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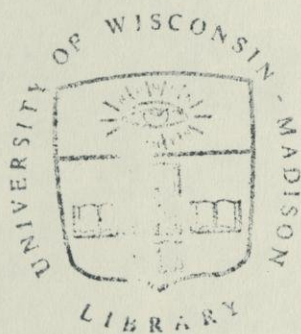
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The International Brecht Society

The International Brecht Society has been formed as a corresponding society on the model of Brecht's own unrealized plan for the Diderot Gesellschaft. Through its publications and regular international symposia, the Society encourages the free and open discussion of any and all views on the relationship of the arts to the contemporary world. The Society is open, of course, 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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Brecht's works are quoted from the twenty volume *Gesammelte Werke (GW)* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), from his *Arbeitsjournal (AJ)* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973) or from *Briefe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981).

Manuscripts for consideration for inclusion in future issues of the *Brecht Yearbook* should be sent in triplicate, cleanly typed, double-spaced (throughout, including quotations) and final form to John Fuegi, editor-in-chief, in College Park, Maryland.

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Bernhard Reich. "From the Posthumous Papers of Brecht's Co-Worker."

How can an artist successfully and unequivocally utilize the complexity of today's world for their work? A justified question. But is the solution of the abstractionists, the disaffiliation with nature and the concrete, the right one? Bernhard Reich denies this. Reich reflects upon the current tendencies of how to deal with reality—the reflection and understanding of peace—in the given political and historical context. Art in the socialist society has to be transparent for and appealing to the people; examples in history, however, of how artists were received by the people and contemporaries can only distract from any solution that leans solely on such a reception. A society which has undergone a cultural revolution certainly has broadened the scope of cultural participation. But even here the results are unsatisfactory due to the dynamics of the people. A socialist education can guide and channel artistic taste (and therewith the reception), but it must not be based on the assumption that the people are immature. Reich argues further that an examination of artistic images (if we need them at all!) cannot be done without considering the artistic form. Finally, the artistic exhilaration must not be measured in terms of the hailing to positive images, but has to be seen in light of the artistic struggle which then results in art.

Bernhard Reich presumably documented these thoughts in the early nineteen-sixties.

Bernhard Reich (Mitarbeiter von Brecht). "Aus dem Nachlaß".

Wie kann ein/e Künstler/in die Komplexität der Gegenwart erfolgreich und unzweideutig für sein/ihr Werk nutzen? Eine berechtigte Frage. Aber ist die Lösung der Abstraktionisten—die Abwendung von der Natur und dem Konkreten—die richtige? Bernhard Reich verneint dies. Reich sinnt nach über die gegenwärtigen Tendenzen, Realität in dem gegebenen politischen und historischen Kontext zu behandeln—die Reflexion und das Verständnis von Frieden. In der sozialistischen Gesellschaft muß die Kunst dem Volk zusagen und zur gleichen Zeit transparent gestaltet sein. Beispiele wie Künstler/innen vom Volk und Zeitgenossin/en aufgenommen wurden, so hat uns die Geschichte gelehrt, deuten jedoch darauf hin, daß die Lösung, die sich einzig auf eine solche Rezeption stützt, nicht die geeignete sein kann. Eine Gesellschaft, die eine Kulturrevolution erfahren hat, hat sicherlich das Ausmaß der kulturellen Partizipation vergrößert. Aber selbst hier sind die Ergebnisse unbefriedigend, was der Dynamik des Volkes zuzuschreiben ist. Sozialistische Erziehung kann den künstlerischen Geschmack (und damit auch die Rezeption) leiten und kanalisieren, sie darf allerdings nicht auf der Annahme basieren, daß das Volk unreif sei. Reich argumentiert weiter, daß eine Untersuchung künstlerischer Bilder (wenn wir diese überhaupt brauchen!) nicht ohne Berücksichtigung der artistischen Form durchgeführt werden kann. Schließlich meint Reich, daß die schöpferische Begeisterung nicht daran gemessen werden kann, inwieweit positive Bilder angestrebt werden, sondern im Lichte der künstlerischen Auseinandersetzung gesehen werden muß, die Kunst zum Ergebnis hat.

Bernhard Reich hat diese Gedanken vermutlich in den frühen sechziger Jahren zu Papier gebracht.

Bernhard Reich. "Des Memoires posthumes du co-employé de Brecht."

Comment un artiste peut-il utiliser avec succès et sans ambiguïté la complexité du monde moderne dans son oeuvre? La question est pertinente. Mais la solution des tenants de l'abstraction, le retrait par rapport à la nature et au monde concret, est-elle la bonne? Bernhard Reich la refuse. Reich remet en question les tendances actuelles en ce qui concerne le traitement du réel dans le context politique et historique. L'art, dans les sociétés socialistes, doit être transparent et d'accès facile pour les masses. Cependant, si l'on se réfère à la façon dont, dans l'histoire, les artistes furent compris des masses et de leurs contemporains, on ne peut que s'écarter d'une solution qui ne prendrait en considération que cette réception. Une société qui subi une révolution culturelle a certainement élargi le spectre de la participation culturelle. Mais même dans ce cas, les résultats ne sont pas satisfaisants de par le fait de la dynamique qui gouverne les masses. Une éducation socialiste peut guider et orienter le goût artistique (et, de ce fait, la réception), mais elle ne doit pas être fondée sur le postulat que les masses ne possèdent pas, en ce domaine, une maturité suffisante. Reich soutient de plus qu'un examen des images artistique (si même celles-ci sont vraiment nécessaires!) ne peut être effectué sans pendre en considération la question de la forme artistique. Finalement, le plaisir artistique n'est pas réductible à l'acclamation d'images positives, mais doit être considéré à la lumière de la lutte de la création artistique qui débouche sur l'oeuvre d'art.

Il est probable que Reich a écrit ces pensees au début des années soixante.

