhaps for PETA, based in Manila, which has been more theoretically prepared and trained in the actual productions of Brecht's plays, most theater groups, especially those based in the communities in the provinces have had very little systematic and conscious training in Brecht's theater. In a society that is hardly able to provide the requirements for survival and amenities for learning and literacy, most of the productions of Brecht's plays in the communities have taken the form of training workshops of PETA for these community theater groups through an interregional network. It is important to note that the cultural workers, playwrights, actors and directors are not professional in the sense that only a handful can afford to live on theater productions. Almost every one involved in theater, especially community theater, has to eke out a living to survive to be able to do theater. Besides, he is not only a cultural worker; perhaps, he is also a community organizer, a student, a teacher, a mother, a breadwinner for the family. These people learn their craft in theater not through attending lectures or through extended training programs in playwrighting, acting, scenic design or directing; they learn to do theater through the school of hard knocks of the urgency of the needs of the community and the nation as a whole. They learn not from books but from seeing each other's productions; and based on what they have seen, they try out ideas and devices in their own communities. What proves to be effective is kept, and what proves to be ineffective is thrown away or modified or distilled to suit their audience.

The production of *Life of Galileo* by PETA and directed by Fritz Bennewitz, a visiting director from the German Democratic Republic in 1981 would be the source of many lessons and inspiration in Brechtian theater which would have no small impact on the many other community groups in the country. With PETA's outreach program, more productions of Brecht's plays would be under way with the training workshops that PETA held within and outside Manila.

There is something at once strange and familiar for the Filipino audience about *Life of Galileo*. On one hand, it is about a historical period in a distant place whose problems and concerns the Filipino audience could only vaguely understand. On the other hand, it speaks about characters and social forces that they know only too well and the contradictions in society it unfolds seem at once familiar and immediate. A society fraught with contradictions between the hold of the feudal mode and the emergence of capitalist impulses as in *Galileo* seems somehow to have its own parallel in the Philippine experience and history, as it is essentially a semi-feudal society with capitalist inroads and overlays in some areas of life. The Philippine society itself is embattled between an era of fatalism and obscurantism and the will to progress, and science, historically rooted in the years of colonialism.

In his society, Galileo lived and fought for progress in a way a man of his class and time could. He recanted and in a sense refused the mold of the hero; yet, in a way he was a hero. His having finished the *Discorsi* despite his having recanted earlier points to the very contradictions with which he was confronted in his society. The Filipino audience saw the Galileo in them, and yet they imagined perhaps their own Galileo, their own hero, who perhaps would not have recanted. To illustrate, the actor who played the role of Galileo himself had to be convinced over and over by the director about the point in Galileo's recantation. The actor had been detained twice by the dictatorship, once for alleged underground activities in 1973 and again in 1977 during an anti-dictatorship rally in which he as director and a cast were about to present an agit-prop play. In prison, despite unimaginable tortures, he argued that he never betrayed the cause of freedom. Why would Galileo? When Andrea says "Unhappy the land that has no heroes." *Galileo*, the play, in the context of Philippine history and the dictatorship, becomes the Philippines itself. Shown only a year before the heinous murder of Benigno Aquino Jr. at the Manila International Airport, *Galileo* indeed anticipated the Filipino people's realization of their own Galileo. His murder, as we all know, sparked the final massive protests that had been expressed by the political theater for the past many years, which would culminate in the ouster of the dictator in 1986.

Yet, perhaps, more immediately, *Galileo* addressed a problem that was directly confronting the country. Science, as Galileo points out, is meant "to lighten the toil of human existence." In the Philippines, science and technology of the kind that the US and Japan have brought in have mostly been made possible at the expense of the survival of the people. The nuclear plants, the dams and much other imported technology with no backward links in the economy have all caused comfort for a few and untold misery for the majority. In 1981, when the play was produced, the nuclear power plants were being built by Westinghouse with the dictatorship despite all dangers to human lives as exposed by human rights groups in the Philippines and abroad; the dams have displaced so many tribal Filipinos from their ancestral lands and their leaders and spokespersons were brutally murdered in the resistance movement. In this context, one could understand how *Galileo* became the symbol of the dilemma of the Filipino scientist,

specifically, those who came back from training in the American universities. What role must they play in the context of the social conditions? Is science neutral? What should be the direction of science and technology in the Philippines? For whom are science and progress? These and many other questions were what *Galileo* confronted not only the Filipino scientist, but the intellectuals, the artists, the students, the urban poor and the different sectors of the society. And the answers seemed clear as the people organized into groups of scientists, artists, students, urban poor, and so on.

As it turned out, the influence of Brecht's theater has become evident with more productions. Each time, PETA, for example would begin to ask the questions they had learned from earlier encounters with Brecht's theater: What is the main argument of the play? What are the personal and social contradictions in the play? What is the configuration of forces that have shaped the characters? What conflicting tendencies, as a result, do the characters embody? How are these characters in relation to the situation they find themselves in socially and historically determined? What methods and devices must be used to effectively show the dialectics of the play? How can the audience be made to respond critically about the play's contradictions? How can the audience understand the implications of his own history?

Galileo could have easily been, say, a historical drama, a period play, a story of a past in staging, in scenic design, acting and directing. It is about a historical period, yet, it is not. The production of *Galileo* had to historicize it in terms of the current conjuncture. The acting had to be stimulated by both the actor's historical and conjunctural knowledge or understanding of the argument of the play. That understanding must be expressed in the *gestus*, in the language, the movements, the attitudes. The scenic design must neither be realistically depicting the Italian Renaissance per se, yet it has to suggest precisely that as it visually underscores the immediacy of the narrative even as the use of space also remains suggestive for flexibility. The music must make its own statement, neither too melodious to attract attention to itself nor too intoxicating to grab the meaning out of the dialogues. The Carnival scene is "unmasked" which is to say, is reduced to its barest essence, without the spectacles which Philippine traditional theater seems to wallow in. The influence of the dramaturgy of Brecht would reverberate in later PETA processes, in *Juan Tambo*, *Duplughang Bayan*, *Panunuluyan*, *Pilipinas Circa 1907* and many others.

In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, suggestive sets, props and costumes, put to use what PETA likes to call "Aesthetics of Poverty", partly influenced by productions of Brecht's plays, "by keeping simple but strong visual statements through color and texture as extensions of the play's different levels of contradictions." With the production of Brecht's plays, PETA has refined its production processes, learning to work more creatively and efficiently in pools such as the artists' pool, the music pool, the actors' pool, and so on, while other establishment or even academic theater groups maintain theater production hierarchy in which the director and only the director is the source of all creativity. Partly compelled by the economics of productions in the Third World and

partly stimulated by more efficient working arrangements as everyone is only a part-time cultural worker, but greatly encouraged by the need to express art through theater, PETA has learned to work as a collective involved in a larger national project.

The impact upon the audience of the production may never be accurately measured but the *Galileo* alone has brought in people from all walks of life - students, professionals, middle class, workers, urban poor, artists, intellectuals, even enthusiasts of high art. The audience would wildly applaud, intently listen, laugh freely throughout the about six performances during the 1981 PETA season. After seeing the play, numerous reflection papers, discussions, rave reviews even by the establishment publications, debates in a journal followed even as the people continued to organize in the schools and the communities. That Brecht's social commitment in theater and that of PETA and the other Philippine community theater are similar need not be belabored. Perhaps because of that, these groups have found in Brecht's theater so much to learn from and dialogue with. Brecht's theater has shown the possibilities in theater ranging from understanding the dialectics in and of theater and society to the suggestive use of props and visual symbols and costumes which need not be expensive, something that is particularly useful for an economically impoverished country like the Philippines. Yet, perhaps, it is in the communities that Brecht's theater has made more far-reaching impact, in which plays like the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* have been translated and adapted, especially in Mindanao, where it holds more significance.

The Mindanao problem is rooted in land. It used to be called the "Land of Promise" as its fertile soil provided possibilities for building new frontiers for Filipinos who used to live in the more congested regions of the country. But soon, plantations of multinational corporations began to mushroom on leased land - pineapple, banana, rubber and coconut. When Martial Law was declared and the government gave the multinational companies more incentives for investment, whatever little hope was left began to fade for the people as the fruit plantations expanded in area and other transnationals set up new and related industries. Social unrest worsened and protest activities increased so the military came in to repress dissent and protect the multinational corporations' interests and investments in Mindanao. As instruments of the dictatorship and the transnationals, the military forcibly uprooted the inhabitants from their lands which were needed by the transnationals for expansion, arrested, tortured and massacred them. Even as the economic and political conditions of the people worsened, thousands of families were lifted from their homes and forced to live in hamlets. In response to repression, the people learned to develop new ways of expressing their protests and organizing to defend their rights. It is in this context that the community theaters in Mindanao were established.

The fishing villages of Davao and Southern Cotabato, the urban communities, parents, out of school youth, the Lumad and the tribal Filipinos have put up their own community theaters, mounting plays that depict how their rights were being violated, how they were being evicted

from their lands, and how they fought for their rights. The people like to tell the story in Lanao del Norte where a group of farmers were being driven out of the land they tilled. To ventilate their problem and to serve as a rallying cry for their unity, the farmers put on a play, in which they dramatized their cause. As a result, they say, they were never driven out of their land. Indeed, wherever organizers work in a given area, theater becomes a significant force. The by-word in Mindanao, they say, is "Magkoryo tayo kung paano mag-akoyo." (Let us do the koryo - play of song and dance - the way we do the akoyo - acupuncture - to mean, our plays will cure the society's ills, the way acupuncture scientifically cures personal ills.) So, theater is used to implement the non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) programs on alternative health care practices, or to serve as medium for appreciating the need for unionism in times of pickets or strikes. A theater group in Midsayap, Cotabato, shows how the Manobos, the Muslims and Christians can together solve their problems. There were theater groups whose involvement became integral to the community so that the townspeople put on plays collectively such as the case in Lanao. In all these cases, theater plays an important part in making people understand their plight in relation to the institutionalized oppression and exploitation by the regime. A favorite example is that of the bombing by the military in one barrio and how it is related to the presence of the military bases.

But as in all other regions, apart from the usual problems of community theaters - lack of expertise, need for further research, skills, refinement in craft, more creative and newer methods, financial difficulty - the more important problem was military harassment and brutality. They recall that in 1983 a community group from Ozamis City was dispersed after a presentation in a rally in which they suffered casualties. There was a case of one community organizer who was "salvaged" after facilitating a theater workshop, or of an actor from a town who portrayed the role of political prisoner after which he became a detainee himself. In Surigao province, after presenting a play in a rally, the members were detained and harassed in a provincial jail. In the face of repression, the people persisted knowing very well that theater was a powerful way of breaking the culture of silence.

PETA has been an active participant in the community theater network in which primarily its role is to train the community cultural workers and organizers of the craft of the theater. As mentioned above, most Brechtian productions in the communities have been a product of theater workshops in which we find duplicated the learning points from PETA's own encounter with Brecht's plays. This process begins with reading Brecht's works, theoretical writings and historical background. The discussions usually underscore how Brecht tried to transform theater into pleasurable instruction for the marginalized people of this time. Then the chosen play of Brecht is studied closely, pointing out the basic contradictions in it in relation to the social forces. In the earlier discussion on a somewhat theoretical plane, notions are invariably developed about Brecht's theater - alienation is usually conceived as indeed alienating - that cause so much wonder for the participants. Understanding Brecht, however, becomes possible only when actual

rehearsals and discussions begin, which is also the time for correcting wrong notions about Brecht's theater. In this process, Brecht's theater is indeed transformed into the Brechtian.

Let's take the case of a version of Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* presented in Samal, a small island off Davao in Mindanao in 1985. There were two reasons for adapting this particular play in the context of Mindanao's specific problems. In terms of artistic form, it offers new methods which the community theater group could get exposed to; in terms of content, it speaks of the very problem which is most basic to Mindanao - land. As theater art, the exposure to this theater would foreground the background against which theater itself is performed. The people would be theaterizing their very lives.

So, the production itself would have to be contextualized in terms of the Mindanao problem, which is also to say, would have to textualize the context of the Mindanao situation. It would also have to harness the range of indigenous forms found in the region. Indigenization would have to be reflected in the staging, in the choice of costumes, music, movements, symbols, directing.

For music, the Mindanawon music was utilized through the use of the *kulintang*, *agong*, *gabakan*, as the main orchestra. For the songs, three melodies familiar to the Mindanawon tunes played throughout. In terms of costumes, the *malong's* possibilities were further explored in communicating the different classes to which the characters in the play belong. To illustrate, the servants wrapped it around the body in such a way that they would have a receptacle for goods or fowls; the royalty, on the other hand, used a different color and propped up her *malong* in such a way that it indicated that her hands were free. The servants wore the *kantiw*. For acting, the characters were placed in their social context: the royalty, the soldiers, the servants, the scheming governors, the peasants, the laborers, were viewed against the hierarchy in society. This would have to be translated in the *gestus*: How would the royalty carry herself given her status? The *sultana* would always be swirling her hands up in the air. The scheming governors would always be moving their eyes around, attentive to the latest intrigues in the court. The soldiers would always be rigid in movement but would break down before a courting scene. The servants would always look down at the feet of the *sultana* or the royalty, instead of looking at her straight in the eye. The peasants would carry the silhouette of those who have been burdened by years of working in the fields. Then, in the rehearsals, the actors were made to react to one another: How would the soldiers say "good morning" to each other? How would the soldier say "good morning" to the servant whom he loves? How would the soldiers say "good morning" to the commanding officer? How would the scheming governor say "good morning" to the king? How would the king and queen say "good morning" to each other? The characters now would have to be situated in the dramatic narrative, but for this the dramatic situation would take another context - that of Mindanao. What parallels could be found in these dramatic situations? Perhaps, the entourage of the king and queen going out into the fields greeting the people could be perceived as an "indignation rally" against

the first couple - then President Marcos and wife, Imelda - visiting Mindanao. For the scene in which Grusha is being sought in the Northern mountains by the soldiers, the military checkpoints which were all over Mindanao became the source of visualization. For the scenes in which Grusha asks for milk and is turned away and told to get milk from the soldiers, the motivation was instinctively clear: it was to be the many cases of hamletting in which the military took liberties with everything they found inside the homes of those who had been forcibly transplanted in other places during military operations.

It is interesting to note that the cast consisted of people from the different sectors of the area. They were beginning actors - as many actors are in the Philippines - who came from the ranks of the urban poor, out of school youth, professionals and cultural workers and organizers. The scheming prince was played by a high school alliance organizer in Mindanao; as such, he had clear ideas of traditional politicians who would do a lot of maneuvering to get favors and position. The visualization and model for the king and queen were undoubtedly the then President and the First Lady. The soldiers' model were the CHDF, especially for the ironshirts; in this regard, what came out were CHDF who wore bullets for their earrings and tattoos all over their bodies and who were most of the time drunk. In one of the scenes in which the cast was supposed to be carrying the bloody head of the king, they had the image of the Mañero brothers, notorious criminals in Mindanao who had figured in the headlines, who were used by the military to frighten away the people. The urban poor came from a highly militarized area in Agdao who had worse experiences of zoning twice a week by the military - there, she would go back to their abandoned house only to find out that the soldiers had taken away their food and other belongings. She was the one who played the role of a servant woman who refused to give milk to Grusha not because she was selfish, but because she was poor, like Grusha. One could only imagine what her line meant when she told Grusha to go get the milk from the soldiers. The person who played the cousin of the prince was an out of school youth, with roots among the lumpen; apparently, he did project the look and rhythm of the part. Azdac was played by the head of the Kulturang Atin Foundation who had no formal training in acting just like most community theater workers; but he was very gifted with rhythm, enunciation, very politicized and a high-caliber cultural organizer; perhaps because of his native talent as an actor and his high level of political awareness, he was able to deliver Azdac's arguments so clearly. For the overall motivation, the cast relied on personal and shared experiences even as the play itself holds a special significance to their collective life. For the movements, the production borrowed from the dances of the tribal Filipinos in Mindanao as in the T'boli dance, the Tausog dance, the *pangalay* (bamboo dance imitating the balancing act of a boat with bamboo safety poles on both sides). The *pangalay* became the focal movement as Grusha crosses the bridge; she was dancing the scene, which proved to be most suspenseful to the audience. The baptism scene in which the baby's clothes are changed into peasant rags, the *malong* was transformed into a streaming river.

Samal is about 45 minutes drive from Davao City center and an hour-long ferry boat ride to the island. It is a frontier town where inhabitants live on fishing and farming; only a few families own most of the island. Culturally, the only exposure are short films or plays produced by the Population Commission. There are no newspapers or television, only radio. It is geographically isolated, the ferry boat makes only two trips a day to and from Davao City, and the only form of entertainment apart from the radio is basketball. When the play was produced, the only other "cultural" fare the inhabitants were expecting was a Gay Beauty Contest being sponsored by the local military, the CHDF.

The performance site was a space that plays many roles for the people: it is a town hall, a basketball court, a cockpit, and everything else where people could gather. The whole community went to see the play. Needless to say, the main social contradiction in a place like Samal, as in most other regions of the country, is the landlord-tenant relationship; on top of that, it is a militarized area where around the island's borders military boats constantly patrol the whole island.

During the performance, among the members of the audience seated on the first row were several CHDF soldiers armed with their M-16s, so that in some parts of the play, there were uncomfortable giggles from the rest of the audience as they recognized the scenes being played before their very eyes. Everybody laughed at the exchange of arguments, especially the quips of Azdac, who turned out to be the most loved character by the audience. The adults among the audience appreciated the play very much, although the kids particularly enjoyed the pageantry, the colors, the action scenes. They suggested a children's version so the kids would fully understand the significance of the play to their lives; they gave comments regarding the authenticity of the *sultana's* costume. The high point for the audience in which they more than wildly applauded was the scene in which Azdac decides finally to give the child to Grusha. And just as the play started with the *agong* playing, it ended with it, too; finally, the community was asked to join the cast in the dancing to celebrate Grusha's getting the child.

The overriding concern in mounting the play was how the people could be empowered to collectively work in producing their own plays so that theater could become their medium for expressing their lives, their problems and aspirations. On this basis, it could be said that the production of Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* was a success. From there, the people of Samal expressed their desire to put up their own community theater that would in time be part of the workshop movement in which they could organize themselves to enable them to articulate in theater their problems and their dreams. In the context of repression, the Samal production had built another crack in the crumbling dictatorship and provided hope for building a better society for the future.

In the Philippines, the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* becomes not only a reorientation of the mind and the heart, much less of theatrical technique. It is at once a revival of the collective political energy which had long been stifled and a redirection of the citizens' will towards a real

power of the people. For Brechtian theater in the Philippines, actors need not play a role; they only need to act out their very lives. In the late 1970s, it helped keep the fire of resistance burning in the city and in the countryside. In the first half of the 1980s, just when the rage of the dictatorship became most intense as it tottered to its fall, Brechtian theater along with the community-based theater groups helped multiply the ranks of the concerned citizenry engaged in a unified action for national determination and survival. As the ranks swelled, so did the need for Brechtian theater become more compelling.

In the Philippines therefore, one can never draw the lines of demarcation between the struggle for liberation and Brecht's theater. To do so is to overlook the unique characteristics and specific power and dynamics of Brechtian theater in the Philippines and its capacity to transform lives once its essence is imbibed by the people. As such, in the Philippines, people's struggle and Brecht's theater converge into one political arena. Indeed, in the course of the struggle for hegemony in the Philippines, Brechtian theater has not only helped make the people understand their plight in a new critical light; it has also enabled them to take concrete action to be able to intervene in the shaping of their national destiny. That struggle did not end with the ouster of the dictator, so Brechtian theater in the Philippines is there to stay.

The Philippine experience has shown for the people that where those lines of demarcation between theater and the struggle shade off into each other, Brechtian theater becomes most cogent even as the liberation struggle itself becomes most potent. Together, Brechtian theater and the people's struggle have worked to help the Filipinos to look into their future with even greater determination and hope while in the past, many of them only looked painfully at their plight.