Bernhard Reich (Colaborador de Brecht). "Del legado".

¿Cómo puede un artista representar claramente con éxito en su trabajo la complejidad del mundo hoy día? Es una pregunta justa. Pero ¿es la solución de los abstraccionistas, la desafiliación con la naturaleza y con lo concreto, la respuesta correcta? Bernard Reich la rechaza. Reich reflexiona sobre las tendencias actuales de cómo manejar la realidad—cómo comprender e incorporar el tema de la paz en el arte—en un determinado contexto político e histórico. El arte en la sociedad socialista debe ser transparente y debe atraer al público; ejemplos de la historia, sin embargo, de cómo los artistas fueron recibidos por el público y sus coetáneos solamente pueden desviar la atención de cualquier solución que se basa solamente en esta recepción. Una sociedad que ha sufrido una revolución cultural seguramente ha expandido el ámbito de la participación cultural. Aún en este caso los resultados no son satisfactorios debido a la dinámica del público. Una educación socialista puede guiar y canalizar el gusto artístico (y con eso la recepción) pero no se puede basar en el pretexto de que el público es inmaduro. Reich mantiene, además, que el examen de las imágenes artísticas (si fueran necesarias) no se podrá lograr sin considerarse la forma artística. Por último, la euforia artística no se podrá medir a través del énfasis en las imágenes positivas, pero tiene que ser vista a la luz de la lucha artística que luego resulta en arte.

Bernard Reich probablemente formuló estos pensamientos en los años '60.

Aus dem Nachlaß

Bernhard Reich (Mitarbeiter von Bertolt Brecht)

Vielleicht kann man die Frage so stellen: Entspricht die Waffe des Schriftstellers dem allgemeinen Niveau? Tatsächlich gibt es jetzt als Folge der kolossalen wissenschaftlichen Entdeckungen eine gigantische Masse von Informationen—wie kann man sie verallgemeinern? Wie kann man sie so darbieten und festigen, daß sie deutlich und unzweideutig als Verallgemeinerungen aufgefaßt werden? Solche Fragen müssen Künstler stellen, die sich ernsthaft darum sorgen, wie überzeugend ihre Schlußfolgerungen sind.

Die Frage, die von den Abstraktionisten gestellt wurde, ist vollkommen richtig, unausbleiblich; eine andere Sache, ob auch die Lösung richtig ist—der Weggang von der Natur, von der konkreten Lösung? Ich nehme an, daß die Lösung nicht richtig, daß sie falsch ist; und hier, gerade hier ist eine gründliche und kluge Argumentation nötig. Aber die absolute Verneinung des Abstraktionismus und seiner schöpferischen Absichten auf der einen Seite und die absolute Unterstützung der früheren Lösung, andererseits, obwohl die Resultate dieser Lösung nicht als zuverlässig angesehen werden können, ruft Verwirrung und Zweifel bei der Kompetenz einer Aufführung hervor.

Wenn man über den Abstraktionismus spricht, muß man im Rahmen des allgemeinen Suchens nach der besten Verallgemeinerung über eine festgelegte Lösung urteilen.

Zur Erklärung muß man unbedingt folgendes berücksichtigen: man hat jetzt das Vorhandensein von Kräften erkannt, die auf uns einwirken, ohne daß wir sie empfinden, weil es in der gegenwärtigen Zeit—in der Gegenwart!—keine entsprechenden Gefühle gibt (um sie zu empfinden). Mit anderen Worten—den Frieden um uns herum in der gegenwärtigen historischen Periode vollständig zu begreifen, zu empfinden, das ist noch

nicht erreicht, obwohl wir wissen, daß er da ist—einige von uns versuchen diesen Mangel mit Hilfe der Phantasie auszugleichen. Offensichtlich sind diese Phantasien aus der allgemeinen Unwissenheit heraus verworren und wenig überzeugend—die Mehrheit hat nicht die geringste Erfahrung; außerdem ist eine Auffassung wie "CHALTURA" unrichtig und kurz-sichtig, weil wir es mit einem Einbruch in das künstlerische Bewußtsein, in das Nachdenken darüber zu tun haben, daß der Frieden nicht so ist, wie wir ihn jetzt empfinden. Wir können ihnen vorhalten, daß ihre Lösungen allzu schematisch, zu vereinfacht und naiv seien, daß man mehr fordern müsse, aber man kann diesen Weg nicht für immer verschließen. Oder man müßte unanfechtbar beweisen, daß solche Versuche, solche Lösungen nicht stichhaltig sind. Ich bin davon überzeugt, daß diese Bilder Chr. [gemeint ist wahrscheinlich N.S. Chrustschow—d. Hrsg.] nicht gefallen werden, daß sie einen abstoßenden Eindruck auf ihn machen würden, ich bin sogar davon überzeugt, daß viele von ihnen mir persönlich auch nicht gefallen . . . , aber die Methode ist unpassend. In solchen Fällen (auch jetzt, natürlich) versteckt man sich hinter dem Geschmack des Volkes und stellt die These auf, daß die Kunst in einer sozialistischen Gesellschaft für das Volk verständlich sein muß. In früheren Gesellschaftsordnungen gab es breite "Verbraucherkreise", aber als Volksmassen konnte man sie kaum bezeichnen. Die Geschichte der Literatur berichtet darüber, daß ein Teil der großen Schriftsteller bereits Anerkennung bei ihren eigenen Zeitgenossen fand, ein großer Teil jedoch nicht. Zu den letzteren gehören Euripides, Cervantes, Shakespeare und Goethe (die besten Dramen von Euripides erhielten nur den 3. Preis, Shakespeare galt bei seinen Zeitgenossen als ein mittelmäßiger Stückeschreiber). Tschernyschewski wird bis jetzt noch nicht sehr geschätzt, und ich bin überzeugt, daß viele Verbraucher aus den "niedrigsten" Schichten den Naturalismus und die Unsittlichkeit bei Leo Tolstoi mißbilligten, während solche vom Leser geliebten Schriftsteller wie Puschkin, Lermontow, Schiller und Gorki, aber auch weitaus weniger bedeutende, Abgötter des "Volkes" und der Zeitgenossen waren. Das heißt, der Hinweis auf das "Volk" und die Zeitgenossen ist nicht richtig und wenig überzeugend, eine andere Sache ist es, wenn wir unter Volk nicht nur eine Generation, sondern viele verstehen. Ein "Volkskünstler", das ist ein Künstler, der lange im Gedächtnis des Volkes lebt.

Aber wir haben eine sozialistische Gesellschaft, bei uns vollzog sich eine Kulturrevolution . . . Man darf das Erwünschte nicht für Vorhandenes ausgeben. Ohne Zweifel hat sich der Verbraucherkreis bedeutend erweitert, zweifellos wurden gewisse Fertigkeiten entwickelt, sich in der Kunst zurechtzufinden, aber leider wurde die Erforschung von Lesergeschmäckern und -urteilen vernachlässigt, so daß es keine sicheren Merkmale gibt. Jedoch hat man Berichte über Theateraufführungen; aus ihnen

geht nur der Erfolg des Stückes bei den Theaterliebhabern hervor, es gibt keine Hinweise, welcher Bevölkerungsschicht die gezeigten Stücke gefallen haben. Sie berichten darüber, daß die Mehrheit der Erfolge unbedeutend oder einfach minderwertig gewesen sei, aber daß auch ernstzunehmende und bedeutende Werke inszeniert und besucht wurden (durch wen?). Die Behauptung, daß die Stimme des Volkes bei uns bürokratisch [oder: staatlich, d. Übers.] orientiert sei, ist einstweilen gefährlich; eine andere Sache ist es, daß die Tendenz, gute künstlerische Gewohnheiten zu erwerben, sich ständig entwickelt und ausweitet. Die These über die Volkstümlichkeit der Kunst ist unzweifelhaft richtig. Aber das Volk ist dynamisch. Seine Fähigkeiten verändern sich. Es ist unsere sozialistische Aufgabe, sie weiter zu entwickeln. Dank der zielgerichteten Geschmackserziehung vervollkommen sich auch literarische Erzeugnisse; Stücke, die früher nicht ankamen, beginnen zu gefallen. Aber die Beobachtung und die Feststellung, daß die Geschmäcker sich verändern, und daß sie erzogen werden müssen, darf man nicht so auslegen, daß das Volk nicht erwachsen sei. Das ist Demagogie. Solche künstlerischen Werke, die gewohnte Vorstellungen und Neigungen zerbrechen, stoßen nicht nur beim "Volk", sondern auch bei bedeutenden Leuten auf Widerstand. Lenin z.B. war über Majakowski erzürnt. Und hier ein Beispiel aus der Vergangenheit: Goethe lehnte Kleist ab, einen mittelmäßigen Komponisten zog er Beethoven vor, und Hegel wurde von ihm für einen begabten Menschen gehalten. Aber mit der Zeit verfliegt der Reiz des Neuen, und die Fähigkeit zur richtigen Bewertung kommt wieder.

Die Frage nach der Wahrnehmung künstlerischer Bilder ist ein spezifisches Problem. Ein Hauptkriterium für die Bewertung ist bei der überragenden Mehrheit die Ähnlichkeit. Mir scheint, daß dieses Kriterium allzu armselig und billig ist, denn wozu diese langweilige Wiederholung von bereits Existierendem? Anscheinend wird ein Bild erst dann notwendig, wenn es von einer unauffälligen Ähnlichkeit ist. Daraus müßte man schließen, daß der Betrachter ständig dazu erzogen werden muß, unmerkliche Ähnlichkeiten in den Bildern aufzuspüren, und nicht darin unterstützt wird, daß er die Bilder nach wie vor nur auf bekannte Ähnlichkeiten hin betrachtet. Offensichtlich spielen in der Malerei Farben, die Zeichnung usw. eine besondere Rolle als Ausdrucksmittel. Es ist nicht richtig, sie nur als Ausdrucksmittel, als Form zu bewerten, sondern als eine mit Inhalt gefüllte Form; man muß die Form bewerten, bei der die inhaltliche Grundlage meßbar ist, meßbarer als Nuancen des Wortes, der Reime und der Rhythmen. Eine sehr vorsichtig formulierte Form der Diagnose würde heißen: Formalismus!

Aber es gibt noch einen sehr ernst zu nehmenden Aspekt—die Kunst, im vorliegenden Fall die Malerei—als Quelle der Freude und der

schöpferischen Begeisterung. Freude?—das bedeutet doch die Demonstration von Siegen, von allem, was hell und angenehm ist und Ablehnung der Darstellung von Niederlagen, Zerfall, Düsterem und Finsterem. Die Verurteilung von Falk, einem Maler, der nicht mit lebhaften, sondern mit gedämpften Farben malt, kann leicht dazu führen, daß man die ästhetische Freude so beschränkt interpretiert. Ich weigere mich, das zu glauben; die Freude, die von einem Bild ausgeht, kann daher rühren, daß ein lichter und angenehmer Gegenstand dargestellt wird, daß man beglückt ist über die Begegnung mit einem großen Talent, daß bewegende Erinnerungen wiederkehren und wichtige Gedanken geweckt werden, oder daher, daß einfach die Macht des menschlichen Genies, das fähig ist, etwas Flüchtiges, schwer Erfäßbares auf der Leinwand festzuhalten, den Betrachter durch den Beweis erfreut, daß der Mensch ein Schöpfer, ein Kämpfer ist, und das ist schon dem düsteren Objekt, das dargestellt wurde, entgegengesetzt. Aus dem Nachlaß, vermutlich Anfang der 60er Jahre verfaßt. Übersetzung aus dem Russischen. Herausgegeben von Heinz-Uwe Haus (Berlin).