When Philippine society finally undergoes a genuine social transformation, along with the rest of the Third World, Brechtian theater shall have become an integral part of the anticipated change of paradigm.

**Maria Luisa F. Torres. "Brecht und die Philippinen:
Das Theater verkündet die Freiheit."**

Die politische Situation auf den Philippinen und das wache politische Bewußtsein der Bevölkerung bilden eine optimale Vorbedingung zur Rezeption des brechtschen Theaters. Das soziale, politische und kulturelle System des Inselstaates ist immer noch geprägt von dem Erbe, das die Kolonialmächte Spanien und USA nach der Unabhängigkeit hinterlassen haben. Die wirtschaftliche und politische Abhängigkeit von Nordamerika zeigte sich besonders nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg in der Absättigung des kulturellen Marktes durch Produktionen aus den USA, was sich besonders im verwestlichten Ideologie- und Wertesystem der Marcos-Diktatur ausdrücken sollte. Die Reaktivierung der traditionellen, ursprünglichen Theaterkultur wurde so zum Teil des Kampfes um politische Liberalisierung und kulturelle Unabhängigkeit, der sich im radikalen Aktivismus der 60er Jahre besonders zuspitzte.

Die Gegenkultur orientierte sich am traditionellen Volkstheater, sowie der politischen Ausrichtung des chinesischen Theaters der Kulturrevolution, und in diese Atmosphäre wurden die ersten Brecht-Stücke produziert unter der Federführung der PETA, der Philippine Educational Theatre Association: *Mutter Courage* (1968) und *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* (1970). Brechts V-Effekte erschienen eher befremdlich und wurden lediglich als "groteske Stilelemente" mißverstanden, doch erwies sich sein Theater nützlich im Feldzug gegen elitäres Denken und für eine Propagierung des Volkstheaters. In verschiedenen Provinzen wurden *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* und *Leben des Galilei* im Lokalkolorit aufgeführt - doch stets geschickt in Bezug auf das seinerzeit herrschende Kriegsrecht und den Machtapparat der Marcos-Diktatur gesetzt. Trotz strengster Zensurmaßnahmen konnte das Theater zum Forum für an anderer Stelle wegzensierte Information und politische Kommunikation werden.

Die PETA benutzte Brecht-Stücke darüberhinaus gewissermaßen als "Lehrstücke" in neuen Theaterworkshops, die gleichzeitig zum Ort politischer Bildung werden konnten. Die Beschäftigung mit Brecht machte es möglich, die Rolle und Effizienz politischen Theaters in den Philippinen klarer zu definieren, indem das dialektische Verhältnis zwischen den Mitteln des Theaters und der dargestellten Wirklichkeit in den Kontext der politischen Situation gesetzt wurde.

**Maria Luisa F. Torres. "Brecht et les Philippines:
prévisions théâtrales de la liberté."**

Le théâtre brechtien a trouvé aux Philippines un terrain propice à son développement, grâce aux aspirations nationalistes et démocratiques du peuple philippin. La colonisation espagnole et la présence américaine ont produit la culture et le théâtre philippins. Au cours des années soixante, on voit naître la distinction entre un théâtre légitime qui ne met en scène que des classiques occidentaux, et un théâtre populaire qui survit dans les communautés rurales et qui reprend les

formas tradicionales del teatro filipino (la *komedya*, la *sarsuwela* por ejemplo). Este teatro popular se abre en una cierta medida a la emancipación nacional y a la lucha contra la hegemonía. Los nacionalistas lo ensayaron, para comprender su cultura, de revivir las formas tradicionales y de utilizar el teatro moderno para difundir sus ideas. Esto lo hizo posible la recepción de Brecht. A la fin de los años sesenta, el *Repertory Philippines* (1968) y la *Philippine Educational Theater Association* (1970 - PETA) pusieron a Brecht en escena por primera vez. Brecht es entonces percibido como demasiado chocante en el contexto de un teatro de vanguardia (dominado por la propaganda). Durante los años sesenta-dieci, un nuevo teatro político que se inspira de Brecht y de Boal, se desarrolla por la instauración de la ley marcial. El teatro de Brecht ofrece posibilidades diferentes del teatro oficial en lo que permite una toma de conciencia colectiva no solamente gracias a sus principios dramaturgicos, sino también gracias al saber dialectico que lo anima. El aporte del teatro tradicional viene sobre todo de la utilización del poema-drama, de materiales populares, del coro, del mimo y de la estilización de los movimientos. Teatro brechtiano y teatro tradicional se unen en su insistencia sobre el proceso histórico en el que el drama debe desarrollarse. Las puestas en escena de Brecht generalmente como origen de un seminario organizado por la PETA que participa activamente en la red de teatros populares y comunitarios. El *Verfremdungseffekt* brechtiano produce una revivificación de la energía colectiva en la acción política.

**Maria Luisa F. Torres. "Brecht y las Filipinas:
Anticipando la libertad en el teatro."**

El teatro de Brecht encontró en las Filipinas un terreno propicio a su desarrollo respecto a la lucha del pueblo filipino por sus aspiraciones nacionalistas y democráticas. La dominación colonial española de muchos siglos y la presencia americana desde hace más de 50 años han producido la cultura filipina y su teatro, repitiendo a través de una operación compleja de mistificación una estructura feudal y un sistema colonial.

Durante la colonización española, las formas del teatro popular eran predominantemente el *sinakulo* (Pasión de Cristo), la *Komedya* (idealización de la sociedad de los conquistadores), el *tibag* y el *panunuluyan* (dramas religiosos).

A partir de los años 60, los teatros oficiales sólo producen las obras de occidente (en general adaptaciones de las obras de Broadway y de los clásicos occidentales). El teatro popular sólo sobrevive en las comunidades rurales y utiliza las formas tradicionales. Brecht era considerado un clásico del teatro elitista en la dicotomía existente entre teatro popular y teatro oficial.

A partir de 1972 (instalación de la ley marcial y de la dictadura apoyada por los Estados Unidos), se ha desarrollado un teatro político inspirado por Brecht y Boal a pesar de las nuevas condiciones de la

censura. Este teatro representa un esfuerzo de demistificación y de toma de conciencia colectiva.

La influencia de Brecht en la Asociación del Teatro Educativo Filipino (PETA) se evidencia sobretodo por la manera de cuestionar los textos dramáticos. El *Verfremdungseffekt* produce una revalorización de la energía colectiva en la acción política, sobre todo reorientando la voluntad individual de los ciudadanos hacia el verdadero poder del pueblo. La lucha por la liberación y el teatro de Brecht son inseparables en las Filipinas.

First World Industry and Third World Workers - The Struggle For a Workers' Theater in South Africa

Astrid von Kotze

H.I.E. Dhlomo, one of the first African poets to write in English, lamented the predicament of the "People's Poet", who as a committed artist reaches out to the masses, but remains unheard:

"Must I ever remain unheard
attempting
in vain to get
Through mighty grind of printed
word - a hearing?"¹

Like other poets of the people he yet failed to transform his scripted signs into sound for a "hearing" by the people. Underlying his predicament, however, was an attitude, shared by so many well-meaning artists and writers, who like him wish to lend a voice to the "masses mute" so that they might "raise their storms" in opposition to their exploiters. This image of a serenely suffering, enslaved but mute people in need of outside agencies to speak up for them politically and culturally, reflects a commonplace vision criticized sharply by cultural activists in Natal's labor movement. In an interview in the South African Labour Bulletin they reject those "black creators who have a patronizing attitude towards us: a lot of people with a tickets worth of education . . . They speak a language we don't understand. Our task is to take our rich or poor heritage and make it satisfy working people, their families and other suffering people in South Africa".²

Unlike Dhlomo the people's poets who have emerged from the furnaces and factories of Natal are both of the people and are *heard*, and the class of people that has sprouted them is no less mute. "There are hundreds performing ... in any place where people and workers meet".³

In this paper I would like to trace how, particularly over the last three years, theater has emerged as a force to be reckoned with in labour organizations. My concentration on the province of Natal in this outline is for two reasons. Firstly, as a participant observer I know it best and, secondly, as A. Sitas has conclusively shown, cultural action as an organized movement is at this stage unique to Natal.⁴

The first focus will be on the "Durban Cultural Local", a grouping composed of workers and cultural activists who are the main "movers" behind the thrust of recent creations. Secondly, before describing the plays themselves, I will look at some of the problems and difficulties the

struggle for a workers' theater involves. Finally, a cursory assessment of the essential similarities of all the theatrical products will lead to a renewed look at the debate on the definition of "popular" culture and working-class theater.

To give even a potted history of the last three years would go far beyond the limited confines of this paper. In a previous article on worker theater in South Africa, I hinted at the formation of a cultural grouping in Natal, arising out of the experiences of *The Dunlop Play* in 1983.⁵

A. Sitas has outlined how important *The Dunlop Play* was and how it became the root of an enormous cultural tree within the "moving black forest of Africa" - to borrow an image from one of the praise poems - "since it created a space within the labor movement for cultural activity over and above union struggles". In addition, as a result of many of the participants becoming shop-stewards and worker leaders, "a strong affinity between grassroot leaders and cultural activists ensured the continuity of this movement; thirdly, cultural work spread horizontally to other factories in Durban and beyond through "imitation-effects": other workers, having seen *The Dunlop Play*, started organizing their own plays and cultural events independently.⁶

After the performance of *The Dunlop Play*, some participants, who included a group of committed activists who had worked with them, were joined by workers from other factories and unions, and they began to meet regularly in the union offices. In early 1984, workshops started around a play about a migrant worker, who confronts the typical problems of accommodation and unemployment and the dissolution of this family as a result of migration. *Why Lord?* was performed to Dunlop strikers and resulted in a renewed surge of membership to what was now becoming the "Durban Cultural Local" (DCL).

Amongst them was Mi S'dumo Hlatshwayo, now one of the leading *izimbongi* (praise-poets) in the movement. He describes how, after watching his comrade A.T. Qabula perform one of his poems, he was inspired with confidence to create and present his own work: *The Black Mamba Rises*.

What is important to note, is that the one overriding element all participants have in common is their suffering as exploited labor and their union membership which arises out of the recognition of the necessity for unity: "We were there, everyday of our lives - in front of our machines, tools and implements; for years we were struggling to survive, to feed the children, earning a wage through our sweat. We realized that we needed each other if we were to survive. We realized that we needed each other if we were to improve our lot. We united. We unionized each other. We said: together we can change the situation". The "divide and rule" policy of the state had succeeded in separating the workers on the basis of "tribal" origins, but as workers they saw their communality. "We discovered that our fate as workers and our needs as human beings bound us together, but language, cultural chauvinism and divisions tore us apart. ... We agreed that our union is not an office, it was a movement of workers, a black mamba rising in anger disturbed by the exploiter from its ancient old sleep".⁷

Together this grouping began to make the plays described below. Most of the work was collective, based on workshop techniques, fed by the communal experience and focussed on a common goal. Shop-steward councils and union organizers/leaders began to take note and placed culture firmly on to the agendas of both mass-gatherings and smaller meetings. By now, there are hardly any meetings without praise poets pacing up and down in between discussion points, playlets being performed during tea-breaks and/or as "relief" between strenuous debates. Supply and demand of cultural items are fairly evenly weighed up. The Metal and Allied Workers Union requests items for their Annual General Meetings, the culture group offers existing work or is spurred into action to produce "special" new ones.

Responding to theoretical debates on "popular culture", realizing the need to formulate how cultural work fits into and can strengthen the workers' movement and with a view to consolidating cultural organization on the national level, in July 1985 the DCL prepared a document which was to be presented at the cultural day in Soweto, organized by the Federation of South Africa Trade Unions. In this address the importance of cultural work alongside other forms of struggle is asserted for three reasons:

1. Because, even if we are culturally deprived as workers, we demand of ourselves the commitment to build a better world.
2. Because we cannot abdicate, hand over the responsibility of this world to others. There are too many intellectuals, teachers, politicians and bosses ever ready to "civilize" us and reap all the harvest for themselves.
3. Because we have been culturally exploited time and time again: we have been singing, parading, boxing, acting and writing within a system we did not control. So far, black workers have been feeding all their creativity into a culture machine to make profits for others. ... This makes us say that it is time to begin controlling our creativity: we must create space in our struggle - through our own songs, our own slogans, our own poems, our own artwork, our own plays and dances. At the same time, in our struggle we must also fight against the cultural profit machines.⁸

There is no space for "cultural profit machines" in the DCL - assuming control over both creative processes and production meant that the members, in consultation with their union leaders, shop-steward councils and the workers on the shop floor level decide when and where production and presentation of work takes place, and they make recommendations about which plays should be performed at specific occasions. Any financial profits generated out of voluntary contributions from the audience are filtered directly back into the coffers of the DCL. To avoid interference from publishers it was decided to publish a

collection of poems independently. The first book has just been launched.⁹

Towards the end of 1985 when it became clear that the union office space was no longer sufficient to cope with the growing number of participants and projects, a space in a sub-divided factory floor housing unions and education organizations was procured. This is the venue used largely now for both workshopping/rehearsing and producing/presenting. Furthermore, one of the Dunlop workers left his job and found employment as a cultural organizer of the center. It is his responsibility to co-ordinate, put in touch, respond to requests and above all, to liaise with the shop-steward councils and the shop floor. *De facto*, however, a lot of his time is taken up with dealing with requests for less "noise": how do you conduct a singing/musical rehearsal, how do you do warm-up exercises if on the other side of the half-high walls comrades are trying to conduct a meeting? We are busy developing excellent mimes.

Despite all the enthusiasm and energy and the belief in the importance of their work, there are times when the obstacles, difficulties and problems facing creative workers seem insurmountable. "First world jobs" and "third world workers" - this contradiction does not only describe the content of the plays but also the conditions of production and presentation. Before embarking on a description of the type of plays created to-date, I would like to focus briefly on some of the difficulties facing this "struggle for a workers' theater".

To describe in any detail the confrontations, acts of rebellion, sabotage, boycotts, street battles and labour disputes would be contravening the current state of emergency, now in its sixth month. But, as Brecht stated: "The great working masses of the people are on the move. The activity and brutality of their enemies prove it".¹⁰ The newspapers announce "another two cell deaths" of detainees - there are an estimated 23,000 people in detention and some have the privilege of being "educated" by soldiers to prepare them for "re-integration into society". Students are writing their final examinations under police guard; townships are surrounded by fencing, spotlights focus on any movements during the night; troops are patrolling the streets; the number of people constantly on the move, hiding for fear of vigilantes cannot even be speculated about. "Necklacing" - the practice whereby a tyre is placed over the victim's head, is doused with petrol and lit, ensuring a painful death - intimidates dissenters. In the Newspaper President Botha smiles for the camera, he is holding a sjambok and whip, given to him as a gift.

Life in the townships has never been poorer, more violent and more oppressive. Amongst the great masses of unemployed, youths who are boycotting school, misfits and Kaspar Hausers, the worker moves between work in town and an overcrowded home: "In the bus-queues, in the train stations during those endless hours of commuting we long for rest, for a home. But for most of us there is no home. We arrive at our shack, our hostel, our compound to live through new worries".¹¹ The South African cities are designed in such a way, that the black townships are well out of sight of white urban dwellers. Transport is available on the basis of getting workers to work and back out of the

area. Friday (payday) nights are the worst risk-times for travelling, but outside the peak hours commuting is a complicated, costly and time-consuming affair. Cultural work at night and over weekends, therefore, involves giving people lifts home because, especially for women, it is not safe to board public buses, trains or even taxis. Transport has been singled out as the single most problematic factor in doing cultural work, and it has been the main reason why it is so difficult to enlist women to participate more actively.

"It is hard to sing, to write and perform if you are a worker: everyday, in a factory or down a mine, in the field or out at sea we get the last drop of energy sucked out of our bodies. We finish work and begin to long for the bottle that will make us sometimes sing disgraceful songs, undignified songs".¹² A lot of the core group members of the Durban Cultural Local work on shift systems around the clock, which usually do not coincide. While a shift should not exceed eight hours, over-time is often unannounced and compulsory; should someone in a more skilled position fall ill, others have to fill in. One of the main participants ended up working twelve hour shifts over a period of six weeks. The only time the factory stands still is on a Saturday afternoon - this then being the only time the cultural group can meet reliably. Needless to say, this is also the time for most union meetings. In addition, migrant workers try to make arrangements with their comrades so that once a month they can go to see their families in the "homelands" or neighboring "countries". There is no after-hour leisure time for any of them - there are only a few hours in which instead of sleeping to gather strength for the next shift, these workers attend workshops and rehearsals.

If *making* plays demands personal sacrifices to overcome the problems already mentioned, *performing* them is no less difficult. Cultural presentations usually take place during already established meetings - they "slot into" union happenings, where there is a readily available audience (who had to go through the same struggle to be there as the performers). This "audience" has not come specifically to see plays but also to attend the meeting and partake in discussion. The educational process - through culture towards culture - is within a context, and the theatrical offerings have to be designed to fit these occasions, not only in subject matter, but also in scope and form.

In line with the union's decision to observe certain celebrations and commemorations on calendar days which mean a lot to a particular factory or the movement as a whole, various culture groupings in Natal have been preparing plays for such days, one of which was the "party", Dunlop workers decided to give on the anniversary of their strike victory in September 1985. They hired a stadium, invited workers and their families as well as another group organized by the Metal and Allied Workers Union, the dismissed SARMCOL workers, who had just finished making their play *The Long March*. It was a great party. The workers loved their poets but the play got lost in the smoke of oxen on the spit, the fumes of beer and the general cacophony of singing, chanting and chatting. It was yet another occasion, like the Mayday celebration, when performers and audience alike, were disappointed and frustrated.

Bad amplification and the inexperience of the players to deal with so large an audience were amongst the problems - others were the unsuitability of the kind of plays and the manner of presentation worked on so far. One obvious answer will have to be greater stylization and the use of over-size masks, which the DCL is working on now.

To all these problems is added the danger from those forces who feel threatened by the work. Plays are taken seriously - so much so that vigilantes disrupted the performance of *Asinamali*, a (non-worker) play about rent boycotts: they were looking for the author of the play and ended up killing the road manager and burning the props and costumes of the fleeing cast. A.T. Qabula was hunted down - but before he could come to harm he decided to "duck" and go into hiding. He has now been sleeping at various places for six months - his pursuers are still harassing his family for information of his whereabouts. His is not an exceptional case.

And yet, cultural work continues because "(1) it takes a step, a small step towards pushing workers to start controlling their creative power, (2) it creates a better sense of unity amongst workers: poems, songs, plays etc. and the struggle to make them available to our brothers and sisters enriches us. We are not united because of our need and hunger alone, (3) it educates people about our struggle and puts across a true picture of things - our picture".¹³ What cultural workers outline here are not just the reasons for, but also the intentions behind their work.

What do these plays look like and how can one describe them collectively? Firstly I would like to attempt a tentative categorization of the plays created to-date and secondly give a brief description of one in particular, *The Long March*.

One day Mi Hlatshwayo arrived at a weekly meeting with some tightly written pages: *Usuku* ("The Day") and not long after that he came with yet another: *Gallows for Mr. Scariot Mpimpi* (Mpimpi is a "scab", traitor). Alfred Temba Qabula brought the concepts for *Why Lord?, If you don't want to listen, you'll learn when the blood comes* (or loosely translated: once bitten, twice shy) and recently, *You're a failure, Mr. Mpimpi* - not as written scripts but definite story-lines for improvisation in workshops. Matiwane suggested work on a historical play about *Mkumbane*, the shack community in Cato Manor, Durban, the people of which were removed to the new townships outside Durban. *Itshesho* ("The Job") was largely evolved in conversations on a bus-ride from Johannesburg to Durban. There are individuals who are the driving force behind the DCL - writing scripts or more often conceptualizing plays. To attempt a categorization along the lines of individual authorship, however, would be unproductive since, in the final instance, what is expressed is not so much the work of one mind but rather the experience - both in the content and in the actual making - of a collective.

Rather, a division of plays into five groups suggests itself on the basis of the following questions. A. For what occasion was the play made? B. Who are the central figures in the play and in what specific context are they shown? C. What is the major conflict presented?