Harris L. Gruman. "The Piscator-Kollektiv: Form and Content in the Political Theater."

In this article, I examine the experiments of the Weimar theater collectives, particularly of the better documented *Piscator-Kollektiv*, that have been valuable in the development of progressive political theater in the 20th century. I distinguish the theater collectives from the political theater movements, such as agit-prop or the *Volksbühne*, by their particular organizational form as democratically managed and financially independent ensembles of professional theater artists. The first two of these collectives, organized in 1929, were made up of veterans of Erwin Piscator's privately patronized theater who had worked in either the script-writing or acting (Studio) collectives within it. When Piscator's theater went bankrupt, the divisive issues of big-name personalities and competition for stardom that had existed even at the leftist *Piscator-Bühne* dissolved in the struggle for the survival of this creative ensemble. Also, in order to survive the Depression and political reaction as financially self-sufficient groups, they had to give up Piscator's experimental emphasis on elaborate stage machinery. These financially motivated changes led to corresponding changes in the dramatic content of their productions. Instead of focussing on the "epic" conflicts of industrial and historical forces, they performed plays treating more human-scale political themes. The most prominent among these was the changing role of women in the Weimar Republic and the Soviet Union; plays about abortion and women in the revolutionary movement dominated the repertoires of the collectives. They also shifted from experimentation on the stage to experimentation in the auditorium. The audience was urged to participate rationally by discussing and voting on the issues represented in the plays.

An interview with Lotte Loebinger (Summer 1984), an organizer of the *Piscator-Kollektiv* and a political activist in the Weimar Republic, adds a woman participant's observations about the active inclusion of women in her group and the efficacy of their experiments with audience-participation to this study. Because Loebinger continued her career after the war in the German Democratic Republic, she offers an insider's perspective (in two senses) on the influence of the collective theater in Brecht's post-war base of operations.

Harris L. Gruman. "Das Piscator-Kollektiv: Form und Inhalt im politischen Theater".

Gegenstand dieses Artikels sind die Experimente der Weimarer Theater-Kollektive, die wertvolle Beiträge zur Entwicklung des progressiven politischen Theaters im 20. Jahrhundert geleistet haben. Ich unterscheide die Theaterkollektive von anderen Bewegungen des politischen Theaters—wie z.B. Agitprop oder die Volksbühne—anhand der ihr eigenen organisatorischen Form als demokratisch geleitete und finanziell unabhängige Ensembles professioneller Bühnenkünstler. Die ersten beiden dieser 1929 organisierten Kollektive setzten sich aus ehemaligen Bühnenautor/inn/en und Schauspieler/inn/en von Piscators privat unterstütztem Theater zusammen. Nach dem Bankrott von Piscators Theater lösten sich die Spannungen zwischen Persönlichkeiten von Rang und dem Wettbewerb um

Starruhm, die selbst an der linksgerichteten Piscator-Bühne existierten, in einem Ringen um das Überleben des kreativen Ensembles. Um dem politischen und ökonomischen Druck der Zeit standzuhalten, waren sie gezwungen, die aufwendige Bühnenmaschinerie abzulegen, auf die Piscator aus experimenteller Sicht großen Wert gelegt hatte. Diese finanziell motivierten Veränderungen brachten Änderungen im dramatischen Inhalt der Produktionen mit sich. Die Rolle der Frau im gesellschaftlichen Kontext fand weite dramatische Anwendung und die Experimente wurden von der Bühne in den Zuschauerraum verlagert.

Ein Interview mit Lotte Loebinger, einer Organisatorin des Piscator-Kollektivs und einer politisch aktiven Person während der Zeit der Weimarer Republik, fügt die Einschätzungen über die Mitwirkung von Frauen und die Wirksamkeit der Experimente zur Zuschauerpartizipation aus dem Blickwinkel einer Frau hinzu. Da Frau Loebinger ihre Karriere nach dem Krieg in der DDR fortsetzte, ist sie in der Lage—aus einer Insider-Perspektive—die Einflüsse der kollektiven Theaterform auf das Theater in der DDR zu kommentieren.

Harris L. Gruman. "Le collectif Piscator: forme et contenu dans le theatre politique".

Dans cet article, j'examine les expériences des collectifs théâtraux de Weimar,—particulièrement du Collectif Piscator, sur lequel les informations sont plus complètes—qui ont contribué de façon significative au développement du théâtre politique progressiste au XXème siècle. Je distingue les collectifs théâtraux des autres formes de théâtre politique, tels que l'agit-prop ou les "Volkbühne", à cause de leur forme d'organisation particulière (groupes de professionnels du théâtre gérés démocratiquement et financièrement indépendants). Les deux premiers de ces collectifs, organisés en 1929, étaient composés de vétérans du théâtre privé d'Erwin Piscator, qui avaient participé au collectif d'écriture ou au collectif d'acteurs (studio) à l'intérieur de celui-ci. Quand le théâtre de Piscator fit faillite, les problèmes créateurs de conflit tels que les personnalités célèbres et la lutte pour le vedettariat s'effacèrent dans la lutte pour survivre de cet ensemble créateur. Egalement, pour survivre à la Dépression et à la réaction politique en tant que groupes financièrement autonomes, ils durent abandonner l'importance expérimentale accordée par Piscator aux machineries de scène compliquées. Ces changements d'origine financière conduisirent à des changements correspondants dans le contenu dramatique de leurs productions. Au lieu de se concentrer sur les conflits épiques des forces historiques et industrielles, ils jouèrent des pièces abordant des problèmes politiques à une échelle plus humaine. Le plus important d'entre eux était l'évolution du rôle des femmes dans la République de Weimar et en Union Soviétique; des pièces sur l'avortement et sur les femmes dans le mouvement révolutionnaire dominaient le répertoire. De plus, l'expérimentation changea de place: de la scène, elle passa dans la salle. Le public fut sollicité de participer rationnellement en discutant et en votant sur les problèmes évoqués dans les pièces.