Group 1: Plays done by workers of specific factories and work places, depicting their participation in class-struggles in the area, e.g. strikes and strike-related issues. The central conflict revolves around workers against management, who refuses to recognize the union at the workplace. *The Spar Play* - done by dismissed workers from a supermarket chain during strike negotiations - was performed largely as a fund-raising effort and to promote support for the boycott of Spar shops and their suppliers. *The Long March* will be discussed in some detail below. The central conflict highlights the heroic attempts of dismissed workers from BTR Sarmcol to mobilize support for their struggle in the entire Natal Midlands area. In fast moving and often very funny scenes, workers show their insights into dealings of multi-national companies and the state support they receive in South Africa.

Group 2: Plays depicting the class-struggle in a fictional way. *Gallows for Mr. Scariot Mpimpi*, *You're a failure*, *Mr. Mpimpi* and *Usuku* all focus on the question of self-advancement as opposed to active commitment to worker-unity on the shop floor. Mr. Mpimpi causes his own downfall by betraying his comrades in assisting management to the detriment of his fellow-workers. His motivation: a middle-class position (very much fostered by the government). *Gallows for Mr. Scariot Mpimpi* was in direct response to a request by the union to make a play about retrenchments; it is a humorous sketch which ends when the scab has dismissed everyone but himself and a renewed demand by the "boss" to solve the non-profit crisis leads to the logical conclusion of him having to retrench himself. *Usuku* is a more serious appeal to workers: the struggle demands personal sacrifice even if the result could be as gruesome as the death of a child - the heroic worker chooses the "movement" rather than submitting to the pressure of his teacher wife, to reveal "the day" to management and thus procure financial assistance. *You're a failure Mr. Mpimpi* depicts the reluctant and scared traitor, who points out leaders amongst the workers but, still, gets fired and is shown humiliatingly hanging up the washing at home, before his girlfriend too chases him out.

Group 3: Plays dealing with the worker in his township community. *Itheshu* ("The Job") and *Qonda's Vigilantes* point out that the struggle is not just fought on the factory floor but also in the community. In *Itheshu* the young man has turned to crime after the state has crushed his only legitimate form of opposition within political and worker organizations. He becomes a social misfit due to lack of political structures and the indictment at the end is less of him than the state which creates these "tsotsis" who lose all human dignity and respect for life: "case postponed". *Qonda's Vigilantes*, the most recent play, arose out of the conflicts between community and vigilantes and their effect on the workers. It shows how workers are intimidated and the resulting instability of worker-unity. The play offers no solution (as none has been found in reality), but the persuasion of one vigilante to come over to the community side points in the direction the creators would like to see realized. When this play was presented to 1,000 striking dairy workers at the workplace, tensions were high. The appeal to those vigilantes among the worker audience to cease their intimidation was well understood.

Group 4: Plays about migration. *Why Lord?* and *Once Bitten, Twice Shy* present the specific problems of migrant workers, whose plight is summarized in a song: "I work over there, my children live over there and I am here". The contradiction of urbanization on the one hand, traditional values and morals on the other are experienced painfully by the central characters: a worker, his wife and family, parents and their daughter who runs away from unemployment at home to seek work in town. Both plays are in the tradition of "morality" plays but with a distinct working-class flavor.

Group 5: Historical plays. The making and content of *The Dunlop Play* was described in detail elsewhere.¹⁴ *Mkumbane*, a play about the shack community of Cato Manor, Durban, the people of which were removed in the sixties, destroying a whole infrastructure of economic and cultural activities, is still being rehearsed at present. Similarly, the DCL has just embarked on a new project involving masks, depicting the history of the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

What do these plays have in common? What are their particularities to make them examples of "popular" working-class culture? Before attempting a cursory answer, let me sketch the creation, development and performance history of one play in particular: *The Long March*. When in May 1985 1,200 workers of BTR Sarmcol were fired over the issue of union recognition, an entire community was hit. This community of Mpopomeni near Howick (north west of Pietermaritzburg) was faced with certain starvation unless it acted, because it was economically dependant on Sarmcol, the main employer in the area. L. Zondi, a leading activist since the 1950s, a MAWU shop-steward in the factory and an oral poet, had conceived a play about the growth of Sarmcol, forcing the people into and then causing the destruction of labour tenancy in the Howick area. This play was aimed at the young workers, intending to educate them about the history of their area and factory. When the strike and dismissals hit, it was suggested that a play about that and the current struggle could popularize the plight of the Mpopomeni workers and their community. In a union-worker meeting ten men were chosen to be the "actors" - the criteria for the choice being their recognized ability to "story-tell" rather than any (in any case non-existent) special training or ability.

At this stage a link with the cultural activists in Durban was established, and they organized (and footed the bill for) a one-week stay in a church retreat outside Durban, where workshops could take place uninterruptedly. The stay was an experience in itself: participants wanted their photographs taken sitting down and being served meals at tables, "otherwise they will never believe us at home". Little did they know how their play would explode into the most dynamic worker-creation so far. After that week they emerged to face their community and present the fruits of their labour. They were terrified - but well-received on the whole. The audience suggested alterations, deletions, additions - and another three days of workshop-rehearsals ensued, during which a scene on the newly-created T-shirt co-op by other Sarmcol workers was incorporated, another theatrically successful but "not realistic" portrayal of the mayor's involvement deleted, and songs

polished up. The second performance was the abortive one at the Dunlop "party", mentioned above. The final acceptance - and players were on their way, performing and publishing their story and plight all over the country.

A run in Johannesburg confronted them with the organizational difficulties facing union organizers when advocating cultural meetings - the hope to fund-raise with the play was not met with as much success as planned, but publicity was high. The list of obstacles placed in their path is endless but revealing in terms of the South African township situation at present. In Soweto the group's combi, containing all their costumes and props was "hijacked" at knife point - the driver and inhabitants could flee in time, their combi went up in flames. A second time their newly borrowed combi was "confiscated" - this time, as it transpired, by "comrades", a radical youth movement which has taken control of the townships and which is emerging all over the country. The people's court revealed their true identity and after apologies and pledges of support, the combi was returned, the performers freed and the "accoster" whipped. Performances in the township of Alexander, Johannesburg, had to be cancelled due to "civil war" between the community, vigilantes and the state.

They returned home and had a season in various community centers, church-halls and hostels in Natal - by now celebrated and hailed for a highly polished performance which explodes with energy. Another achievement is the language: while the play was originally predominantly in Zulu, it is now played in English as well, depending on the audience's language. Before embarking on a run of the Cape, the group set up their own cultural local in Mpopomeni. They helped to found a choir, and a dance troupe, have begun work on a new play and are assisting Clover Dairy workers with making a theatrical story of their strike.

The overriding element all the plays have in common is the identity of creators and audience and their identification as members of the working-class and its struggles for liberation. The central figures can be grouped into two: on the one hand the exploited, who represent the victims of capitalism, on the other, the exploiters and their helpers, the "sliding" figures straddling the up-and coming middle-class, who represent the system. The worker emerges as a figure who despite obstacles and severe difficulties to survive the daily grind, is constantly fighting to retain and regain his/her dignity. His/her frame of reference is the self-awareness of and pride in being a worker whose sweat helped to build this country. Whether shoved around by problems of accommodation as a black, separation from the family as a migrant (*Why Lord?/Once Bitten*) or threatened by death through sickness or violence (*Usuku/Qonda's Vigilantes*), or threatened by unemployment and its consequences (*Long March/ Dunlop/ Spar/ Gallows/Failure*), this dignity must be saved for the sake of individual humanity and collective goals. All the plays emphasize that workers together are strong if unified against artificially created barriers of language and race and powerful in their vision of who represents their exploitation and who benefits from their oppression and disunity. The plays announce that in a unified movement they can succeed in controlling their history and

changing society. They also show that the *izimpimpi* (sell-outs) might advance themselves temporarily in their blind and misguided alliances, but in the long run they will be squashed and outlawed. The girl in *Once Bitten*, the young man in *Itheshu* are social misfits, cast-offs from the movement; the vigilantes and *izimpimpi* have turned against progressive trends.

Is there no space for the middle-class? They are always shown as "bad" and corrupt, little or no better than the exploiters they assist. The plays work with types as an abbreviatory device, but they do not simplify: it is stated clearly, that as long as the focus is against the oppressors - economic, political and cultural, the "black moving forest of Africa" can be a home for anyone who does not sabotage the advancement of the real struggle: that against capitalism.

The emerging workers' theater in South Africa is proving to be a powerful weapon in the overall opposition movement against Apartheid. Cultural workers are conquering the problems and constraints imposed by the regime and are also assisting in overcoming the hurdle of virtual cultural imperialism so prevalent in the education systems and "palaces of culture".

I believe the definition of "popular culture" must be looked for in the products such as those of the DCL. The continuation of present debates will have to focus more intently on the question of form - not tackled sufficiently in this paper, nor in the cultural work itself. "Our conception of 'popular' refers to the people who are not only fully involved in the process of development but are actually taking it over, forcing it, deciding it. We have in mind a people that is making history and altering the world itself" wrote Brecht in 1938. The members of the Durban Cultural Local are "these people". They have done and are busy doing what Brecht advocated: "taking over their own forms of expression and enriching them / adopting and consolidating their standpoint / representing the most progressive section of the people in such a way that it can take over the leadership".¹⁵

Why tease the mamba in its
Century old sleep?
The writing is on the wall,
No stone shall stand on top
Of the other till eternity,
Tell them - the borrowed
Must be given back
Tell them - the chained
Must be chained no more
Tell them - these are the
Dictates of the black mamba,
The mamba that knows no
Colour,
Tell them - these are the
Workers' demands,
By virtue of their birthright ¹⁶

NOTES

1. Visser, N. and Couzens, T. (eds), *H.I.E. Dhlomo: Collected Works*. Johannesburg, 1985, p. 365.
2. Interview "Culture and the Workers' Struggle", *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 10, No.8, July/August 1985, p. 72.
3. Ibid., p. 73.
4. Sitas, A. "Culture and Working Life: Ethnicity and Class in Natal's Labour Movement", Paper delivered at the Centre for Adult Education, University of the Western Cape 1986, Workshop on Education and Community Organization.
5. von Kotze, A. "Workers' Plays in South Africa". *Communications*, Vol. XV, No.1, November 1985, p. 3-17.
6. Sitas, A., op cit.
7. Workers' Cultural Local, Durban, "Talk for FOSTAU Education Workshop" in Sitas, A. (ed.) *Black Mamba Rises. South African Worker Poets in Struggle*. Durban: Worker Resistance and Culture Publications, 1987, p. 67.
8. Ibid., p. 69.
9. *Black Mamba Rises*, op cit.
10. Brecht, B., "The Popular and the Realistic" in Craig, D. (ed.) *Marxists on Literature*. Harmondsworth, 1975, p. 423.
11. Workers' Cultural Local, Durban, op cit., p. 68.
12. Ibid., p. 68.
13. Interview, Culture and the Workers' Struggle, op cit., p. 73.
14. von Kotze, A. op cit.
15. Brecht, B. op cit., p. 423.
16. *Black Mamba Rises*, op cit., p. 33.

Astrid von Kotze. "Proletariat der dritten Welt für hochindustrielle Arbeit - Der Kampf um ein Arbeitertheater in Südafrika."

In Südafrikas Natal hat sich das Theater zu einem der wichtigsten Bestandteile der Arbeiterbewegung entwickelt. Die alltäglichen politischen Aktivitäten der Gewerkschaften werden aufgelockert und gleichzeitig erweitert durch die kulturellen Aktivitäten unter Federführung der gewerkschaftlich organisierten Arbeiter. Am Beispiel einer Gruppe von Arbeitern der Dunlop-Fabrik in Durban, die sich 1983 nach einer erfolgreichen Inszenierung (*The Dunlop Play*) zum *Durban Cultural Locale* (DCL) zusammengeschlossen hat, berichtet Astrid von Kotze über Konzepte, Aktivitäten und Schwierigkeiten der Theaterkultur, die sich im Anschluss an dieses Ereignis herausgebildet hat.

Das Theater wird ein integraler Bestandteil der Lebens- und Arbeitswelt der schwarzen Arbeiter und ihrer gewerkschaftlichen Tätigkeit, die Fabrik wird gleichzeitig zum Spielraum. Das Theater hat sich neben der allgemeinen politischen Bewußtseinsbildung besonders um deren kulturelle und ethnische Einigung verdient gemacht und somit eine Stärkung der Gewerkschaft erreicht. Daneben liegt eine wichtige operative Funktion in der Vergewisserung und Konkretisierung der eigenen kulturellen Identität, in der Emanzipation von intellektueller und politischer Bevormundung jeglicher couleur. Die durch das System der Apartheid hervorgerufenen miserablen Lebensumstände und Arbeitsbedingungen, die Gewalt in den Townships, der staatlich aufgetroffene Lebensrhythmus stellen eine große Belastung für jede außerplanmäßige Tätigkeit dar, doch bestimmen gerade diese Schwierigkeiten die einzigartige Form und Richtung der künstlerischen Aktivitäten. Die Stücke sind Kollektivproduktionen, die sich in verschiedenen Schwerpunkten mit den spezifischen Problemen der Gemeinschaft beschäftigen: den sozialen Problemen der Wanderarbeit, mit den ethnischen und sozialen Spannungen in den Townships, mit Faustrecht, Anpassung, Verrat, sie üben besonders häufig Kritik am Aufsteigertum der neuen schwarzen Mittelklasse und versuchen in historischen Stücken die Erinnerung an bedeutsame Arbeitskämpfe früherer Jahre wachzuhalten. Das Streben nach Selbstbewußtsein und Einheit ist die verbindungsstiftende Thematik all dieser unter Ehrgeiz und Entbehrungen entstehenden Zeugnisse der Arbeitskämpfe eines extrem entrechteten und fremdbestimmten Proletariats in dieser technisch hochentwickelten weißen Gesellschaft.

Astrid von Kotze. "L'industrie du premier monde et les ouvriers du tiers monde - la lutte pour un théâtre des ouvriers en Afrique du sud."

A travers une analyse historiographique de la production théâtrale du "Durban Cultural Local" (Province de Natal), l'auteur tente une définition de la culture populaire et se rapproche de la définition que donne Brecht en 1938 de la culture populaire et des pratiques

esthétiques de la partie la plus progressive du peuple. En effet, les créations théâtrales, la création de *The Dunlop Play* jusqu'à la mise en scène plus récente de *The Long March* (1985), par le DCL sont intimement liées aux mouvements syndicaux et aux revendications ouvrières. Formellement et thématiquement, un classement en cinq catégories est tenté: les pièces jouées par les ouvriers qui représentent leur participation à la lutte des classes (*The Spar Play*); celles qui se rapportent à la lutte des classes de manière fictive (*Gallows for Mr. Scariot Mpimpi*); pièces sur la condition de l'ouvrier dans sa communauté de banlieue (*Ithusta*); celles qui parlent de la migration forcée (*Why Lord?*), et le théâtre à teneur historique (*The Dunlop Play*). Ces pièces de théâtre ont ceci en commun, qu'elles sont l'expression culturelle de la classe ouvrière, qui fournit leurs acteurs-créateurs et leur public. Par ailleurs, elles décrivent toutes l'effort des opprimés de constituer une communauté au delà des barrières sociales et raciales. Cette culture populaire s'avère être un outil puissant pour la revendication sociale ainsi que pour l'opposition globale à l'*apartheid*. La discussion reste extrêmement externe et il faudrait étudier les formes auxquelles ce théâtre donne lieu.

Astrid von Kotze. "Industria de primer mundo y trabajadores de tercero: la lucha por un teatro de trabajadores en el Africa del Sur."

Este análisis histórico de la producción teatral del *Durban Cultural Local* (Provincia de Natal, 'Africa del Sur) intenta definir la cultura popular a través de un paralelo con la producción de Brecht de 1938; respeto al desarrollo cultural de la fracción más progresista de la población y la praxis histórica y social.

En efecto, las obras teatrales del DCL desde *The Dunlop Play* (1938) hasta la mas reciente, *The Long March* (1985), están íntimamente vinculadas con los movimientos sindicales y las reivindicaciones de los trabajadores. El autor clasifica las obras en cinco categorías: aquellas representadas por los trabajadores que describen su participación en la lucha de clases (*The Spar Play*) aquellas que se refieren a la lucha de clase de manera ficticia (*Gallows for Mr. Scariot Mpimpi*); aquellas sobre la condición del trabajador en las afueras (*Ithusta*); aquellas que hablan de la migración forzada (*Why Lord?*); y aquellas con contenido histórico (*The Dunlop Play*). Lo que estas obras de teatro comparten es que ellas son la expresión cultural de la clase trabajadora tanto respeto a sus creadores cuanto a sus públicas. Además, ellas tienen como base la división entre explotadores y explotados; el esfuerzo de los oprimidos para conservar su dignidad y para constituir una comunidad más allá de las barreras sociales y raciales. Esta cultura popular es un arma poderosa para la reivindicación social y para la oposición global al *apartheid*.

Kotze sugiere la necesidad de un estudio profundo de las formas teatrales producidas por esa cultura.

Wasn't Brecht an African Writer?: Parallels with Contemporary Nigerian Drama¹

Sandra L. Richards

Within the field of African literature, examples abound of critics who see this literature only in terms of their own Euro-American framework.² For them, it exists primarily as an interesting sub-set of a more pre-eminent, creative form, and an analysis of the works of artists like Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan, two of Nigeria's most skillful and prolific dramatists, becomes a search for evidence of European influence.

This consideration of the significance of Bertolt Brecht for contemporary Nigerian playwrighting rejects the automatic assumption of influence and imitation. Rather, it starts from the premise that Nigerian authors, like Soyinka and Osofisan, are attracted to the German playwright's dramaturgy in large measure because it parallels certain aesthetic structures found within their own indigenous culture. Such a starting point does not deny the fact that Bertolt Brecht is perhaps the most significant dramatist and theoretician for our post-colonial, post-atomic age. Nor, does it overlook the fact that both of these playwrights have been exposed to Brecht, and Soyinka has chosen to adapt at least one Brecht play to the Nigerian terrain.

Rather, by exploring first an indigenous creative source for the playwright's choice of style, this paper acknowledges the auto-dynamic quality of contemporary African drama and points to the existence of similar aesthetic structures over a range of cultures, a consideration which allows one to keep in perspective Brecht's own "imitation" or reformulation of Chinese and Japanese theaters. Additionally, such a starting point allows the critic to appreciate the extent to which African performance aesthetics precede post modernist theories of artistic production and can offer insights valuable to the further articulation of those concepts.

As will become apparent in the ensuing discussion, Wole Soyinka employs techniques analogous to Brecht's in such plays as *The Trials of Brother Jero* or *Kongi's Harvest*, and adapts Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* into *Opera Wonyosi*. Repeatedly celebrating the individual who risks disintegration for communal benefit, Soyinka, however, differs significantly from Brecht in world view. Thus, so-called Brechtian devices result in non-Brechtian ends.

In contrast, Femi Osofisan, a talented, "second generation"³ Nigerian playwright, seemingly shares Brecht's faith in the possibility of positive, collective action. While he, like Brecht, stops short of picturing the new society on stage, his dramas allow for more audience debate

and empowerment than those of Brecht. As will become apparent from a discussion of works like *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* and *Eshu and the Vagabond Minstrels*, the source of that freedom is the African dilemma tale.