Une interview avec Lotte Loebinger (été 1984), une organisatrice du Collectif Piscator et activiste politique dans la République de Weimar, ajoute à cette étude les observations d'une femme sur la participation active des femmes dans son groupe et sur l'efficacité de leurs expérimentations de participation de l'audience. Parce que Loebinger continua sa carrière après la guerre en République Démocratique Allemande, elle offre le point de vue d'un participant (à un double

titre) sur l'influence des formes du théâtre collectif dans le centre d'activités du Brecht d'après-guerre.

Harris L. Gruman. "El Teatro colectivo de Piscator: forma y contenido en el teatro político".

En este trabajo, examino los experimentos de los teatros colectivos de la República Weimar (en especial el *Piscator-Kollektiv*) que han sido valiosos en el desarrollo del teatro progresivo político en el siglo veinte. Distingo los teatros colectivos de otros movimientos de teatro político como el teatro de propaganda y agitación o el *Volksbühne*, por su forma de organización específica, ya que son grupos de artistas profesionales de teatro, dirigidos democráticamente e independientemente financiados. Las primeras dos compañías colectivas, organizadas en 1929, fueron formadas por los veteranos del teatro de Erwin Piscator, subsidiado por donaciones privadas, quienes habían trabajado como guionistas o como actores en las colectivas. Cuando el teatro de Piscator quebró, los puntos divergentes entre las personalidades famosas y la competencia por el estrellato que existió hasta en el izquierdismo de *Piscator-Bühne*, se disolvió en la lucha por la supervivencia del grupo. Así, para sobrevivir la Depresión y la reacción política y para mantener la autosuficiencia económica, ellos tuvieron que abandonar el énfasis experimental de Piscator en la compleja maquinaria escénica. Estos cambios, por motivos económicos, condujeron a cambios correspondientes en el contenido dramático de sus producciones. En vez de enfocar los conflictos "épicos" de las fuerzas industriales y históricas, ellos representaron obras que trataban más los temas políticos de dimensiones humanas. El más proeminente entre ellos fue el papel cambiante de la mujer en la República Weimar y en la Unión Soviética; obras sobre el aborto y la participación de las mujeres en el movimiento revolucionario dominaron los repertorios de los colectivos. Ellos también pasaron de lo experimental en el escenario a la experimentación en la sala. Se solicita entonces la participación racional del público a través de discusiones y elecciones sobre los asuntos representados en las obras.

Una entrevista con Lotte Loebinger (Verano de 1984), organizadora del *Piscator-Kollektiv* y activista política en la República Weimar, añade a este trabajo la observaciones de una mujer participante sobre la inclusión activa de las mujeres en su grupo y la eficacia de los experimentos con la participación del público. Loebinger, en función de la continuación de su carrera en la República Democrática de Alemania, después de la guerra, ofrece la perspectiva desde adentro (en dos sentidos) sobre la influencia de las formas del teatro colectivo dentro del teatro de la República Democrática Alemana.

The *Piscator-Kollektiv*: Form and Content in the Political Theater

Harris L. Gruman

The *Piscator-Kollektiv* was among the first of the collective theaters that became a rallying point for politically-engaged German theater artists between 1929 and the fall of the Weimar Republic. These collectives sheltered the continuing theatrical projects of such important artists as Bertolt Brecht, Erwin Piscator, and Gustav von Wangenheim from the economic austerity of the Depression, increasing government censorship, and the growing terror of the Nazi SA. Furthermore, their experiments with financial alternatives (to private-capital supported theater), democratic decision-making in the arts, and a popular-culture orientation to working-class audiences have greatly influenced the professional political theater of succeeding decades.

I am defining "the collective theater" as any democratically-organized ensemble of *professional* theater artists, so I would like to draw a distinction, at least for the purposes of this essay, between this "collective theater," on the one hand, and amateur workers' theaters and agit-prop troupes, on the other. The latter, whether sponsored by clubs, unions, political organizations, or even governments, usually emerge to fill a perceived need for political or cultural expression and are significant as tools for communication that might otherwise not occur. Their members' primary concern, therefore, is with the *content* that they are conveying. The collective theaters, by contrast, represent an internal transformation of already existing theatrical institutional structures, whether in Capitalist or Socialist systems, and, as such, their members are primarily concerned with the *form* or structure in which they work, affecting content only secondarily. Certainly these categories of political theater can come to resemble each other

in both form and content, and it is at that time that the one has become the other and *vice versa*.

In Germany, the Social Democrats organized amateur political theater companies as early as the 1880's, a program which developed by the beginning of this century into the *Volksbühne* movement and the establishment of professional companies. But with professionalization, the *Volksbühne* also departed from the collective forms of its origins. Amateur workers' theater and agit-prop experienced a revival in Germany, however, during the Weimar Republic after its rapid growth and development in the early years of the Soviet Union, and it has had a rich history in the Third World since that time. Erwin Piscator began his political theater career with such groups in the early 20's.¹

The collective theater movement in Weimar Germany also grew out of these developments in "popular theater," but represented a new direction, almost a reversal, of the process. Amid the new conditions and pressures of the Depression, many political theater artists reorganized themselves into collectives which gave them more economic flexibility without sacrificing their professional commitment to theater. This collective theater movement not only produced a significant body of new political dramas, including most of Friedrich Wolf's major works and Brecht's *Die Mutter*, but has influenced (mainly through the writings of Brecht, Piscator, and Mordecai Gorelick) the organizational forms of such ensembles as those of Augusto Boal of Brazil, Dario Fo of Italy, Athol Fugard of South Africa, and the Living Theater of the United States, not to mention its immediate influence on the Depression theaters in the U.S.: The Mercury Theater, The Theater Union, The Federal Theater, etc.² Studying the achievements and shortcomings of the Weimar collectives offers both insights into the milieu that produced Brecht and possibilities for the political theater beyond Brecht.