Indigenous aesthetics and Brechtian theory

Contemporary Nigerian drama in English draws upon both ancient, ritual theater and secular or popular theater for its rhetorical strategies and oftentimes for its content as well. Underpinning both genres is a philosophy, whose central tenets involve the concept of a life-force or *ase* which pervades all elements of the universe. Within both the plastic and the performing arts, *ase* manifests itself in discrete units which share equal value with other distinct units and may activate diverse forces, resulting in shifting perspectives, multi-focus, and complementary opposition with the potential of resolution into equilibrium. Clearly demarcated openings and closings, seriality, repetition, discontinuity, interlocking of energies or values, and density of meaning become some of the prominent structural mechanisms for the articulation of this principle.⁴

An examination of the story-telling complex not only provides a more detailed description of this aesthetic, but it also offers an appropriate model for comparison with Brechtian theory, for the complex utilizes re-enactment and relies upon spoken language to an extent that popular theater does not. A typical session may begin with several households of children and adults of all ages gathering together. The designated narrator greets his audience with a formulaic opening to which it must in turn respond in accordance with a prescribed pattern. Subject material is drawn from non-personal, collective sources with an intent to entertain listeners; offer specific social commentary in a symbolic form, which avoids further inflaming existent familial or community tensions; project desirable modes of behavior; and reinforce sentimental bonds among those assembled.⁵ Thus, the social aspect of man's identity remains in the forefront.

The narrator may describe in considerable detail a number of loosely related episodes; in each, he acts out the roles of a variety of characters, enlisting audience help in singing and/or dancing illustrative elements. At any point in which audience members sense that the impact of the narrations is lagging, another person is free to insert himself, either taking over the story already under way or launching an entirely new tale. Just as there is a formulaic means of beginning the story, so too is there a ritualized closure to the formal narration.

A type of story which finds great favor among African peoples is the dilemma tale in which no resolution is advanced. Moral definitions are seen to be contextual rather than absolute, and the audience is offered a choice of alternatives designed to elicit spirited debate among those assembled. High value is assigned to the development of reasoning skills, and the articulation of various viewpoints becomes the most important objective of the artistic enterprise.

Evident throughout the story-telling complex is an active interplay between narrator and audience. Fluidity of role exists both in the sense that the narrator plays a multiplicity of characters and in the fact that all assembled are potentially performers. Because the specific content or general thrust of a story is often known to most listeners, they remain critical observers, focusing attention instead upon the skill of the performer, who must exert "coolness" or compelling technical mastery in a volatile, improvisatory situation fraught with the possibility of individual failure and community rejection.

The analogs with Brechtian theory are immediately apparent in that both traditions insist upon the social character of the narrative, articulated through an episodic structure, fluidity of actor identity, and audience objectivity. What is, however, crucial to a discussion of Brecht's influence on African playwrights is a consideration of the purpose or vision which these devices serve.

Soyinka and Brecht

The Trials of Brother Jero (1960) is sometimes cited as the earliest Soyinka play to evidence Brechtian influences.⁶ The rascally minister's role as the narrator who stands both outside the dramatic action offering commentary and within it as protagonist, along with his oscillation between being a scheming rogue and a sincere man of God identify the play as an example of Brechtian theater. Indeed, James Gibbs alleges that Soyinka, who was rehearsing at the time the role of Yang Sun in *The Good Person of Sezuan* "borrows a technique used by Brecht in scene eight of *The Good Person*, one which, in a sense, grows out of the story-telling tradition."⁷

But a more careful analysis would illuminate the extent to which the play is non-Brechtian and argue for the story-telling complex as a more plausible source of influence. Jero's honesty in revealing his motivations to the audience and his willingness to show himself as an object of derision disarm it. Given the relative pettiness of the issues initially at stake, one delights in watching this rogue manoeuvre to retain his charismatic hold over the wilfully gullible. Only with Jero's admission that he intends to manipulate the politician and would-be minister of war into incarcerating Chume, does delight in Jero's knavery turn into a sobering appreciation of the demagogue's sinister appeal. In one sense the audience has already become a comparable victim, susceptible to Jero's charms. Yet its possession of greater information concerning concealed identities or motivations renders it a co-conspirator who shares Jero's privileged position vis-à-vis his victims. This sense of superior position may in effect blind the audience to its status as potential victim, for congratulating themselves on their distance from the obviously credulous viewers may forego critical reflections.

Soyinka's study of an emergent fascism in *Kongi's Harvest* (1965), coupled with the manipulation of certain structural devices, seemingly invites comparison with Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (1941/1958).⁸ More important than surface similarities, however, is the

manner in which the two playwrights differ, for as will become more apparent, Soyinka consistently eschews Brecht's focus on the systemic roots of social phenomena.

The Soyinka play is situated in a fictional African nation known as Isma where the annual New Yam festival provides the occasion for a decisive confrontation between traditional and modern forms of government, between life-sustaining and death-dealing forces. Kongi's search for a public self-image, which will divest the deposed, traditional Oba of moral authority and legitimize his own reign of terror additionally identifies the drama as a meditation on the means by which a social order perpetuates itself. Abrupt, *in media res* crosscutting between Kongi's group of physically and intellectually starved advisors and Segi's bar of carousing habitués initially establishes an episodic structure in which diametrically opposite styles coexist with little relevance to each other. Only gradually does an underlying unity emerge, as it becomes fully apparent that Kongi seeks to force validation as the new Spirit of Harvest from the Oba, represented by the ruler's nephew Daodu and club owner Segi.

Contextuality of identity is conveyed through the devices of doubling and positing contradictory, social stances within an individual character. Thus, the Reformed Aweri who struggle to invent new legitimating slogans replicate the Oba's customary council of elders, and the Oba's servant, pursuing a policy of political survival, easily switches loyalty from king to president. Caught between the two opposing orders and thus required to play conflicting roles is Daodu, heir apparent to the traditional ruler. Given his familial background, Daodu must oppose Kongi and yet serve as a pragmatic functionary willing to negotiate some compromise between the two leaders; given his gradually revealed, subversive intentions, he must openly defy his uncle's spiritual authority in order to buy time for his conspiracy.

But a further paradox exists: While clearly representing the hope for a more positive future, Daodu also bears disturbing resemblance to the destructive present of Kongism. A farmer, Daodu, ironically knows more about what he would destroy than the new social order which he would nurture. Like Kongi, he is more comfortable inveighing against enemies:

Let me preach hatred Segi. If I preached hatred
I could match his [Kongi's] barren marathon, hour
for hour, torrent for torrent . . .⁹

And as was Kongi, he, too, is loved by Segi, the irresistible female capable of unfeelingly luring men to destruction.

Segi's praise names ally her to the Mammy Wata spirit who summons her devotees to a watery death; yet other songs tell of her ability to nurture.¹⁰ In this instance she attempts to inspire Daodu to advocate life in opposition to Kongi's death-dealing practices. When male resolve falters, Segi herself makes the grand gesture of confronting Kongi with the harvest of his inhumanity, as symbolized by

the decapitated head of her father, killed in an attempt to assassinate Kongi.

Given an elaborated imagery which locates Segi in a timeless, natural framework ambivalent to human concerns, this character quite clearly functions more as ideological construct than as flesh-and-blood woman. She is a supernatural force incarnated in human form; her responses to human suffering, her decision to function as a regenerative element are governed by stimuli not necessarily within human access. In choosing this mysterious figure as the actual instigator of revolt, Soyinka seems to be suggesting that the will to freedom is equally inscrutable, as liable to endure as it is to strike out against oppression.

Thus, a dramaturgical concern with strategies by which a ruling order validates itself ultimately narrows to a focus wherein the individual with his particular idiosyncrasies is paramount. Daodu may become another Kongi, yet the process of events by which Kongi has evolved from savior to oppressor remains unimagined. History threatens to repeat itself for reasons which remain unknown to man. Given the final tableau, in which the Oba's and Kongi's anthems compete inconclusively for dominance, the only certainty in this age of contemporary tyrants is imprisonment and further dehumanization of the population.

Though *Kongi's Harvest* shares certain thematic concerns and stylistic mechanisms with Brecht's *Arturo Ui*, its conclusions are radically different. Brecht foregrounds the relationship between the Cauliflower Trust and Arturo Ui in order to insist upon the connection between capitalism and fascism and to suggest the direction in which a likely solution lies. Given perhaps his Yoruba beliefs in a cyclic history and the contemporary African experience of successive, brutalizing coups, Soyinka can not entertain such optimism. But presented with silence concerning the social processes which have engendered the familiar results dramatized on stage and ambiguity concerning the contours of positive change, what alternatives might audiences choose? Reflective inactivity in the face of repression, or action grounded in a leap of faith that this time genuine progress is possible?

Opera Wonyosi (1977) is, of course, the obvious example of Brechtian influence, for the play is an adaptation of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* (1928), itself an adaptation of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728). Although Soyinka follows his Brechtian model to a large extent, the manner in which he indigenizes the drama to an African landscape is significant and again, leads to diametrically opposite conclusions. Brecht offers a dispassionate critique of the European middle-class; Soyinka fashions a satire which spares no element of Nigerian society.¹¹

At least three instances of authorial choice illustrate this difference in style and perspective. Brecht sets his play in the Victorian era, feeling that such a time period is sufficiently familiar and yet remote enough to allow audiences to react critically, separating out what is of relevance to them.¹² In contrast, Soyinka locates his drama within a Nigerian expatriate community in the Central African Republic on the

eve of the coronation of Jean-Bedel Bokassa, an event still fresh in his audience's memory. The choice allows him to lampoon Nigerian events like the craze for extravagant "Wonyosi" lace;¹³ the accumulation of dead bodies along Nigerian roadways; the public execution of criminals in a carnival-like atmosphere known popularly as the "Bar Beach Shows"; and a long litany of riots perpetrated against innocent civilians by unknown soldiers. The decision to feature a university professor prominently among Anikura's beggars directly indicts Soyinka's university audience for its complicity in perpetuating national chaos. In addition, the choice of the Central African Republic allows him to lash out at one of the continent's most notorious leaders. Thus, the distance between audience and dramatic events is virtually non-existent, and highly impassioned reactions - either positive or negative - are the only plausible responses.

The characterization of Polly is another area of difference. Brecht is careful to maintain a tension between Polly's uttering middle-class clichés related to romance and acting upon an astute sense of financial profitability. Thus, character is constantly made to comment - albeit unwittingly - upon itself, and the discrepancy between motives for human behavior and their rationalization as a system of social values remains at the forefront of the drama.

With his sights aimed elsewhere, Soyinka eliminates scene three in which Brecht's Polly mouths romantic sentiments before agreeing with her parents that such emotions are useless. Similarly, in scene five Soyinka's Polly wastes no time bemoaning the loss of love; she quickly assumes leadership of Mack's band of thieves, imposing upon it a more acceptable business image by introducing the Wonyosi cloth, much beloved by successful Nigerians. In response to Tiger Brown's amazed reaction to her transformation, she offers "The Song of Lost Innocence" with its chorus of female traders who like a contagion of Mother Courages attack the Civil War dead and sell their grisly finds to the audience. This Polly makes no passing nod to bourgeois respectability. With the tension between private thought and public stance removed, Soyinka's character may confirm audiences' experiences, yet she poses less demand that observers focus on the root processes by which these events occur.

By devoting less time to Polly, Soyinka is able to bring to the foreground the soon-to-be crowned monarch, absent from the earlier plays. Thus, in scene three Emperor Boky addresses the audience directly, mouthing egalitarian sentiments while offering a boot dance, complete with hobnails and deadly blows to his soldiers, as an example of revolutionary culture. But Soyinka can not simply parody Bokassa's brutal delusions of grandeur, for the real Bokassa was already a gross parody of leadership, acting out his own, self-scripted imitation of the glories of French civilization. Fact and fiction have coalesced, raising the question of what actually is being imitated.

Furthermore, the presence on stage of an Emperor Bokassa crystallizes Soyinka's contention that the exercise of power appeals to and anesthetizes the moral sensibilities of all social classes. Thus, in the aggressive "Who Killed Neo-Niga?" song, replete with military drills

executed by Boky's henchmen, a variety of Nigerian types like academics, prophets, cash madams, radicals, and policemen proudly admit to exploiting the suffering populace, which has only recently been liberated from harsh European masters. None, however, speaks out when asked who will fight for the cause of Neo-Niga, now turned into Corpse Niga by social injustice. While all of them are present at Boky's coronation, where the Neo-Niga song is performed to the rhythms of Boky's deadly boot dance, all again fall silent when someone dares to puncture the jubilation with the question, "Who CROWNED De-Niga?"¹⁴ As the moment of both Boky's coronation and Mack's execution approaches, the population becomes even more exuberant; added to the throng of those eager for Mack's blood and the legitimization of brutality are Anikura's beggars, a gaggle of religious leaders, and common people like ice cream vendors, whores and mothers with children.

To all who were prepared to watch or profit from this orgy, the beggars' leader Anikura warns,

A ragged coat does not virtue make . . .
Nor is the predator a champion of rights, . . .
It's too easy to declare society fair game - . . .
What we must look for is the real beneficiary . . .
Who does it profit? (83)

He absolves none of complicity and challenges his audience:

Who really accumulates and exercises
Power over others? The currency of that power
Though it forms the bone of contention
Soon proves secondary. I tell you -
Power is delicious . . . (83)

Thus, for Soyinka *Opera Wonyosi* functions as an accusation hurled against all those who give silent support to tyranny. Disavowing the class analysis of the Brechtian model, he contends,

We do not intend to give any "intellectual" audience the comfort of seeing their material situation as the inevitable consequence of their socio-historical condition. We pronounce: "Guilty" on all counts, . . . (Foreword, p.3)

But, a note of reservation, similar to that experienced with *Kongi's Harvest*, can also be sounded with this play. Soyinka posits a lust for power rather than offering for scrutiny some of the processes which result in the injustice he so brilliantly condemns. In doing so, he deprives audiences of an opportunity to better understand how it might prevent such atrocities in the future. Given the strength of his satire, the audience or individual moved to action must make what can only be described as a quasi-religious response in which an inexplicable faith is a key element.

Thus, though *Opera Wonyosi* clearly is not a tragedy, Soyinka places his audience in the position of the prototypical actor whose experience of the abyss retraces the trajectory of human history. For him the myth of the god Ogun, who courted a total sundering of personality in order to achieve the communal benefit of reuniting god with man, sets forth the archetypical experience which drama describes.¹⁵ Having undergone a nightmarish experience calculated to re-create in symbolic form those primordial terrors, the audience is challenged to further risk disintegration of the self in order to attempt to counter the pervasive anomie dramatized in *Wonyosi*. That someone will eventually accept the challenge, that progress will eventually occur is guaranteed by the paradigm; hence, Soyinka can confidently affirm,

... sooner or later, society will recognize itself in the projection and, with or without the benefit of "scientific" explanation, be moved to act in its own overall self-interest.
(Foreword, p.3)

Osofisan and Brecht

Insisting that myth is a pedagogical explanation of experience by means of metaphor,¹⁶ Femi Osofisan infuses Yoruba belief with materialist perspectives. In contrast to Soyinka, Osofisan accords equal weight to other gods in the Yoruba pantheon¹⁷, and thus lodges the potential for progress in the unpredictable mix of a collective of opposing yet complementary personalities and forces. In his analysis of contemporary crises and possible solutions he is closer to Brecht. Yet as the following discussion of the relatively early *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* and the most recent *Eshu and the Vagabond Minstrels* will demonstrate, Osofisan's exploitation of the story-telling complex, particularly as it manifests itself in the dilemma tale, potentially allows the viewer more autonomy than what obtains in a Brecht script.

In *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (1978)¹⁸ the playwright manipulates conventions related to space, multiple perspectives, and performer-audience relationships; the result is a drama in which repetition, contradiction, discontinuity, and lack of an integrating vision loom large. Foregoing an elaborate mise-en-scène, he begins this story about the triumph of young love over social divisions with a group of young men and women deciding who will be the evening's storyteller. The narrator then announces that he will tell a story of reconciliation and drafts his colleagues into the various roles. Since there are more performers than there are character parts, some people must be cajoled into playing hills, door frames, verandahs, and other needed scenic elements. As the drama progresses, scenic elements are dismantled and reconstituted in accordance with the demands of the story. Yoruba songs, adapted for the most part from popular rhythms and proverbs, and dance are the structural modes by which these changes are accomplished. Eventually some actors tire of playing hills and verandahs or of watching from the sidelines; they rupture the narrator's

control over events, seize parts from their colleagues, and replay segments of scenes so as to accustom the audience to the change. In addition, at the conclusion of other scenes they offer commentary on the quality of the actors' performances. Thus, Osofisan continually focuses attention on the mechanics by which illusion is created and thwarts any tendency towards emotional involvement with the characters' crises.

Two segments of this modified Romeo and Juliet story are significant because of the importance of the issues involved and the manner in which they are left unresolved. The first concerns the artist's social role. Prompted by the suitor's plea for advice, the musician Fatai relates the circumstances under which his wife Folawe left him. Folawe has absorbed a more liberating vision from a young man who not only questions the dishonest means by which government officials become millionaires but also grapples with the custom whereby musicians compose celebratory songs for wealthy patrons. He challenges her:

Why do you compose songs to thrill *them*,
You who come from the poor?
Why do you hail chiefs and landowners
And forget those who work the land?
Why praise the Big Industrialist alone?
Aren't there fine workers in his factory?¹⁹

Given the lengthy passion with which Folawe expresses her commitment to an art progressively confronting its material foundations, given the logic whereby artistic practices are linked to irrefutable ills plaguing contemporary Nigeria, one senses that this character functions as the voice of the playwright.

But balanced against this position is another, argued with equal eloquence and support from the socio-political realities of contemporary Africa. Fatai despises the destructiveness of self-appointed leaders and reaffirms a belief in the pristine quality of art which intrinsically takes precedence over politics:

Revolutionaries come with every season
The words of fire flare and fade to ashes
Only the songs of the artist remain
Yes! Only the works of beauty
Are not quenched in the floods of time.
I thought ... I thought you understood ...

Osofisan further counters Folawe's position by locating this discussion within a framework which threatens to subvert her views. That is, the Folawe-Fatai encounter is introduced by a comic debate concerning the virtues of polygamy. Not only is the light tone of the men's advice to the desperate suitor carried into the ensuing artistic/political debate between husband and wife, but once that explanatory flashback is completed, the men also return to their battle of wit.

Thus, the issue of the artist's responsibility to society is lodged within a framework which seemingly devalues its significance. Having articulated major positions on an on-going literary debate in Nigeria, Osofisan simply abandons the topic entirely. No specific mention of the issues raised by this marital infidelity is made again; nor do subsequent events provide a resolution by validating either position. The interchange exists as a discrete entity within a series of stories about the clash between tradition and modernity, and the audience must assign its own value to this disjunctive, dramatic sequence.

Similarly, the re-enactment of the folktale of *The Most Handsome Stranger* seems to represent another issue abandoned in midstream once its obvious purpose as theatrical spectacle has been served. Offered as an explanation of the mother's disapproval of the proposed marriage, the story is narrated by a *babalawo*, who functions as the voice of Ifa, the repository of received wisdom among the Yoruba. The couple's decision to disregard the oracle has potentially profound ramifications for their future happiness. In that this love story also functions on the level of political metaphor, the couple's choice has problematic implications for the possibility of national unity in Nigeria.

Briefly stated, the folktale concerns a young woman's inability to see beyond a stranger's handsome exterior. Despite all warnings from family, friends, and the Stranger himself, she follows the man who transforms himself into a crocodile and consumes her. Because the thrust of the tale's moral is clear from the outset and its specific content is familiar to Nigerians,²⁰ audiences may maintain a more objective stance to the story's enactment, focusing upon - and hopefully delighting in - the skill with which an illusion is created. In addition, Osofisan's interjection of modern elements into the traditional tale startles observers, for although the Stranger's enticing physical attributes are described in temporally neutral terms, his actual pronouncements locate him in the specific context of neo-colonialism.

The potential relevance of traditional folklore to contemporary social realities is further emphasized through the device of repetition, when the mother offers a secular explanation for her objections to her daughter's proposed marriage. Her tale of the government official who promises agricultural miracles but leaves only dissension and death in his wake approximates the earlier story. Both stories describe a community willing to accept alien values without any critical reflection; as such, both raise questions concerning issues at the heart of African and Third World development.

That these stories are dramatized in a manner which encourages the creation of spectacle suggests one of two possibilities concerning what Alain Ricard has termed "the pragmatics of performance" as a shaper of meaning.²¹ The distancing or alienating devices described above may work effectively, thereby stimulating audiences to reflect upon the explicit social critique. But there exists the alternate possibility that sensual delight in the ingeniousness of the theatrical spectacle overtakes a critical sensibility. Particularly in the story of the Stranger's transformation into a crocodile is this possibility likely: Because the spectacle relates primarily to the supernatural, western-

oriented audiences, accustomed to ignoring phenomena which elude rational explanation, may sense in this incident little challenge to their own attitudes.