The particular occasion for this article is an interview that I conducted in the Summer of 1984 with Lotte Loebinger, a co-founder and actress for the *Piscator-Kollektiv*. I felt that her commentary was a significant addition to my research for several reasons. First, the relationships between the Weimar Republic's Women's Movement and the collective theaters, which is demonstrated by the significant number of plays that they produced treating the changing social and economic role of women, demands an effort to add a woman participant's account to the writings of her published contemporaries, who are predominantly male. Second, because of the collective theaters' emphasis on direct political interaction with the audience, I wanted to field questions about the efficacy of such experiments with an eyewitness. Finally, Loebinger's lifelong experience in the political theater of Berlin, from the *Piscator-Bühne* of 1927 to the *Maxim Gorki*

Theater today, bridges the worlds of the Weimar Republic and post-war Germany and gives an unusually broad historical perspective on the development of the collective theater over time.³

A week before my interview with Loebinger, the *Deutsches Theater* of East Berlin hosted a revival of Ernst Toller's *Hoppla! wir leben!* (*Hurrah, Such Is Life!*), which had premiered in 1927 under the direction of Erwin Piscator.⁴ In *Hoppla!*, Toller presents his view of the betrayal of the German Revolution by the Social Democrats (SPD). The protagonist, Karl Thomas, is a revolutionary who is imprisoned by the para-military *Freikorps* at the order of the SPD in 1919. After eight years in a lunatic asylum, Thomas emerges to find a Germany that has absorbed the SPD into its traditionally conservative bureaucracy.⁵ The revival at the *Deutsches Theater* was being staged by a group of graduating theater students, so I expected to see only new faces in the cast.

The auditorium lights dimmed. An Expressionistic criss-crossing of harsh white lights and stark shadows imprisoned the figures in their cramped cell. Two women stood out in the middle of this group of men, the defeated and jailed activists of the *Spartakus* uprising in Berlin. Mother Meller, grey-haired and wearing a factory worker's dark dress, embraced a trembling young woman, Eva Berg, and spoke reassuringly to her. Despite her age and hard life, Mother Meller showed the optimism that comes with a sense of purpose—the same optimism I found in Lotte Loebinger, who was playing Mother Meller in this revival.

Loebinger's sense of purpose has remained strong since her participation in the 1927 premiere of *Hoppla!* when her youthful idealism was being challenged and tempered by the experience of post World War I Germany. She recalled for me the tensions of the time with this story of her political work:

I worked in a picket-line kitchen for the Red Front Fighters in 1930. That was during the Depression, and the Berlin transit workers had gone on strike. We cooked food for the strikers—big cauldrons of hot soup to keep them warm in that particularly cold snowless time of winter. I remember a car driving past the picket-line. The young man on the passenger's side had a revolver and fired at the strikers, shouting "Long live Germany," or something like that. Two men on the line were injured. Those incidents were common.⁶

But even as she was involved politically in the struggles in the streets and factories of Berlin, Loebinger devoted the majority of her time to her acting.

When I met with her for the interview outside the *Maxim Gorki Theater* a few nights after the *Hoppla!* performance, she seemed to be continuing her role as Mother Meller, the straightforward proletarian activist.

She emerged from the evening shadows of the park dressed with unexpected simplicity: a pullover sweater, khaki trousers, and a kerchief tied around her straight white hair against the cold drizzle. But minutes later, seated in the over-heated dining-room of the Opera Cafe, the actress behind the stage role began to show. She seemed quite at home in the swank restaurant and placed her order in flawless *Hochdeutsch* with the clarity required of a stage-trained voice. She smiled often—a strikingly warm smile with an innocence that must have been capable of quickly winning an audience.

In 1927, she had become a permanent member of the ensemble of the *Piscator-Bühne*, the theater of the innovative director Erwin Piscator, and performed in most of the productions. Bertolt Brecht evokes the spirit of Piscator's theater in his 1939 lecture "On Experimental Theater." Although his account is a somewhat compressed and romanticized vision of the *Piscator-Bühne*, written as it was on the eve of a war that threatened to wipe out the memory of the accomplishments of the Weimar Republic, it does offer us a sense of the excitement and daring of Piscator's theater.

Piscator's experiments began by causing complete theatrical chaos. While they turned the stage into a machine-room, the auditorium became a public meeting. Piscator saw the theater as a parliament, the audience as a legislative body. To this parliament were submitted in plastic form all the great public questions that needed an answer. . . . The mechanism on the stage weighed so much that the stage of the *Nollendorftheater* [the home of the *Piscator-Bühne*] had to be reinforced with steel and concrete supports; so much machinery was hung from the dome that it began to give way. Aesthetic considerations were entirely subject to political. Away with painted scenery if a film could be shown that had been taken on the spot and had the stamp of documentary realism. Up with painted cartoons, if the artist (e.g. George Grosz) had something to say to the parliamentary audience. Piscator was even ready to do wholly without actors. When the former German Emperor had his lawyers protest at Piscator's plan to let an actor portray him on his stage, Piscator just asked if the Emperor wouldn't be willing to appear in person; he even offered him a contract. In short, the end was such a vast and important one that all means seemed justified. And the plays themselves were prepared in much the same way as the performance. A whole staff of playwrights worked together on a single play, and their work was supported and checked by a staff of experts, historians, economists, statisticians.⁷

From 1927 to 1929, the machine experiments, which Brecht's memory did not exaggerate, dominated Piscator's stage. If the audience was conceived of as a legislative body, it was a rather silent one. The spectators were usually overwhelmed by the physical spectacle before them. The male protagonists struggled to act out political lessons as they walked on treadmills, climbed through scaffolding, rode elevators between the multiple

stages of a giant hemispheric set, or were engulfed in films of war and industry.⁸ By 1929, however, the expenses of this stage machinery outstripped even the resources of Piscator's affluent clientele, and the *Piscator-Bühne* folded in bankruptcy.⁹

The two sides of Loebinger's career, as a political activist and organizer, and as a talented theater artist, merged in her response to this crisis:

I had always been principally concerned with acting. But at the *Piscator-Bühne* there was a strong ensemble feeling. We wanted to keep working together, so Albert Venohr, Heinz Greif and I signed a legal contract that we would be equally responsible for the financing and organization of the group.