Osofisan's subsequent handling of the implications of the tale seemingly further complicates this question of theatrical "meaning." Because the story has been introduced by the *babalawo* as an illustration of a divine response to the lovers' announced intentions, their decision to defy the oracle can only mean for the traditionalist that disaster will result. Yet, their success in finally achieving their parents' consent is appealing for a number of different reasons. For political leftists, it sustains a materialist view that men and women - not the gods - make and remake this world. For those more ideologically conservative, this articulation of a world, in which the wounds of past wars are healed and peace prevails, satisfies deep-rooted, social conditioning concerning myths of rupture and subsequent harmony or concerning beliefs in the future, as necessarily represented by its youth.

But the drama has functioned throughout as both a personal love story and a political commentary. Its resolution, however, exists primarily within the realm of the personal and the rhetorical, for what is the social equivalent of the couple's devotion to each other? How are the ethnic tensions operative in Nigeria to be conquered? Though the materialist Osofisan has invoked the supernatural power of Ifa only to jettison it later, his faith in the couple rests on a foundation no firmer than that which he has rejected.

Seemingly, he acknowledges in part the inadequacy of this resolution, for the drama does not conclude with the uncle's bestowing blessings on the couple. Rather, in the midst of rejoicing comes the news that the old man has committed suicide. His death may provide the necessary, sacrificial blood which will enable the couple to move towards a happier future. In burying the patriarch, the young may succeed in burying "the cannibal rage" which characterized his generation. Or, the pronouncements uttered by the Ifa oracle may suggest a political reality: The uncle's suicide is harbinger of the difficulties ahead as the younger generation struggles to confront the complex legacy of the past and forge a truly sovereign nation. In such a manner, then, does Femi Osofisan utilize several conventions of traditional story-telling which not only encourage observers to retain a more objective stance, but more importantly, also challenge them to select an integrating interpretation for the dramatized events.

His latest play *Eshu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1984) makes explicit use of the aesthetic strategies of the dilemma tale, thereby charging his public to debate issues of national significance. This genre requires a superficial simplicity in which right or justice is lodged first with one and then with another of the adversaries in the given situation. The narrator/playwright evidences skill to the extent that he creates spectacle and elicits surprise while maintaining the illusion of a straightforward narrative headed for a predictable conclusion. Through control over his medium, which includes structured improvisation in the song and dance sequences in particular, the playwright aims ultimately

for disorder or the passage of artistic hegemony from himself to the community of observers. The deconstruction of form, or the subversion of the artistic process of skilful reflection and selection from random experience, is the conscious objective towards which the enterprise moves.

Briefly stated, the play concerns a group of starving musicians whom the god Eshu, posing as a priest, promises wealth, provided they each bestow a magical gift upon a truly needy recipient. Predictably, all but one of the five choose to help those who clearly have the wherewithal to offer a handsome reward. The loner selects a poor, pregnant woman and a leprous couple, from whom he contracts the disease. The priest/god reappears to evaluate the musicians' choices, claims an inability to decide the leprous musician's case, and demands that the audience make known its opinions.

Though some more pragmatic individual may volunteer that in a context of pervasive greed, selfishness is the only viable reaction, one imagines that social conditioning prevails, and in fairly short order the audience decides that the afflicted man should be restored to health, and the selfish musicians made sick. After momentary hesitation concerning the determination of audience opinion, the priest/Eshu affirms justice. The drama initially concludes with cast members hailing this man as "humanity's last remaining hero."²²

Up to this point the play's construction has been straightforward, with the charm of the piece arising primarily from songs and dances, executed as part of the cures offered by the musicians. Although the audience has been invited to make a choice, this freedom appears counterfeit, given a dramatic structure which exploits ingrained, cultural conditioning and thereby limits the parameters of response. But an epilogue punctures this fairy tale ending and begins the transition towards a dynamic, collectively determined resolution (or irresolution) of meaning. Stage directions indicate that two actors seated in the audience arise to question the relevance of songs and magic to current crises in Nigeria. Presumably voicing reactions shared by other observers,²³ they launch an argument with actors on stage on a number of issues including the public's expectations of radical writers like Osofisan and the relationship of political theory to life and art. Although their objections have, in fact, been carefully scripted and rehearsed beforehand, the potential for audience intervention at this point is high, given the specific, earlier invitation to decide the play's outcome and the general, Nigerian custom of audibly commenting on events as they are being enacted.

Before relinquishing control and engaging the audience in a full-fledged discussion, the cast sings "Eshu Does Not Exist." The song argues the need for compassion and asserts the materialist view that the gods do not exist; it also warns,

And if evil does persist
We must each search our soul . . .
If our ways seem so slick . . .
One day we'll come to reason . . .

Where Eshu - or History -
Waits in ambush with his noose!

Now the audience has several questions before it: An ordinary morality tale about the virtues of selfless generosity has been subverted to raise issues like fostering a sense of group responsibility in an age of rampant individualism or determining an appropriate relationship between the masses' spiritual proclivities and a political praxis which advances their interests. In addition, Osofisan has functioned like a clever performer who, at the end of a story-telling session, innocently offers his audience a possible solution. His overt assertion that "Eshu does not exist," is in fact a conundrum, for it does not bring clarity to the debate by shifting responsibility from the gods to human beings. In an atmosphere where traditional, animist religions still find numerous adherents, such a declaration threatens to derail the discussion into an argument about the validity of specific religious beliefs. Furthermore, confidence in the ultimate operation of justice, whether it be called Eshu or History, does not confront directly the endemic materialism plaguing the nation now.

In fact, on the level of literal meaning, disavowal of Eshu's existence has engendered seeming peripheral audience debates. Although many theater students in a 1984 post-performance discussion applauded the manipulation of mythology to confront pressing social issues, a vocal minority objected to the god's desacralization.²⁴ Since that time Osofisan has revised the play for reasons which seemingly relate in part to a love for theatrical spectacle and a willingness to seriously consider audience feedback.

On the symbolic level, this approximation of the so-called trickster god to the force of History is important in both its political and dramaturgical consequences. Osofisan's equation acknowledges the operation of what appears to be coincidence or the unpredictable and factors in uncertainty as a necessary principle in any theory of social behavior. As such, it constitutes a specific commentary on the politics of his radical colleagues and indicates an area of difference with European Marxism. Within the dramaturgic realm, respect for this Eshu principle identifies the dilemma tale as an appropriate aesthetic vehicle.

But what also seems apparent from these revisions is a certain uneasiness with the dilemma tale form. By pointedly entrusting the administration of justice to Eshu's companion god before soliciting audience commentary, the playwright attempts to insinuate greater spectator focus on the issue of comparison. Ironically, these revisions have engendered further controversy. On the one hand, experts in Yoruba cosmology have charged evidence of inaccurate, Christianizing influences in the depiction of Eshu and the selfless musician, while on the other, a group of university lecturers stormed out of a performance in disgust at the alleged move towards mystification.²⁵

Thus encouraged to exercise their freedom, spectators may resist authorial efforts at closure and concentrate in the immediate, post-performance discussions on topics not necessarily of the playwright's choosing. Such occurrences serve to underscore the fact that with the

dilemma tale, any interpretation is always provisional, subject to overturn by the interplay of dispositions and choices of another group of observers imposing its own consensual order.

Interestingly, the *Eshu* experience describes a reverse development from what obtained in Brecht's *The Good Person of Sezuan* (1941) with which - given the similar subject matter - comparison is perhaps inevitable. Brecht, of course, chose the parable form to dramatize two well defined, contradictory viewpoints which nonetheless seem to preserve the position of the author as the voice of authority. Audience "mis"understandings, as reflected in the Viennese press, later prompted him to be more explicit by adding an epilogue²⁶ which directly challenges spectators to script a more aesthetically and politically satisfying conclusion.

Nonetheless, the dramaturgical strategy of both playwrights is identical. Audiences are left to claim their responsibility to impose meaning upon event. Their actions within the symbolic realm approximate actual experience, as they must continually refine and defend their rights against the machinations of those seeking their disempowerment.

Conclusion

In assessing the significance of Bertolt Brecht for Nigerian playwrights, one must start on the African continent itself with an analysis of indigenous aesthetics and performance practices. Such a study reveals parallels with Brechtian dramaturgy which can, nonetheless, be fashioned to produce results antithetical to Brecht's Marxist convictions. Thus, though Wole Soyinka has stated his admiration for the "liveliness" of Brecht's theater,²⁷ he uses similar structures to produce an anti-Brechtian drama, while Femi Osofisan, sharing a belief in a dialectical and historical materialism, employs many of those same techniques to extend the German playwright's challenge. Such a study of indigenous aesthetics additionally suggests the probability of a reciprocal popularity of Brechtian and African theaters as both African and Western audiences recognize in each other parallels with their own cultural universes.²⁸ In that awesome apprehension of the strangely familiar lies, as Brecht always argued, the possibility of progress.

NOTES

1. The title for this paper comes in part from a quip Femi Osofisan made concernig Brechtian influence at the fifth International Jahn Janheinz Symposium in Mainz, Germany, where an earlier draft of this paper was read.
2. Given historical circumstance and the choice of language, comparisons between European traditions and modern African literatures are in some senses appropriate and inevitable. For a perceptive essay on the complexity of the challenge facing the critic of African literatures, see Abiola Irele, *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology*. London, 1981, pp. 9-42.
3. In that a modern Nigerian theater in English is generally dated from the 1958 production of Wole Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers* and *The Lion and the Jewel*, the term "second generation" has been adopted to signal the emergence of a group of younger men who have joined theater pioneers Soyinka and J.P. Clark. For a discussion of some Onstage: Responses from "Second Generation" Playwrights, *Theater Journal*, 39, No. 2, May 1987, pp. 215-227.
4. Roger Abrahams, "Concerning African Performance Patterns," in *New African Literature and Culture, Essays in Memory of Janheinz Jahn*, eds. Bernth Lindfors and Ulla Schild. Wiesbaden, 1976 and Henry John Drewal and Margaret Thompson Drewal, *Gelede: Art and Female Power Among the Yoruba*. Bloomington, 1983, pp. 1-7.
5. For an extended discussion of this complex, see such works as Roger D. Abrahams, *African Folktales: Traditional Stories of the Black World*. New York, 1983 and William Bascom, "African Dilemma Tales: An Introduction" in *African Folklore*, ed. Richard M. Dorson. Garden City, New York, 1972.
6. Victoria Chinwenma Ezeokoli, "African Theater: A Nigerian Prototype", Diss. Yale University 1972, p. 186 and James Gibbs, *Wole Soyinka*. New York, 1986, p. 32.
7. James Gibbs, p. 32.
8. James Gibbs, p.34. Edith Ihekweazu offers in "Two Leaders on the Stage: Soyinka and Brecht" (*Journal of African and Comparative Literature*, No. 1 [March 1981]: 52-68) a much more detailed and perceptive analysis of the ways in which the two plays differ.
9. Wole Soyinka, *Kongi's Harvest* in *Collected Plays*. vol. 2. London, 1974, p.99.
10. Oyin Ogunba in *The Movement of Transition: A Study of the Plays of Wole Soyinka* Ibadan, 1975, pp. 187-189, 197-198 while acknowledging Segi's destructive capacities also likens her to legendary Yoruba or Bini women like Moremi, Emotan, and Sungbo who took decisive action to save their communities. The parallel seems inapplicable, however, because tradition does not also attribute such elemental destructiveness to these women.
11. Interestingly, production histories suggest that both plays fail to stimulate self-critical reflection. *The Threepenny Opera* audiences have often found the robbers and beggars charming and distant from themselves. *Wonyosi* audiences were either delighted by the accuracy of Soyinka's satire or enraged by his accusation of complicity leveled at all social strata. On reactions to the Nigerian production, see James Gibbs, *Wole Soyinka*, pp.133-136 and Mario Relich, "Soyinka's 'Beggar's Opera'" in James Gibbs, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Wole Soyinka*. Washington, D.C., 1980, pp. 128-129.
12. See the transcription of a conversation between Brecht and Giorgio Strehler, who was preparing to direct *The Threepenny Opera* in Milan in 1955.

- Conversation published as part of notes accompanying the play in Brecht, *Collected Plays*, Vol 2, eds. Ralph Manheim and John Willett. New York, 1977.
13. Michael Etherton in *The Development of African Drama*. London, 1982, p. 269, notes that the title plays on meanings of the word "opera" in English and Yoruba. Properly accented, the word in Yoruba translates "the fool buys."
 14. Wole Soyinka, *Opera Wonyosi*. Bloomington, 1981, p.77. All other references to the play are from this edition and indicated in parentheses in the text.
 15. See Soyinka's analysis of tragedy, "The Fourth Stage" in his *Myth, Literature, and the African World*. London, 1976.
 16. Femi Osofisan, "The Origins of Drama in West Africa," Diss.. University of Ibadan, 1973.
 17. Orunmila, popularly known as the god of divination, and his messenger, Eshu who is popularly known as the trickster, assume importance in Osofisan's work. As a metaphor, Orunmila "incarnates the tension between the existing and the visionary." See Osofisan, "Ritual and the Revolutionary Ethos: The Humanistic Dilemma in Contemporary Nigerian Theater," *Okike* (September 1982), p. 72-81. The god Eshu embodies the principle of justice whose operation often eludes man's predictive abilities. Both gods are also crucial to the complex system of divination known as *Ifa* and hence related to hermeneutics.
 18. Farewell was produced first in 1978, approximately 7 or 8 years after it was written.
 19. Femi Osofisan, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (Ibadan: Evans Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Limited, 1986), p. 27. All other references to the play are from this edition and indicated in parenthesis in the text.
 20. The tale appears in the oral folklore of several different ethnic groups in Nigeria and of course, undergoes a literary re-working in Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drunkard*.
 21. Alain Ricard, "Theater Research: Questions About Methodology," *Research in African Literature*, Spring 1985, pp. 45-51.
 22. Femi Osofisan, *Eshu and the Vagabond Minstrels* TS, 1985, p.54. All other references to the play are from this draft and indicated in parentheses in the text.
 23. In fact, the second typescript, on which this analysis is based, incorporates into the dialogue some of the questions raised by this writer and others.
 24. Nigerian theater students conference (NUTAF) held at the University of Calabar in April 1984.
 25. I am grateful to Professor Biodun Jeyifou of the University of Ife for an account of audience reactions to the 1986 production.
 26. See Eric Bentley's comments at conclusion of Brecht's *The Good Woman of Sezuan* in Brecht, *Parables for the Theater, Two Plays by Bertolt Brecht*, rev. trans. Eric Bentley Minneapolis, 1948, p.96.
 27. In fact, Soyinka asserts, "... what I like in Brecht is his sort of theater, its liveliness and freedom, not so much his purpose or intentions," in Cosmo Pieterse and Dennis Duerden, eds., *African Writers Talking, A Collection of Radio Interviews*. New York, 1972, p. 173.
 28. Brecht has already proved popular with college audiences with, for example, *Mother Courage and The Measures Taken* produced at AmaduBello University in the Muslim North and Ife's Jeyifou adapting *Puntila* in 1985 to protest the Buhari regime's unlawful detention of its most vocal critics.

Sandra L. Richards. "War Brecht nicht eigentlich ein afrikanischer Schriftsteller?: Parallelen im zeitgenössischen Drama Nigerias."

Afrikanische Literatur wird meistens als Produkt kolonialistischer Einflüsse verstanden. Sandra Richards möchte der eindimensionalen Vorstellung von Vorbild und Imitation entgehen und stattdessen Brechts Einfluß auf afrikanische Schriftsteller als Ergebnis universaler ästhetischer Strukturen beschreiben, die beiden Kulturkreisen zugrunde liegen. Genau darauf berufen sich die einflußreichen nigerianischen Autoren Wole Soyinka und Femi Osofisan, die von Richards hier in aller Ausführlichkeit vorgestellt werden.

Brechtsche Elemente existieren beispielsweise als Spielregeln in traditionellen Gemeinschaftsritualen: Ein intensives Zusammenspiel zwischen Erzähler und Zuhörerschaft findet statt, Identifikation weicht einer kritisch-distanzierten Partizipation, formelhafte Elemente wechseln mit extemporierten Einwüfen; das traditionelle narrative Genre des "Konfliktmärchens" führt ein moralisches Dilemma vor, das nicht gelöst wird, sondern offen bleibt und somit aktive Reflexion stimuliert. Inwieweit hier marxistische Ideologie mitvermittelt wird, ist dabei von Fall zu Fall verschieden, wie Richards anhand der beiden Autoren beispielhaft demonstriert. Soyinkas Stücke arbeiten zwar formell mit episodischen Strukturen, dialektischen Stilmitteln und ambivalenten Charakteren, doch beschränkt er sich auf aktuelle Zeitkritik, ohne das Kritisierte als Ergebnis historischer Prozesse kenntlich zu machen; das Geschichtsbild ist traditionell zyklisch, Soyinka arbeitet innerhalb des philosophischen Systems der *Yoruba* Religion, Zeitkritik wird mit Hilfe bekannter mythologischer Chiffren und Märchen unters Volk gebracht. Seine Adaption der *Dreigroschenoper* (als *Opera Wonyosi*) beispielsweise verzichtet auf die Kritik an der bürgerlichen Mittelklasse und wird zur Tyrannenkritik an Bokassa und zum Rundumschlag gegen aktuelle Zustände in Nigeria.

Femi Osofisan dagegen verläßt die angestammte Ebene der *Yoruba*-Mythen und setzt sie in materialistische Geschichtsperspektive um. Auch er verwendet das Muster des "Konfliktmärchens", doch die bekannten Fabeln, Sagen und Orakelsprüche werden durch stilistische Verfremdung zur zeitpolitischen Anspielung: Der fiktive Familienkonflikt in einer wohlbekannten Liebesgeschichte wird beispielsweise auf aktueller Ebene zum Kommentar auf die ethnischen Spannungen in Nigeria. Um die Märchen und Mythen aus dem tradierten Sinnkontext herauszulösen, werden viele "verfremdende", dekonstruktivistische Szenentechniken angewendet: Die szenischen Konventionen des Bühnen/Zuschauerraumes werden aufgehoben, fest definierte Funktionen von Autor, Spielleiter und Schauspieler verschwimmen, ebenso wie die Schauspieler abwechselnd Personen und Requisiten (!) darstellen oder durch ihr Erscheinen das Szenenbild konstituieren. Der Künstler und das Kunstwerk sollen entmythisiert, ihre oft zu beobachtende Funktion als Apologeten der Herrschenden entlarvt werden.

Sandra L. Richards. "Brecht, n'était-il pas un écrivain africain?: une comparaison avec le drame nigérien de nos jours."

Les critiques qui abordent la littérature africaine dans une perspective occidentale abondent. Selon certains critiques les deux dramaturges nigériens de langue anglaise, Wole Soyinka et Femi Osofisan, se seraient inspirés de la dramaturgie de Brecht. On pourrait au contraire penser que l'intérêt pour Brecht vient d'une analogie entre son esthétique et certaines structures visibles de la culture nigérienne. Le théâtre nigérien contemporain s'inspire de l'ancien théâtre rituel et populaire tant dans son contenu que dans ses stratégies rhétoriques. L'esthétique nigérienne est sous-tendue par une philosophie qui prétend que tout est issu d'une force vitale (*asè*). Cette esthétique produit le conte à dilemme où aucune solution n'est offerte et qui serait à l'origine de la dramaturgie d'Osofisan. Les analogies entre cette esthétique et Brecht sont nombreuses: le caractère social de la narration, une structure épisodique, la fluidité des acteurs et l'objectivité du public. Soyinka s'inspire lui aussi de cette esthétique. Tout en affirmant l'importance de Brecht pour les dramaturges nigériens, on doit tenir compte de l'esthétique et des pratiques théâtrales du continent africain lui-même. Cette étude met en évidence des similarités qui peuvent donner lieu à des résultats opposés aux convictions marxistes de Brecht. Alors que Soyinka exprime ouvertement son admiration pour la vivacité du théâtre de Brecht, il utilise des structures similaires pour produire un théâtre anti-brechtien. Femi Osofisan, partageant une même foi dans le matérialisme historique, utilise les techniques théâtrales de Brecht pour étendre le questionnement initié par Brecht.