Loebinger and Greif already had been involved in an experiment with collective work within the *Piscator-Bühne*, The Studio Group.¹⁰

The Studio had been originally conceived as a less performance-oriented workshop of the *Piscator-Bühne*'s entire acting ensemble; they would complement the work of the script-writing collective by approaching the problem of integrating politics and aesthetics from the perspective of the stage itself.¹¹ The more famous script-writing collective, which included names like Becher, Brecht, Döblin, Mühsam, Toller and Tucholsky, was, in Piscator's words, "dogged by misunderstandings and embarrassment." An inordinate amount of diplomacy was necessary to maintain the peace between these "big" personalities. Piscator's memories are a far cry from Brecht's nostalgic description above:

Herzog in particular was annoyed, and declared he would refuse to work under somebody else's orders. Brecht, who was a constant visitor at the *Theater am Nollendorfplatz* in these early days and took a close interest in all our preparations, strutted up and down the stage shouting, "My name is my trademark, and anybody who uses it must pay for it!"¹²

By contrast, "the work of the second collective within the theater, the Studio, was much more rewarding, probably largely because it was carried out by members who were young and full of enthusiasm."¹³

Even the Studio suffered from the verbal rather than physical participation of the ensemble's "stars." In an annoyed "Report," it was announced that:

Frau Durieux [the lead in *Konjunktur* and the wife of Piscator's biggest financial backer], on the advice of her doctor, has withdrawn her offer to give instruction on how to learn a part. Herr Granach [Karl Thomas in *Hoppla!*] has promised to take a class, but has so far been prevented from doing so by hoarseness and film commitments.¹⁴

Freed from the reverence for "star" mentality, the Studio members went on after the financial collapse of the *Piscator-Bühne* to found the *Gruppe junger Schauspieler* (the Young Actors' Group)¹⁵ and the *Piscator-Kollektiv*, the first of what would become a whole movement of collective theaters throughout Germany before the Nazi seizure of power.

Loebinger and her colleagues founded the *Piscator-Kollektiv* in November, 1929, one month after the *Piscator-Bühne* closed Walter Mehring's *The Merchant of Berlin* (which dramatized the collaboration of a Jewish businessman with the Nazis). The *Piscator-Bühne* went bankrupt in spite of the generous donations of its patrons and the high admission prices—as much as 100 Marks for the orchestra (although several sections of inexpensive seats were always reserved for members of the *Junge Volksbühne*, a cultural organization of the KPD).¹⁶ The new *Piscator-Kollektiv* hoped to produce plays without any private patronage or state subsidies. This plan was greeted with skepticism. Brecht had learned a different lesson from the failure of the *Piscator-Bühne*:

In Germany we had great advantages: the great sums of money we were able to work with. We could always experiment and develop, because we were backed by private capital. But we came to an end long before the real collapse. Already the reaction was too strong, and our audience had lost their money. Besides, it's no more possible in the theater than anywhere else to carry out really radical and epoch-making experiments without state subsidy, and that's something we didn't have.¹⁷

Andor Gabor, the co-founder of the leftist literary journal *Die Linkskurve*, responded even more cynically:

Your plan for the great collective theaters is on the whole utopian: as if it were possible to build a collective institution on a small "island of bliss" in a non-collectivised society. No, that would not be possible according to Marxist theory. . . . If you think that Piscator went *kaput*, because he didn't have a collective theater, you're on the wrong tack. He went bankrupt, because he managed a capitalist production process without the necessarily harsh business methods of capitalism, but rather *à la Bohème*. Don't forget that our Party press and other businesses that we own are also not collectives in the sense of production, consumption, and distribution. They must be managed in a rigidly capitalist way; otherwise, they would collapse in the economic environment of capitalism.¹⁸

The *Piscator-Kollektiv*, however, which proposed to survive from the proceeds of its ticket sales alone, offered very reasonable ticket prices: from one to twenty Marks, with an average price of five Marks.¹⁹ How would they survive, when the *Piscator-Bühne* had failed? They would play before

packed houses in inexpensive working-class theaters and with a minimum of stage machinery. Perhaps the "radical and epoch-making experiments" that Brecht called for were sacrificed, but the experiments of the collectives were at least as important for the political theater of the 20th century. According to John Willett, "What stopped [Brecht] from sticking with Piscator at this juncture . . . was the improbable success of *The Threepenny Opera*, which effectively tied him to the rival regime at the *Theater am Schiffbauerdamm*."²⁰

After the initial contract of the collective was drawn, with Lotte Loebinger as Secretary, the group soon grew to seventeen members, seven of whom were women.²¹ The organization of the collective coincided with an upsurge in women's demands for more decision-making power in the German Communist Party (KPD). The subject had been raised as early as 1926 by such important women delegates as Clara Zetkin and Helene Overlach, but in October, 1929, the Party-organized Reichscommittee of Working Women held its first congress with an agenda of neglected women's issues: birth control and abortion, equal pay for equal work, and the domestic division of labor. This agenda was accepted into the Party's program, making the KPD's stand on women's issues the most far-reaching in the world at that time. This new focus on women also provided an avenue of outreach to members of independent leftist and feminist organizations. The KPD became the nucleus of a broad coalition campaigning for the legalization of abortion.²²

Between 1929 and 1932, the *Piscator-Kollektiv* produced six plays; three of these treated women's issues and women in politics. These themes were acceptable to all the collective's members. Loebinger pointed out that "most of the members were not in the KPD, but they were sympathetic to its program."