Sandra L. Richards. "¿Erá Brecht un escritor africano?: paralelos con el teatro nigeriano contemporáneo."

Aunque la autora afirma la importancia de Brecht en la obra de Wole Soyinka y Femi Osofisan, prefiere subrayar la importancia de la estética y de las prácticas teatrales del continente africano mismo. Su estudio revela que Wole Soyinka utiliza estructuras similares a las del teatro de Brecht para producir un teatro antibrechtiano. Femi Osofisan utiliza también esas técnicas para ampliar la crítica hecha por el dramaturgo alemán.

Richards arguye que el teatro contemporáneo nigeriano de lengua inglesa es inspirado en gran parte por el antiguo teatro ritual y el teatro popular en su estrategia retórica y su contenido temático. La estética nigeriana es sostenida por una filosofía que pretende que todo en el universo es producido y determinado por una fuerza vital (*asè*). La estética del cuento dramático ofrece un modelo comparable a la teoría brechtiana a través de su utilización de la repetición y de la lengua hablada. Las analogías entre Brecht y esta estética son numerosas: el carácter social de la narración, la fluidez de la identidad de los actores y la actitud objetiva del público.

Book Reviews

Werner Zimmermann. *Bertolt Brecht: Leben des Galilei. Dramatik der Widersprüche*. Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, Zürich: Schöningh, 1985. 142 pages.

In volume 15 in the series "Modellanalysen: Literatur", the author presents an enlarged and more or less updated version of his earlier interpretation of Brecht's *Galilei* in the *Beihefte zum Wirkenden Wort* (1965). The selective assimilation of 20 years of controversial opinion on Brecht's "probably most significant and most difficult" dramatic work was facilitated by Zimmermann's unchanged and inclusive notion of dialectics as the central element in all structural aspects of the play.

Following the pattern of other handbooks, the author added a useful first part on the origin and different versions of the play, including, for comparative purposes, a vita of the historical Galileo. This material is based on Schumacher, Szczesny and other secondary literature rather than on Brecht's own sources, a timely fresh look at which would seem desirable for a new assessment of Brechtian perspectives. In accentuating differences between history and fiction and between the three versions, Zimmermann underestimates the theological implications in Brecht's treatment; regarding the thrust of the first version, he is more eloquent on Stalinist trials than on Nazi Germany (on p. 94 he rebalances the emphasis); the function of the Keunos story would have deserved more attention; however, the increasing contradictions in Brecht's shaping of the main figure are duly emphasized.

The reworking of the main section on dialectics pays more attention to contradictions than to what Brecht understood by "Veränderbarkeit der Welt". The brief survey on the "dialectic" structure of the individual scenes now also acknowledges the 15th scene, which Zimmermann, like other earlier critics, had ignored in 1965, but he still does not see the alternative conclusions as an important issue (although he gives the "Horizontalverknüpfungen" special mention). The complexity of language and imagery receives limited explication; more attention is paid to the conflicting traits of the main character, whose social responsibility and failure the author considers partly an issue of mere rhetoric. Among the complementary figures, Andrea's role is not fully fathomed, Virginia receives much sympathy, whereas the little Monk and the Pope serve to emphasize the conflict of faith vs. knowledge. In tracing references to the existential security offered by "faith", Zimmermann soft-pedals the evidence of social exploitation through the Church. That he does not see the negative social consequences of scientific progress until late in the play is incomprehensible in view of

the establishment's continuous exploitative use of science. It seems inconceivable to him that contradictions might be defused in a classless society; nor does he sense much activist appeal in the outlook of the drama. Although he pursues thematic contradictions to the end, he does not convincingly close in on Brecht's aesthetics of provocation. Continuous textual analysis rather than selected thematic examples would aid such a model.

A newly added part on reception again emphasizes the parallel "Politbüro" - Inquisition. The greater performance rate in non-communist countries leads the author to conclude that "socialist" states are less ready to lend an open ear to the message "Unhappy the land that needs heroes" than Western countries which generally spare scientists the fate of a Galileo or a Sacharov. Wekwerth's noteworthy 1978 staging of the earliest version and Brecht's ideas for a continuation of the Galilei problem in a projected *Life of Einstein* receive additional attention. A brief survey of the scholarly reception of the play (also divided between East and West) credits Mittenzwei's and Schumacher's pioneering work but criticizes their ideological, pro-Soviet defense of the "socialist classic". Among the Western contributions the author mentions those in particular that emphasize contradictions and dialectics, but the survey is spotty and not without inaccuracies. The concluding didactic suggestions (the booklet is geared to higher learning) are interesting in their emphasis on West-German, neo-conservative educational policy which, endangered by popular literature, linguistics and communication theory, is looking for new canons within the guidelines of which Brecht's open-ended classic may not only be defended but fully recommended and placed side by side, comparatively, with Schiller. Among the suggestions are also some comparative perspectives with regard to Dürrenmatt's and Kipphardt's dramas on the scientist's dilemma in our time as well as interdisciplinary aspects beyond strictly ideological debates. All in all: a concise selective digest for introductory purposes, but not an original contribution to Brecht scholarship. As a revised monograph, however, it is still preferable to Szczesny's "new" *Bertolt Brechts 'Leben des Galilei'. Dichtung und Wirklichkeit*, vol. 22 (1986) in the series *Sammlung und Profile*, a virtually unchanged reissue of his 1966 essay, without the earlier documentation of primary texts but with a patched-on bibliography whose entries for the last twenty years have nothing to do with Szczesny's dated findings.

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Dana B. Polan. *The Political Language of Film and the Avant-Garde*. Studies in Cinema, No. 30. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1985. 141 pages.

The table of contents of Dana B. Polan's *The Political Language of Film and the Avant-Garde* suggests a collection of diverse essays rather than the surprisingly unified polemic the work turns out to be. Polan follows a theoretical introduction with chapters on Sergei Eisenstein, the American avant-garde film, Bertolt Brecht and Nagisa Oshima, yet all four examples suggest a common argument: that political meaning in a film derives not solely from the text itself, but from that text's historical place in society and its interaction with an audience.

Polan attacks those formalist and post-structuralist critics, many of whom he clearly respects, who refuse to go beyond textual analysis or who see a movie's political implications as extending only from its formal use of the cinema apparatus. His chapter on Brechtian aesthetics is one of the book's stronger sections, as he quarrels with those commentators who see only one issue in Brecht, i.e. the formally experimental separation of artistic elements.

If anything, Polan goes to the other extreme. In response to those critics, representative of a "dominance of misreadings of Brecht", who would argue that narrative-illusionist films dominate their spectators, Polan argues that all texts dominate their readers. And all art, he says, consists of alienation techniques whereby the normal is made strange. The formalism and distancing of Brecht are for Polan little different from the formalism of any art, be it that of Hollywood, Aristophanes, or *Tristram Shandy*.

Rather, Polan argues that any genuine Brechtian filmmaking cannot separate Brechtian techniques from the ends to which they are put. Polan claims a Brechtian aesthetic must incorporate "realism (the theater as a demonstration of something); pleasure (the theater as a joyous confirmation of the changeability of the world); popularity (a theater that works for the working classes)." In the chapter that immediately follows, Polan proposes Oshima's cinema as a successfully Brechtian one, one which calls for action on the part of a politically mobilized audience to complete the works and resolve their contradictions.

Polan's writing has an unfortunate tendency to be jargon-laden, almost defensively abstract and convoluted. This is a serious problem only in the book's first chapter, and its prose becomes more readable when Polan centers on specific theorists and works. Fortunately, even at their worst, Polan's arguments are strong enough to warrant the careful rereading they sometimes require.

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John Willett, *Caspar Neher: Brecht's Designer*. London and New York: Methuen, 1986. 141 pages (Illustrated).

With a text largely by John Willett and with 76 black and white illustrations from various stages of Caspar Neher's career, this small paperback volume was designed to accompany an exhibition of Neher's work which toured England in 1986. The volume achieves what the large and expensive 1966 *Caspar Neher* by Gottfried von Einem and Siegfried Melchinger did not: some sense of how heavily Brecht as director relied on Neher's stage designs. With carefully selected drawings of proposed sets followed by photos of the stage realization of those sets, Willett clearly shows how important Neher's role was in the dozens of productions he did with Brecht.

The volume also contains a charming text by Egon Monk on Brecht's and Neher's work together staging the adaptation of Lenz's original play, *The Private Tutor*. This text originally appeared in German in the Melchinger/ von Einem book. Monk presents here a small jewel of careful and understanding observation, refreshingly candid in the use of human detail and far removed from high-flown theory or any idealization, often produced by those with little knowledge of Brecht's practical and very down-to-earth stage work.

Willett is quite frank about the fact that Neher stayed in Germany during the Third Reich and worked until the theaters were finally closed. Equally refreshing is the citation of the early Neher in the Augsburg and Munich days, as he writes openly about Brecht's rather Kragler-like behavior at that time. The volume closes with a most useful "Neher Chronicle" which traces the main line of Neher's career without making all the entries somehow dependent upon or revolve around the axis of Bertolt Brecht. At least one of the figures who contributed so much to the Brecht oeuvre finally begins to emerge in his own right as a major contributor to the modern stage.

This is a useful and well constructed work on a major figure who went in and out of the Brecht circle at various times in his life, and it is strongly recommended.

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Werner Hecht (Ed.). *Brecht's Theorie des Theaters*.
Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986. 376 pages.

Il ne s'agirait nullement de réfuter les critiques de Brecht, mais plutôt de l'approcher par les voies que notre société emploie pour le digérer . . . Brecht révèle quiconque en parle.¹

Roland Barthes

An anthology on Brecht's theatre theory that takes as its motto, "*In der Praxis muß man einen Schritt nach dem andern machen - die Theorie muß den ganzen Marsch enthalten*" [Bertolt Brecht, 1929] may well lead us to expect a thorough discussion of the theory from its sources to its reception, beyond the bounds of the two German states. We might expect to be invited to play the role of Brecht's implied spectator - "der prüfend Schauende"² - in a critical examination of Brecht's theoretical practice, so as to acknowledge and evaluate its limitations as well as its achievements.

This volume as a whole disappoints any such expectations. Instead of a fresh critical look at Brecht's theoretical practices (for, as Klaus-Detlef Müller reminds us, Brecht's notes do not constitute a closed theoretical system)³, we are treated to a random selection of articles, most of which appeared one to two decades ago. Hecht's justification of this re-presentation, on the grounds that these essays "have captured the essence of the Brechtian method", seems oddly to imply that the contribution of these "Experten" have become, by association with the classic Brecht, "vital classics" in their own right. This homage to the Master's classic œuvre tends to obscure more controversial but no less significant reflections on Brecht, particularly in French interpretations and mises en scène of his work (conspicuously absent from the Bibliography). Moreover, it presents a curious defence of a playwright who preferred to subject essences to a test of their usefulness. Hecht's "Nachwort" and many articles in this collection stray perilously close to the kind of bardolatry that would reverse the direction of Brecht's "theoretical march" by displacing the "prüfend Schauende" whose reflections are useful, indeed exemplary, but determined nonetheless by their time and place, so as to elevate the image of Brecht as "Seher" (GW 16, 640) whose vision anticipates, incorporates and transcends disciples and sources alike.

This classification of the (Brechtian) method is particularly evident in the GDR contributions. The majority of these succumb to the temptation of treating Brecht as the real socialist "Aufhebung" of all that is exemplary in classical bourgeois humanism, legitimated within the framework of an official Marxism-Leninism. For example, Käthe Rülicke-Weiler's essay on the dialectic between "Darstellen" and "Erleben" does not explore the operation of this dialectic in Brecht's practice but rather attempts to translate Brecht's terms into those of the German classical

tradition, considered to be the cornerstone of the GDR cultural heritage.⁴ Yet, neither Brecht's real debt to the Enlightenment theatre's representation of social life nor any formal similarity between Diderot's tableau and Schiller's "Ruhe in der Handlung" - framing moments of pathos, on the one hand, and *Verfremdung* on the other (*Brechts Theorie des Theaters*, 220-225) - can erase the crucial ideological difference between them, namely that the former strategies were understood by practitioners and theoreticians alike as the appropriate means to induce assent to the harmonious and moving picture, whereas the latter should remind us of the social and contradictory constitution of the spectacle (GW 16, 682 and 869 ff). Despite Rüllicke-Weiler's affirmation of a solution to these contradictions in the "positive hero" through which "die Lösungen müssen gezeigt werden" (BTT, 228), Brecht returns to an emphasis on critical contradiction:

Wir müssen überall, wo wir Lösungen zeigen, das Problem zeigen, wo wir Siege zeigen, die Drohung der Niederlage zeigen, sonst entsteht der Irrtum, es handle sich um leichte Siege. (16, 680)

A similar strategy surfaces in the centerpiece of the collection, Hecht's essay on "Der Weg zum Epischen Theater." Tracing the development of Brecht's theatre theory up to 1933, Hecht concentrates, appropriately enough, on Brecht's evolution from an aesthetics of shock effects towards a more systematic approach to critically representing social contradiction in the theatre. He points out how Brecht's growing interest in showing this social contradiction, coupled with his introduction to Marxism, contributes to his commitment to an enlightened and enlightening theatre. Yet, even as he highlights the necessary interdependence of political and theatrical concerns in Brecht's work from the late 1920's on, Hecht simplifies the complexity of Brecht's commitment to Marxism. His assertion that Brecht's work on *Die Mutter*, for example, was "das Produkt des marxistischen Studiums und ein Ergebnis der Kontakte mit dem revolutionären Proletariat" (BTT, 82, my emphasis) is seriously misleading, not only because it omits any mention of Brecht's contact with Karl Korsch, which might complicate Brecht's reading of Lenin,⁵ but also because his image of a culturally united "revolutionary proletariat" flickers and dies in the light of the hotly contested contemporary debate among socialists about the value of a separatist proletarian culture (suggested by work on the *Lehrstück* with workers' clubs) as opposed to an appropriation of the bourgeois heritage for an audience under socialism (promulgated by Lukács and Franz Mehring).⁶

In concluding his essay with the sweeping claim that Brecht somehow resolved this debate by incorporating both "old forms" and new onto a higher level (BTT, 85) and that his theories required only the advent of a "progressive audience" (86) to be practically realized, Hecht constructs a teleological reading that obscures the persistence of this debate as well as the nagging difficulty - which Brecht could not ignore - of creating a socialist audience in the absence of a grassroots

revolution (GW 16, 907) out of a working class fragmented and debased by Nazi rule (*Arbeitsjournal*, 596-97). While we should in no way underestimate the historical urgency of this "revolution from above", especially in the first decade of GDR cultural policies,⁷ and the possibility of theatre's contribution to those policies, nor, in reaction, attempt to dismiss Brecht's commitment by reviving the cold war cliché of the misguided artist in a hostile environment, we cannot ignore the critical implications of Hecht's teleology. By reading Brecht's incorporation of Marxist critique into his theory and practice of theatre as a complete and inevitable *conversion*, and by remaining silent on the controversy about cultural practice within that discourse in general and Brecht's continuing dialogue within that controversy in particular,⁸ Hecht's account threatens to degenerate into a hackneyed Portrait of the Marxist - which does both Brecht and his Marxist readers a grave disservice.

- Es ist die Art der Kunst, die Frage aufzuwerfen, ohne daß eine Lösung gewußt wird . . .
- Das ist auch die Art der Wissenschaft.

"Dialog des Messingkaufs" (GW 16, 571)

In his numerous dramatic dialogues on theory, of which the *Messingkauf* is only the best known, Brecht returns again and again to a central question: how to forge an intelligent and intelligible theatrical representation out of two apparently contradictory terms - spectacle and speculative conception - both derived from the Greek root, "thea", or "sight". The kingpin in this combination of spectacle and conception is the spectator's (self)recognition as sovereign or "prüfend Schauende"; in the absence of this critical intervention, within social relations that stifle criticism, the power of the spectacle may be coercive rather than enlightening.

Understanding this ambiguous moment at the heart of Brecht's project requires us to look at both Brecht's understanding of his Enlightened sources and the contemporary context that frames that understanding. We might begin testing the critical sharpness of the "eingreifendes Denken" (GW 20, 65-75) that Brecht claims for his theatre by turning to Brecht's exploration of the sources of the Enlightenment in the early modern period. Several contributions to *Brechts Theorie des Theaters* point out Brecht's debt to Bacon's *Novum Organum* as a source for reflections on what he understands as the Renaissance conception of a "manageable world", the relationships between amazement and discovery (16, 661 ff), "Ahnung" and "Wissen" (16, 641) in the critical observer, whether artistic or scientific.

The significance of Brecht's comments on Bacon (and Galileo) as exemplars of this attitude does not simply lie in a universally valid scientific attitude, nor in a merely formulaic adaptation of Bacon's aphorisms on amazement or on mastering Nature by obeying it. Gert Irmlitz's article, ostensibly on the "Philosophische Quellen Brechts," is particularly problematic. Instead of an analysis of the significance of

these sources - Bacon, Socrates, Hegel - as opposed to others, the article simply lumps together Bacon and Descartes, Newton and the logical positivists, all of whom allegedly share a "general logical principle" of the rational observation of the "Auge des Naturforschers". This "intellektuelle Synthese" supposedly underpins a transhistorical concept of scientific rationality, yet it takes no account of Brecht's specific objections to Descartes' concept of the rational Cartesian subject on the one hand, and the logical positivists on the other (10, 132 ff), for their insufficiently dialectical attention to the ways in which social praxis determines philosophical practice. Further, this reading obscures the historical context of Brecht's concept of the *Naturforschers* critical sovereignty as well as the historical contradictions in the development of scientific rationality that problematize the power of the rational "wissenschaftliche Haltung".

In order to clarify Brecht's interest in the origins of this "attitude", we need to understand how Brecht's enthusiasm for the "Neuzeit" is mediated by his historical position. The model of Brecht's response to the *Neuzeit*, as in the New Age aria in *Life of Galileo* as well as his several comments on Bacon, is clearly the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.⁹ The Manifesto's contribution to Brecht's thoughts on the relationship between "scientific" enlightenment and social emancipation lies not simply in its account of the rising bourgeoisie as a progressive class, whose powers of inventiveness and "ruthless critique of everything existing" made its members capable of overturning oppressive relations of production and of transforming natural and human resources into a "manageable world". It is also located in its focus on the doubly historical character of the socialist appropriation of the "Neuzeit" as a revolutionary exemplum. On the one hand, Brecht follows Marx in looking to this period of the revolutionary bourgeoisie for exemplary critical strategies that the revolutionary proletariat might use to overthrow bourgeois power. On the other, Brecht undoes the Manifesto's emphasis on emancipation through enlightenment, pressing beyond Marx's ambivalent response to the consequences of this radical transformation (*MEW*, IV, 468) - to highlight not only the alienation and exploitation of the working class (*GW* 16, 669), but also the growing destructiveness of technological development in the 20th century. Brecht's enthusiasm for technology should be juxtaposed with this image of its negative dialectic: "This new age of ours turned out to be a whore splattered with blood"; the contradictions in the relationship between production and social revolution may persist beyond a change in the owners of the means of production.

Klaus-Detlef Müller's article, "Der Philosoph auf dem Theater", develops the emancipatory moment of Brecht's Marxist engagement with the Enlightenment without, however, examining the potential contradiction within. Juxtaposing Brecht's use of the "frühe Neuzeit" as a model for a future "wissenschaftliches Zeitalter" with his concern for a timely and critical theatre, Müller shows how Brecht's contact with Karl Korsch shaped the former's portrayal of the Marxist philosopher's program for "engagement" and "Ideologiekritik" in the *Messingkauf*, as well as his general conception of the sovereign subject of "eingreifen-

des Denken", whose ability to change the world depends on his rational grasp of it. Müller thus follows Heinz Brüggemann's interpretation of Korsch's and Brecht's focus on the "philosophical side of Marxism" (*BTT*, 152)¹⁰ as an attempt to rescue Marxism from the objectivistic "Wissenschaft" it has become in the hands of Lenin (*BTT*, 166) and to heal the breach between (philosophical) speculation and revolutionary action.¹¹

Even as he points to the subjective moment of the enlightened "Ansicht" and "Absicht" (16, 687) in Brecht's critical theatre, Müller continues to refer to Brecht's theatre as an "Instrument der Aufklärung", which, although it claims to place spectators at the center, leaves them at the mercy of this instrument, suspending, if only temporarily, the crucial link between Enlightenment and emancipation through "Kritik". Müller has to acknowledge the widening gap between these two terms in Brecht's theory and practice, as both become elevated to classical status (*BTT*, 175), but instead of confronting this problem, he (dis)solves it by blaming "kulinärische Rezeption" on the one hand and asserting rather vaguely on the other that the "Spannung zwischen Intention und Wirkung" can be explained by Brecht's incomplete acknowledgement of the aesthetic autonomy of theatre as a consequence of his overestimation of its enlightening and emancipatory potential. Müller ends his essay by leaving unsolved the issue he briefly addresses: the tendency among Brecht's official heirs to treat his stage pictures as edifying exemplars, whose enlightenment operates by demanding assent to, rather than radical critique of, these masterful images is not the simple result of an unfortunate "kulinärische Rezeption" (*BTT*, 173), but may turn out to be the legacy of an untimely adherence to the precepts of the early Enlightenment. This untimeliness manifests itself in the gap between Brecht's faith in the correspondence of enlightenment and emancipation, production and revolution, which he inherits from Marx, and "real existing socialism's" claims to resolve the dialectic in the assertion that the "socialist mode of production" eliminates the need and desire for further emancipation.¹² Faced with a working class (as yet) incapable of critical sovereignty, Brecht's earlier enthusiasm for the spectator's double critique (15, 222) gives way in the 1950's to a grudging admission that, in the absence of revolutionary emancipation, this audience is unlikely to respond to enlightenment in an enlightened way (16, 907):

Der reinigende Prozeß einer Revolution war Deutschland nicht beschieden worden. Die große Umwälzung, die sonst im Gefolge einer Revolution kommt, kam ohne sie. . . (Bei) einer neuen Lebensweise, . . . der noch bei breiten Schichten die entsprechende neue Denk- und Fühlweise fehlte, kann die Kunst nicht ohne weiteres an Instinkt und Gefühl ihres mannigfaltig zusammengesetzten Publikums appellieren. Sie kann sich nicht blind führen lassen durch Beifall oder Mißfallen; andererseits, darf sie sich, führend, indem sie die Interessen der neuen führenden Klasse vertritt, von ihrem Publikum niemals trennen.

Brecht's reflections here on his work at the Berliner Ensemble reveal the tension between desire to keep faith in the centrality of the critical audience and his somewhat paternalistic regret that this audience needs still to be *coerced* into assent to "new ways of thinking and feeling." Brecht's own critique of the stubborn brutality of cultural force-feeding on the model of a "Prussian eagle feeding its young" thus returns to trouble his "Wunschbild" of theatre's participation in the "Bewußtseinseinsbildung der Nation." (16, 931)

This problem goes deeper than the surface of an unfortunately "kulinarische Rezeption" and cannot be solved by blaming a Western "critical mafia" for failing to take account of the social(ist) context of Brecht's work.¹³ As Heiner Müller - one of Brecht's more critical heirs - remarks, the aborted revolution is a specter haunting German history from the Enlightenment, doomed - in the absence of mass support on the French model - to remain in the realm of the Idea.¹⁴ Indeed, Müller goes so far as to suggest that Brecht's theatre theory and practice in his last years succumbs to the very fate he attempts to avoid - *Tod durch Beifall* - not simply due to institutional conditions beyond his direct control, but arising out of the very form - synthetic, classical, even tragic - of Brecht's last performed plays such as *Die Tage der Kommune*, which encourage identification with the pathos of the failed revolution, rather than a critique of the conditions of its failure. (Fatzer, 18).

Whether or not one finally assents to Müller's reading of Brecht's cooptation from "Forscher" to "Funktionär", rebellious son to political Father, Müller raises questions about Brecht's status as an exemplary enlightened figure that cannot be ignored or resolved by respectful repetition of "Brechtian axioms" about critical sovereignty - in the face of its absence. If we are to critically inherit Brecht by stripping away the trappings of the paternalistic "Lehrer" so as to make better use of the critical "Forscher", we have to acknowledge the difficulty of this inheritance; we cannot silently pass over the problematic history of the German Enlightenment or ignore the ongoing debate on the relationship - if any - that remains between enlightened reason and emancipation. The importance of this debate (in which Lyotard and Habermas are only the most visible antagonists)¹⁵ for our evaluation of Brecht's contemporary significance has been as yet only marginally acknowledged¹⁶ and remains largely unmentioned or unmentionable in the context of collections such as this one, which claim to provide the definitive word on Brechtian theory. We can hope that the (long overdue) translation of the theoretical corpus will stimulate critical engagement.

"Brecht gebrauchen, ohne ihn zu kritisieren, ist Verrat."

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NOTES

1. Roland Barthes, "Les tâches de la critique brechtienne", *Essais critiques*. Paris, 1980, p. 86.
2. Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke*. Frankfurt, 1967, XVI, 640. Subsequent references to *GW*.
3. Klaus-Detlef Müller, "Der Philosoph auf dem Theater", *Brechts Theorie des Theaters*, Frankfurt, 1986, p. 144.
4. For an authoritative discussion of the question of the classical heritage in the GDR, see the essays under the rubric of "Die Klassik-Debatte", in *Wer war Brecht? Wandlung und Entwicklung der Ansichten über Brecht im Spiegel von Sinn und Form*. Ed. Werner Mittenzwei. Berlin, 1977; for a critique of this essentially Lukácsian position in the light of the ambivalent value of the Enlightenment in the historical context of Germany after Nazism, see Heiner Müller, "Brief", in the same volume.
5. For a systematic account of Brecht's theoretical debt to Korsch and for his critique of the objectivist reflection theory of culture promulgated by Lenin from the point of view of a critical defence of *eingreifendes Denken* (grounded in the *Theses on Feuerbach*) see Heinz Brüggemann, *Literarische Technik und soziale Revolution*. Rowohlt, 1973, esp. Chs. 5&6. Those who base a dismissal of Korsch's influence on Brecht on the basis of reading Brüggemann, as does Jan Knopf in his essay on *Verfremdung* in the volume under discussion (pp. 99-101 and notes), might consult Brecht's comments on the subject (*GW*, 20) as well as his letters to Korsch (*Alternative*, no. 105, 1975).
6. For a historical analysis of this debate on the relative merits of radical theatrical innovation and traditional realist forms (which resurfaced very quickly in the GDR) in its late Weimar context, see Helga Gallas, *Marxistische Literaturtheorie*. Darmstadt, 1971.
7. See Werner Mittenzwei, "Der Realismus-Streit über Brecht", in *Wer war Brecht?*, pp. 7-114. Significantly, Mittenzwei's chief contribution to *Brechts Theorie des Theaters*, "Die Spur der Lehrstücktheorie", opens by defending Brecht's Lehrstück against the orthodox Marxist-Leninist dismissal, using Rainer Steinweg's seminal account of the Lehrstück as a radical productive departure from the theory and practice of theatre for contemplation and consumption (which would include some of Brecht's earlier work such as the *Dreigroschenoper*). What appears as an acknowledgement of the Lehrstück's actual value beyond the orthodox category of the classical heritage, however, turns into an attack that shifts the blame for *Linksabweichung* from Brecht to those West German critics - Steinweg, Hildegard Brenner and contributors to *Alternative* - who endorse the Lehrstück as a militant separatist practice, so as to "save" activist material such as *Die Mutter* as works in the repertoire of exemplary showpieces and, by separating them from their activist context - theatre without spectators building active *Einverständnis* - to incorporate the theory as an endorsement of an aesthetics of essentially passive *assent* to these exemplars.
8. John Willett's detailed account of Brecht's long and sometimes circuitous march in "The Changing Role of Politics," *Brecht in Context*. London, 1983, pp. 178-201, provides a valuable corrective to Hecht's reading by stressing the contradictory character of Brecht's encounter with Marxism and Marxists while continuing rightly to insist that Brecht's work cannot be fully understood outside the context of his commitment.
9. "Manifest der kommunistischen Partei", Marx, Engels: *Werke* (hereafter, *MEW*). Berlin, 1983, 462-93, esp. 463-68.
10. Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*. Leipzig, 1928, p. 49.

11. For Brüggenmann's account, see note 6 above. For a more general appeal for the theoretical restoration of the socially reflective moment of philosophy to the objectivist, instrumental reasoning of 20th century *Wissenschaft*, see Max Horkheimer, "Traditionelle und kritische Theorie", *Kritische Theorie*. Frankfurt, 1968, II, 137-200 and Herbert Marcuse, "Kritische Theorie und Philosophie", *Kritik und Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt, 1965, I.
12. For an account of the progressive contradiction between such claims and the persistence of alienating social and productive relations played out in the work of GDR writers whose commitment to representing progress in the (re)construction of the GDR faded with the unfulfilled promise of emancipation, see Helen Fehevary, "Prometheus Rebound: Technology and the Dialectic of Myth" and David Bathrick, "Affirmative and Negative Culture: Technology and the Left Avant-Garde", in *The Technological Imagination*. Ed. Teresa de Lauretis, Andreas Huyssen and Kathleen Woodward. Madison, 1980.
13. Manfred Wekwerth's contribution to *Brechts Theorie des Theaters*, which claims to cover the vast terrain of "Brecht-Theater heute", limits his appraisal of "true" Brechtian theatre essentially to the Berliner Ensemble and berates Western formalist directors and the Western "Kritiker-Mafia" for reducing Brecht to a style. Wekwerth bases these remarks on anecdotal accounts of his work in Sweden and the UK (the National Theatre's *Coriolanus*), significantly without any attempt to acknowledge or account for the productive and dialectic attention to Brecht's specific combination of theatre and politics in Italy or France where this combination has had a much greater impact than in the UK or USA.
14. Heiner Müller, "Fatzer + Keuner", *Brecht-Jahrbuch 1980*. Ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand. Frankfurt, 1981, pp. 14-21 (hereafter, *Fatzer*). Müller is by no means alone in this observation; he has an important predecessor in Büchner, whose scathing materialist critique of the Jungdeutschen literary road to revolution exposed the political and ideological fragility of the German Enlightenment.
15. See Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*. Frankfurt, 1985 and J.F. Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*. Paris, 1979; *The Postmodern Condition*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, 1984. For an indication of further developments, see Fredric Jameson's critical introduction to the translation; Seyla Benhabib, "Epistemologies of the Postmodern: a Rejoinder to Jean-François Lyotard", *New German Critique*, no. 33, 1984, 103-26, and Richard Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity", in *Habermas and Modernity*. Ed. Richard Bernstein. Cambridge, 1985.
16. See the articles by David Bathrick and Helen Fehevary mentioned in note 12; also Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*. Bloomington, 1987, esp. Ch. 1, "The Hidden Dialectic: Avant-Garde -Technology -Mass Culture."

Klaus-Detlef Müller (ed.). *Bertolt Brecht: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung. Beck'sche Elementarbücher (Arbeitsbücher zur Literaturgeschichte)*. München: Beck, 1985. 432 pages.

In the previous volume of the *Brecht Yearbook*, Antony Tatlow opened his remarks on "The Way Ahead: Brecht and Postmodernism" by reflecting that although there exist various publishers' series on writers and thinkers who are thought to have made significant contributions to modern culture, not one has yet included a book on Brecht. Tatlow muses that there is a good reason why this book has yet to appear: "Nobody is yet in a position to write it. ... Because we are only beginning to understand the depth of Brecht's work and the complexity of its relationship to our changing world." What Tatlow calls for is an approach that will do justice to the depth and the psycho-social creativity and complexity in Brecht's work.

Is the collective study *Bertolt Brecht: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung*, by Jörg-Wilhelm Joost, Klaus-Detlef Müller and Michael Voges - all three from the Institute for Literature at the University of Kiel, F.R.G. - an answer to Tatlow's call? Their "workbook" on Brecht is one of a series of monographs on illustrious German literary figures, including Hartmann von Aue, Lessing, Heine, Grimmelshausen and others. It is set up as a very thorough, very systematic, very German study, consisting of eleven main sections in linear, chronological order.

The book features an annotated bibliography at the beginning of each of the eleven sections as well as of each of their subdivisions, and the end of the book contains a "Synoptic Table" covering data about Brecht's life and about cultural, political, social, economic and technological developments during Brecht's life span. There is an additional, mostly annotated, bibliography of 250 more titles (raising the total to 470 titles) and a name index in addition to an index of all the Brecht works mentioned. The study has been edited with great care and there are few typographical errors. All in all, the tome is an informative reference tool, particularly in the areas which have not been extensively and systematically covered in other works on Brecht. The language used is generally clear, and overly long sentences have been avoided. A statement like: "The theory of the epic-dialectic theater is ... not foremost a theory of the political theater but a political theory of the theater," is so concise that it might have been coined by Brecht himself (p. 201).

That is no accident, since the authors largely identify with Brecht. Like him, they are Marxists and they tend to see Brecht's total oeuvre as a conscious and increasingly sophisticated expression of his political and aesthetic convictions. For Brecht's pre-Marxist period, the theoretical background of the present study is predicated upon the crisis of the individual and upon the observations of Peter Szondi and others that drama as a rendition of inter-personal discourse became outdated by twentieth century reality (pp. 90ff). Subsequently Brecht's plays, from *Baal* (1918-20) through the versions of *A Man's a Man* (1924-26), are strictly seen as stages in his progress in overcoming this crisis of the drama. A figure of portent, like the Widow Begbick, is barely mentioned since she does not fit the authors' frame of thought.

Many a time, while reading my way through the study, I was reminded of one of Brecht's favorite Charlie Chaplin scenes. In *Working Journal* Brecht writes: "In order to fit neatly into compartments, literary works have to be cut to size. I once saw Charlie Chaplin pack a suitcase. Whatever ended up sticking out, the legs of his trousers and the ends of his shirts, he simply cut off with a pair of scissors" (*Gesammelte Werke*, 19, 415). That the authors of the present monograph are aware of the dangers of trying to squeeze any segment of Brecht's work into too narrow a compartment, is evident in their critique of Reiner Steinweg's thesis that the *Lehrstücke* constitute the theater of the future and that the major plays of Brecht's exile years should be seen as "expedient solutions" (p. 148). This critique is justified. Yet, since the authors allowed themselves major simplifications and omissions, their critical stance is reminiscent of the proverbial pot calling the kettle black! Of course, the double task the authors set themselves is a momentous one: 1) to offer a systematic introduction to Brecht's complete oeuvre based on the latest research findings and 2) to stress works that have hitherto been neglected. How did they manage to pack an overview of the socio-political and literary conditions in Germany, as well as a treatment of the playwright's politico-aesthetic experiments of the late twenties, plus two sections on Brecht's theoretical reflections about the media and the theater, in addition to a treatise on the *Threepenny Novel* and a study of some of Brecht's late adaptations, particularly of *The Tutor*, in their neatly bundled 432 pages? The answer is that they did not include some important works like *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, *The Exception and the Rule*, the shorter prose works and "The Hollywood Elegies" and other poetry from the American exile.

The authors grant in their introduction that omitting the first of these works is problematic, claiming that *Saint Joan* simply would not have fit into the frame of reference they used in dealing with Brecht's politico-aesthetic experiments of the late twenties and early thirties (p.18). Obviously, the complex Saint Joan figure is much harder to categorize than the Young Comrade of *The Measures Taken*, because despite her failing in the class struggle, she cannot simply stand as a "model for asocial behavior" (pp.154f). Moreover, the authors' linear development would have been disturbed if they had dealt with Brecht's treatment of a popular heroine and with his reception of the German classics at a point where they were concentrating on the more radical experiments of the *Lehrstücke*. In the further course of the study there is at least occasional reference made to *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*. Not so, however, to *The Seven Deadly Sins*. It is odd that Anna/Anna should not even be mentioned when the authors are dealing with the Shen Te/Shui Ta persona split (pp. 287ff).

Apart from primary texts the authors did not include, there are secondary materials they treated the way Charlie Chaplin treated his pants and shirts. They simply cut off what would not fit in. For example, taking note bibliographically of Regina Wagenknecht's treatise *Bertolt Brechts Hauspostille* (p.73). They ignore her reading of "The Ballad of Hanna Cash" as parody and reiterate instead the old, implausible and

sentimental interpretation of Hanna's devotion to her abusive and asocial Kent as proof of the moral superiority of the downtrodden (p.79). When dealing with the "Buckow Elegies" they also snip off the interpretations of thoughtful readers like Peter Paul Schwarz and Michael Hamburger (p.301 and 317ff.). Although the authors are correct in stressing Brecht's masterful mediation between the subjective and the objective in these elegies, their strictly political reading of a poem like "Iron" fails to take into account what Brecht had said some thirty years earlier, when he praised the "inexorable flexibility" of the "Tree Green" as a necessary survival technique (GW 8, 186).

The last section of the book, dealing with preliminary reflections on Brecht-reception in the F.R.G., consists mainly of Hans Mayer's speech on the occasion of Brecht's eightieth birthday. Mayer reminisces about Brecht at age 20, 30, 40 etc. For the year 1938 he dwells briefly on the Svendborg poem, "Legend of the Origin of the Book Tao-Te-Ching on Lao-Tsū's Road into Exile" stressing that the poem deals with the importance of a teacher who is minded and whose teachings are called for. This was obviously of great concern to Brecht, but Mayer fails to mention the content of the teachings, the Lao-Tsū-Brecht lesson that "soft water, by attrition / Over the years will grind strong rocks away. / In other words, that hardness must lose the day" (p. 369; GW 9, 660; John Willett's translation).

This neglect of and abstraction from the poetic essence of Brecht's work is in many ways typical for the whole study since Müller and his co-workers are simply too preoccupied with what they perceive as Brecht's authorial intent. Another example: early on, when discussing the Baal-figure, they state that the lyrical mode corresponds to the great individual (p. 98). Subsequently they argue that Brecht, particularly in his dramas, had overcome the individual since it had outlived its purpose. Hence they do not deal with the poetry in Brecht's plays nor with the important role Brecht gave to woman figures in many of his pieces and with the correlation between these figures and the lyrical gems that stud his plays. Again Charlie Chaplin's scissors come to mind!

While it is instructive and refreshing to read a Brecht study that does not dwell on biographical details and does not attack Brecht for his Marxist convictions nor tries to make these secondary to his personal needs and/or his poetic inspiration, the way Martin Esslin, Ronald Hayman and others have done, it is also disappointing that the three German Brecht scholars by and large have not deigned to take the work of their Anglo-Saxon colleagues into account. There is no mention of the recent Willett/Manheim translations and of the thorough research that went into their apparatus. The ample bibliography of the Müller team features just one single title from John Willett, Antony Tatlow and Michael Morley each. Keith A. Dickson's challenging Brecht study, *Towards Utopia* (1978) is listed but not annotated or otherwise referred to. The feminist critique of Brecht's work has been totally ignored.

Hence, although definitely useful and informative for both Marxist and non-Marxist readers all over the world, the book under review fails to update the German reader on the latest Brecht research elsewhere.

For all its considerable merits, the book does not answer Antony Tatlow's call for a comprehensive study that would do justice to the depth and the psycho-sociological creativity and complexity in Brecht's work.

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Peter Whitaker. *Brecht's Poetry: A Critical Study*. Oxford Modern Languages and Literature Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. 284 pages.

Marion Fuhrmann. *Hollywood und Buckow: Politisch-ästhetische Strukturen in den Elegien Brechts*. Pahl-Rugenstein Hochschulschriften: Gesellschafts- und Naturwissenschaften 195. Serie Literatur und Geschichte. Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1985. 227 pages.

Bertolt Brechts *Buckower Elegien*. Mit Kommentaren von Jan Knopf. Edition Suhrkamp 1397. Neue Folge 397. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986. 127 pages.

Weite und Vielfalt einer realistischen Lyrik

Noch im Jahre 1982 klagte Christiane Bohnert bezüglich der Brecht-Lyrik-Rezeption, daß Brecht für den größten Teil der Forscher, Kritiker, Dramaturgen und des Publikums "tot" sei und daß die nur noch vereinzelt betriebene Forschung jede Diskussion vermissen lasse.¹ Dieser Topos, dem wir in vielen Einleitungen begegnen, war schon damals eine Übertreibung, aber seit 1982 erschienen außer Bohnerts Arbeit mindestens vier weitere Bücher, welche sich alle durch ihren relativ breiten Horizont auszeichnen.² Peter Whitaker meint 1985 allerdings noch immer, daß Übersichtswerke fehlen und die meisten Veröffentlichungen nur als "small-scale studies of sources and influences or ... interpretations of individual poems" (S. 3) zu betrachten sind. Sein Werk wird denn auch angekündigt als "the first comprehensive critical survey of its subject to appear in English ... drawing on the most up-to-date publications". Letzteres ist nun leider nicht der Fall. Selbstverständlich kann man keinem Autor vorwerfen, daß er nicht auf parallel entstehende Werke eingeht. Es läßt sich aber nicht entschuldigen, daß z.B. Bohnert nur in einigen oberflächlichen Bemerkungen auftaucht (u.a. S. 235, Anmerkung 5) und auch nicht in den unsorgfältig zusammengestellten Index aufgenommen ist, während Hartinger (1982), obwohl sie doch zum Teil mit demselben Material arbeitet, überhaupt nicht erwähnt wird. Auch bleibt wichtige Literatur der

siebziger Jahre unverarbeitet, oder sie wird mit pauschalen Urteilen neutralisiert, wie zum Beispiel Pietzcker (1974).³ Die 1985 erschienene Arbeit reagiert hauptsächlich auf eine knappe Auswahl aus der Literatur der sechziger und siebziger Jahre.

Die relative "Unabhängigkeit" Whitakers hat nicht nur Nachteile, sondern wirkt oft sehr erfrischend. Mit wohlthuender ästhetischer und politischer Unvoreingenommenheit untersucht er vor allem die weniger bedachten Gedichte. *Die Hauspostille* nimmt nur knappe sieben Seiten in Anspruch und dann entfernt Whitaker sich schnell vom jungen Brecht, um sich den "realistischen" und politischen Gedichten zuzuwenden, die tatsächlich den Großteil der Brechtschen Lyrik ausmachen: Das *Lesebuch für Städtebewohner*, die *Drei Soldaten*, die *Svendborger Gedichte*, das *Lehrgedicht von der Natur der Menschen*, die Satiren, die *Buckower Elegien* und die *Erziehung der Hirse*.

Whitaker arbeitet nah am Text, was seine Aussagen in höchstem Maße nachprüfbar und nachvollziehbar macht. Bei ihm findet man keine Schein-Wissenschaftlichkeit in Form von theoretischen Konstruktionen, die assoziative Spekulationen verhüllen; stattdessen hat man es mit ruhig argumentierenden Paraphrasen einzelner Texte zu tun, die, weil sie auch immer den wechselseitigen Zusammenhang und den historischen Kontext dieser Texte berücksichtigen, oft zu interessanten Verallgemeinerungen führen.

Wie andere vor ihm, so nimmt auch Whitaker Abstand von der "Bruchtheorie" und wählt eine Perspektive, die es ihm möglich macht, den ideologischen und ästhetischen Zusammenhang der Brechtschen Lyrik zu sehen. Mit Recht gibt er den Perioden nach 1926 sehr viel Gewicht. Anhand einer sorgfältig aufgestellten Texttypologie zeigt er, wie reich die lyrische Formenwelt Brechts in diesen Perioden ist. Wie Ulla Lerg-Kill (1986) kommt auch er zu einer funktionalistischen Ästhetik.⁴ Während Lerg-Kill aber die rhetorisch-publizistische Funktion als die steuernde betrachtet, wird diese Lyrik nach Whitaker vor allem durch den Willen, Wirklichkeit *darzustellen*, also durch ihre referentielle Funktion beherrscht. Leider fehlt bei Whitaker eine systematische texttheoretische Begründung seiner interessanten Ergebnisse.

Die frühe Lyrik wird, so meint Whitaker, durch den Kampf gegen die Metaphysik geprägt, der mit der Bekehrung zum "Gott der Dinge, wie sie sind" endet. Daß das *Lesebuch für Städtebewohner* und andere Gedichte, die in derselben Zeit entstehen, als Experimente in einer realistischen Lyrik gesehen werden, liegt auf der Hand. Die Wendung zum historischen und dialektischen Materialismus ist denn auch kein "Bruch", sondern eine logische Konsequenz. Die Realitätsdarstellung geschieht in den großen Lehrgedichten natürlich ganz anders als in Kurzpoesie wie den Elegien. Dies demonstriert Whitaker in vielen Analysen. Seine Ergebnisse müssen aber unvollständig bleiben, solange er solche Begriffe wie "Lehrgedicht" (S. 60) oder "Kinderbuch" (S. 67) unscharf definiert und nicht von einem klar umschriebenen kommunikationstheoretischen Modell ausgeht. So hat die Tatsache, daß Brecht an eine phonographische Publikation seiner *Lesebuch-Gedichte* gedacht hat, zweifellos Konsequenzen für die Form dieser Texte, die Whitaker nicht berücksichtigt (S. 39-61). Auch läßt die

Richtigkeit der These von der Fiktion des "inkompetenten Dichters" in den *Drei Soldaten* sich erst beweisen, nachdem man festgestellt hat, daß das als "Kinderbuch" angebotene Werk eigentlich für Erwachsene geschrieben wurde. Kinder wären doch überhaupt nicht imstande, diese fingierte Inkompetenz zu erkennen. Whitaker läßt derartige Zweifel nicht aufkommen, sondern geht vom Spiel-Charakter des Buches aus, ohne zwischen Spiel für Erwachsene und Spiel für Kinder zu differenzieren. Bei der Behandlung anderer Formen wie Epigrammen und Elegien, vermißt man ein explizites literaturtheoretisches Modell aber kaum. Wenn man Whitakers Buch nach dem Kriterium der Brauchbarkeit beurteilt, kann man es jedem, der sich mit der Lyrik Brechts befaßt, empfehlen.

Marion Fuhrmanns Warnung im Vorwort ihrer strukturalistischen Untersuchung, sie gehe davon aus, "daß eine zielgerichtete Diskussion keiner künstlichen 'Verfröhlchung' bedarf, um den Leser zu interessieren" (S. 9), ist für den theoretischen Teil ihrer Arbeit eine Untertreibung. Warum soll es für eine "politisch-ästhetische" Untersuchung ein Nachteil sein, wenn der Autor sich nicht nur um das Interesse, sondern auch um das Wohlgefallen seiner Leser kümmert?

Fuhrmanns Buch hat im Gegensatz zu Whitakers Werk eine klar umschriebene theoretische Basis, wie bereits angedeutet, eine strukturalistische. Den Vorwurf, Strukturalismus abstrahiere vom gesellschaftlichen Kontext, weist sie mit überzeugenden Argumenten zurück (S. 12). Zwischen Jakobson und Benjamin sieht sie eine Verbindung, und zwar in der beiden gemeinsamen Auffassung von der *relativen* Eigenständigkeit der Kunst und der Kunstproduktion. Wohin der Weg führt, wird aus diesen kurzen einleitenden Bemerkungen klar: *Politisch-ästhetische Strukturen* lautet der Untertitel. Benjamin macht, wie man weiß, den ästhetischen Wert eines literarischen Textes von der Fortschrittlichkeit seiner politischen Tendenz und von seinem Beitrag zur Umfunktionierung des bürgerlichen Produktions- und Publikationsapparats abhängig. Die ästhetische Organisation des Textes umschreibt er denn auch konsequent als "literarische *Technik*". Fuhrmann findet das Instrumentarium, mit dem sie die technische Organisation der Brechtschen Elegien aufdecken will, indem sie Bühlers berühmtes Organonmodell und Jakobsons informationstheoretisches Kommunikationsmodell ineinanderschiebt. Ästhetische Begeisterung klingt in Fuhrmanns Arbeit nur vereinzelt durch und sie endet mit dem charakteristischen Satz: "Im Vergleich zu diesen 'reduzierten' Gedichten [den *Hollywood Elegien*] zeigen die *Buckower Elegien* auch, daß es Brecht trotz aller Schwierigkeiten 1953 möglich war, engagierte Gedichte zu schreiben, die in ihrer scheinbar einfachen Bildlichkeit komplex organisiert und *daher* [Hervorhebung durch den Verfasser] auch schön sind" (S. 149). Das ist nun alles sehr legitim, weil Fuhrmann genau sagt, was sie will und Schritt für Schritt ihre Argumentation offenlegt.

Fuhrmann fängt mit einer Problematisierung von der Bildlichkeit der Elegien an und deckt die schwachen Stellen in der theoretischen Basis der wichtigsten Literatur auf.⁵ Das Problem der Unterschiede zwischen sprachlichem Bild und Gemälde einerseits und Foto andererseits, die in

der Selektion der Bildelemente und in der Freiheit, beziehungsweise Unfreiheit, welche der Produzent dabei hat, liegen, scheint mir noch nicht vollständig zu Ende gedacht. Wahrscheinlich ist Kracauers Buch⁶ in diesem Zusammenhang doch schon überholt, wie Fuhrmann selbst in einer Anmerkung über Experimentalfotografie bemerkt (S. 154). Aber auch streng naturalistische Malerei ließe sich nur schwer in ihre Theorie einpassen. Begriffe aus dem Bereich des Films wie "Überblendung" lassen sich dagegen leicht auf eine wiederholt von Brecht in den Elegien angewandte Technik übertragen.

Nach einer klaren Beschreibung der Schichtenstruktur des poetischen Textes und der Problematisierung der poetischen Funktion im Kommunikationsprozeß wird in eindringlichen Analysen die relevanteste Forschungsliteratur besprochen: Vollmar, Link, Rastegar. Interessant ist vor allem die Konfrontation der beiden strukturalistischen Modelle von Link und Fuhrmann. Auch in der kritischen Darstellung seiner Opponentin bleibt Links Emblem-Modell, das immerhin vor mehr als zehn Jahren zu Resultaten führte, die für das Verständnis der *Buckower Elegien* richtungsweisend waren, eine - allerdings zu modifizierende - Alternative.

Nach der Behandlung der literarischen Tradition der Elegie und der Problematisierung des "lyrischen Ich" anhand der Elegie *Deutschland 1952* folgt die Analyse der *Hollywood Elegien*. Charakteristisch für diese Elegien sind, nach Fuhrmann, die "doppelte Distanz" und die Reduktion der "klassischen" Elegie (S. 66-69): "Die Distanz, mit der die *Hollywood Elegien* geschrieben sind ..., ist die Distanz desjenigen, der die Verhältnisse des Marktes Kalifornien durchschaut und sich bemüht, nicht allzusehr von ihnen korruptiert zu werden ... Dies hat aber die Distanz von allen zur Folge, die sich korruptieren lassen, im Schlamm versinken" (S. 68). Die Elegien stellen sich zwar der Realität entgegen, indem sie ihre Strukturen entlarven, aber es werden in ihnen keine Ansätze zu ihrer Überwindung aufgezeigt. Die Distanz zwischen dem lyrischen Ich und den gezeigten Verhältnissen ist so groß, daß nur noch eine "reduzierte" Lyrik möglich ist (S. 68f).

Der größte Teil des Buches enthält ausführliche und überzeugende Analysen der *Buckower Elegien*. Garantiert die Anwendung von Fuhrmanns strukturalistischem Modell in allen Fällen das Ausschließen assoziativer Spekulation? Die eigentlichen Probleme der strukturalistischen Interpretation von Gedichten bestehen in der Beantwortung der Frage, welche Elemente der verschiedenen Ebenen - der der Signifikanten (Schriftbild, Lautung, Metrum, Rhythmus), der Denotation (Grundbedeutung) und der Konnotation (assoziierte Nebenbedeutungen) - man aufeinander projiziert und für welche Hierarchie der Nebenbedeutungen man sich entscheidet. Zum Beispiel trägt Fuhrmanns Aussage, "Die dritte Zeile [des Gedichtes *Gewohnheiten, noch immer*] ist zudem vom i-Vokal dominiert, was ganz ihrem Inhalt entspricht [Hervorhebung durch den Verfasser]" (S. 92), auch nicht viel zum Verständnis des Gedichtes bei. In der Analyse des Gedichtes *Der Einarmige im Gehölz* richtet Fuhrmann ihre Aufmerksamkeit vor allem auf den "Widerspruch", daß der alte SS-Mann im Sommer Brennholz sammelt: Die Wühlarbeit der alten Nazis in der DDR, die zu den

Brandstiftungen am 17. Juni 1953 geführt hatte, so deutet Fuhrmann. In ihrer Interpretation bekommt aber die Tatsache, daß es gerade ein *Einarmiger* ist, der die Hand hochstreckt ("zu spüren, ob es regnet"), viel weniger Gewicht. Das bedeutet nicht, daß die - übrigens schon 1983 - von Knopf vorgeschlagene Interpretation falsch wäre, aber es ist klar, daß sie durch eine andere Selektion und Hierarchisierung der gedeuteten Bildelemente erheblich modifiziert werden könnte.⁷

Im abschließenden Kapitel betrachtet Fuhrmann die *Buckower Elegien* als Zyklus und geht dabei näher auf die von Brecht angewandten literarischen Techniken ein, wie das filmische Sehen und die Trennung der Elemente. Dies kommt beispielsweise darin zum Ausdruck, daß das Element "Traumebene", das in mehreren *Buckower Elegien* eine große Rolle spielt, nie in gleicher Weise zweimal gebraucht wird (S. 147). Auf dem Prinzip von der Trennung der Elemente beruht, nach Fuhrmann, die Dialektik des Verfremdungsverfahrens (S. 146). Bei ihrem Vergleich zwischen den *Hollywood Elegien* und den *Buckower Elegien* stellt Fuhrmann in bezug auf die Rolle des lyrischen Ich fest, daß die *Buckower Elegien* nicht bei der kritisch-distanzierten Deskription bleiben, sondern als Ergebnis der Reflexion höchst komplex organisiert sind: "Ebenso, wie das Ich oder der Sprecher auf der Denotationsebene der Elegien in die beobachteten Phänomene involviert ist, wird der Rezipient, der sich näher auf die Gedichte einläßt, in sie 'verwickelt' und aktiviert" (S. 144).

In der *edition suhrkamp* erschienen in einem Band eine revidierte Ausgabe der *Buckower Elegien* (*Gesammelte Werke* 10 - nicht 4, wie irrtümlicherweise angegeben wird - und Supplementband IV) und Kommentare von Jan Knopf: 24 Seiten Gedichte, 92 Seiten Kommentar. Es ist zwar von einer "kritischen Ausgabe" die Rede, aber das Nachwort zur Edition gibt zuwenig Information, um diesem Anspruch ganz zu genügen. Es werden nur "wichtigste Fehler" der bisherigen Ausgaben kurz genannt (S. 124). Knopf hat allerdings recht, wenn er in dieser Kurzpoesie auch noch den Unterschied zwischen *Knien* und *Knieen* für wichtig hält, und der Leser braucht denn auch nicht an der Zuverlässigkeit dieser Ausgabe zu zweifeln.

Obwohl eine verbindliche Anordnung der Gedichte durch Brecht nicht überliefert ist, macht Knopf seine Rekonstruktion der beabsichtigten Reihenfolge ohne weiteres plausibel. Die Anordnung der Gedichte ist wesentlich für den Zyklus: "Brecht wollte durch die Zusammenstellung dem einzelnen Gedicht sein Gewicht nehmen, das es isoliert beansprucht; zugleich aber gab sie ihm Raum für vielfache Brechungen und Spiegelungen, die beileibe nicht in bloßer Antithetik oder 'dialektischer' Einheit der Gegensätze aufgehen" (S. 124). Knopfs Kommentare sind denn auch zwar Einzelinterpretationen, aber sie berücksichtigen immer den zyklischen Zusammenhang. Marion Fuhrmann, deren Arbeit von Knopf betreut wurde, konnte bei der Vorbereitung ihres wichtigen Kapitels über den zyklischen Zusammenhang der *Buckower Elegien* leider noch nicht von der hier vorgeschlagenen Anordnung ausgehen.

Auch in Knopfs Kurzinterpretationen - die Bezeichnung "Kommentare" (Erläuterungen) weckt ganz andere Erwartungen - entsteht das Bild eines Lyrikers, der in einer adäquaten poetischen Form zur konkreten Wirklichkeit Stellung nehmen wollte. Diese Auffassung hatte Brecht schon 1927 in seinem berühmten Votum zum Lyrik-Wettbewerb formuliert, in dem er die Gedichte des Im- und Expressionismus spöttisch als unbrauchbare "Druck-Kunst" bezeichnete und Lyrik forderte, in der die Haltung "eines wichtigen Menschen" einer "interessierenden Sache" gegenüber vor den Lesern dokumentiert wird (GW 8, S. 55-56). Diese Auffassung einer "realistischen" Lyrik wird im Laufe seiner Entwicklung nicht nur in den verschiedenen Formen seiner Lehrdichtung praktiziert, sondern in seinem ganzen lyrischen Werk. Anders aber als in seiner didaktischen Lyrik, die ohne die Berücksichtigung ihrer konkreten kommunikativen Voraussetzungen zum Teil unverständlich - ja, vor allem ungenießbar - bleiben muß, treten die realen "Adressaten" - ihre Zahl war relativ klein! - in der "Alterslyrik" kaum in Erscheinung. In den *Buckower Elegien*, so macht Knopf deutlich, wird die Realität *dargestellt* und zwar als Übersetzung in eine "bildhafte", gestische Sprache von den realen Haltungen, die Brecht 1953 in der Gesellschaft vorfand. In den Gedichten wird auch die Verbindung von Literatur und gesellschaftlicher Produktion thematisiert, indem sie Literatur - klassische und moderne, bürgerliche und sozialistische - in sich aufnehmen und sich damit auseinandersetzen. Die Elegien verlieren sich nicht in passiver Kontemplation oder unverbindlichem dialektischem Spiel, "sondern formulieren in der 'Klage' zugleich auch den Widerstand gegen das, was beklagt wird" (S. 38).

Die "Kommentare", von denen einige schon eher veröffentlicht wurden (*Der Radwechsel*, *Beim Lesen des Horaz*, *Der Einarmige im Gehölz*)⁸, und die konzeptartig im Brecht-Handbuch (1984)⁹ zu finden sind, wollen Denkanstöße im Sinne Benjamins sein. Die Frage ist allerdings, ob die zwei Zielsetzungen - eine gewisse Summe der Forschung zu ziehen und einen Anstoß zum Selbst-Lesen und Selbst-Entdecken zu geben (S. 125) - in dieser Weise vereinbar sind. Weil die verarbeitete Literatur nicht kenntlich gemacht ist, ist der professionelle Leser nach wie vor darauf angewiesen. Die anderen Leser - u.a. Studenten und Schüler - werden die "Kommentare" kennen- und schätzen lernen als das, was sie im Grunde sind: Fesselnd geschriebene, aber gründliche und relativ abgeschlossene Kurzinterpretationen, worin die wichtigsten Ergebnisse der Forschungsliteratur verarbeitet sind. Da gibt es wenig mehr zum Selbst-Entdecken. Trotz - und in gewissem Sinne auch wegen - der unbestrittenen Qualität von Edition und Interpretation war es kein guter Gedanke, beide in einem Band zu kombinieren. Das Beispiel findet hoffentlich keine Nachahmung.

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NOTES

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