The first production was *Paragraph 218*, a play by the gynecologist Carl Credé about the inequities of the anti-abortion law. Credé revealed mechanisms that allowed wealthy women to obtain secret abortions (in return for a degree of humiliation in their social circle), while working women were forced either into greater poverty or unsafe back-alley abortions. The play follows the contrasting fates of two such women. One is a glamorous flapper whose business-magnate husband rescues her from the law while publicly upholding it. The other, a mother of three, whose husband is unemployed, seeks illegal help. Loebinger played the part that linked the two women's stories; she is the daughter of the working mother, and the businessman's maid. She also has an illegal abortion to save her job, but when the businessman learns about it, he fires her, and she takes to prostitution to survive the Depression.²³

Credé's script was a straightforward Naturalist drama, but the collec-

tive added a new dimension to the performance to make it more effective aesthetically and more compelling politically. Loebinger recalled that:

The play had an especially strong effect because of the audience-participation that we added to it. We planted a group of actors in the audience as a minister, a lawyer, a doctor, et cetera, who argued with each other about the issues raised in the play, even disrupting the stage action at points. At the end of each performance, the audience was called on to vote—for or against paragraph 218 [which outlawed abortion].

This use of audience-participation, which the collective would continue to use and develop, was a new direction for Piscator's ensemble and an influence on contemporaries as well. Brecht's 1930 production of *Die Massnahme* (*The Measures Taken*), for example, used the audience as an active "Control Chorus."²⁴ And he vividly evoked the *Piscator-Kollektiv's* experiments:

Piscator saw the theater as a parliament, the audience as a legislative body. To this parliament were submitted in plastic form all the great public questions that needed an answer. Instead of a Deputy speaking about certain intolerable social conditions there was an artistic copy of these conditions. It was the stage's ambition to supply images, statistics, slogans which would enable its parliament, the audience, to reach political decisions.²⁵

But he did not note the transition that occurred: "While they turned the stage into a machine-room, the auditorium became a public meeting." It was only after the "machine-room" folded that the experiment with the auditorium as a "public meeting" began.

This transition also reveals a debate in Piscator's ensemble about the best means to integrate aesthetics and politics. In the years of the *Piscator-Bühne*, Piscator had written: "Oddly enough, the Studio was politically less committed than the *Piscator-Bühne*."²⁶ To understand this judgement, we need to hear Piscator's ideas on the essence of political theater:

Political drama must, if it is to fulfill its pedagogic aim, make documentary evidence its point of departure, and not the individual. On the contrary, it must maintain the most impersonal, "objective" attitude to the characters in the subject, not in a neutral sense, but in the sense of a materialistic conception of history.²⁷

For Piscator this led to an emphasis on documentary film and projections, and the use of an elaborate and alienating mechanization of the stage to represent the greater context of industrial capitalism.

The Studio's interest in individual psychology, however, prepared their stage for a reaffirmation of the human element in live theater. For the *Piscator-Kollektiv*, it was less important to represent the alienation of industrial capitalism than to portray the constructive human interaction, complete with its own set of conflicts, necessary for social progress. The collective's staging of family life, workplace organizing, dramas of human conflict in post-revolutionary Russia and, most notably, its active involvement of the audience in that process reveals this new focus. What Piscator saw as an inferior commitment to politics became the seed of a new solution to the problem of a political theater.

Loebinger recalled that Piscator's creativity actively led the way in these new developments, but Brecht noticed his personal dissatisfaction:

There was one production where Piscator adopted an entirely different method, partly for economic reasons. He staged a play called *Section 218* (this being the section of the law dealing with abortion) using a highly simplified technique. It was a huge success, but he himself didn't like it at all. As its producer he was like a bacteriologist whose microscope had been taken away from him.²⁸

And Loebinger remembered that despite his role in choosing and adapting *Paragraph 218*, Piscator did not want the play performed under his name in Berlin:

He was used to his big stage and special effects. *Paragraph 218* was very simple. He was afraid it would hurt his reputation in the capital.

So Loebinger and her colleagues, on their own initiative, took the play on a nationwide tour of provincial theaters. Over the next half year, they performed the play in dozens of towns in Germany and Switzerland to at least 40,000 people (and over 100,000 according to Ludwig Hoffmann²⁹). When they returned to Berlin, they did not play in the affluent theater quarter, but rented the *Wallnertheater* in a working-class neighborhood. The play was received with ovations.

But the tour also foreshadowed the political violence that would become a daily fact of life for Loebinger:

In one town, we were greeted outside the theater by some men in Red Front uniforms. They suddenly attacked us with night sticks and brass knuckles, and several audience members had to rescue us. They turned out to be SA men.

And the violence was not always from the Right:

Heinz Greif had to play the Nazi lawyer in the audience. Whenever we played in a worker's theater, the audience wouldn't realize that he was just an actor representing the role, so they would attack him physically.

Her account gives graphic illustrations for Brecht's comment that Piscator's productions "split the audience into at least two mutually hostile social groups, and thus put a stop to any common experience of art."³⁰

Loebinger played the lead roles in both of the other plays on women's themes. The first, *Tai Yang erwacht* (*Tai Yang Awakes*),³¹ by gynecologist/playwright Friedrich Wolf,³² was set in China and billed, *à la* Brecht, as a *Lehrstück*.³³ The factory boss forces a young Chinese woman, Tai Yang, to become his mistress. Her double exploitation as a worker and a woman leads to her political "awakening"; she joins the Chinese Communist Party and organizes the workers in her factory. The introduction of the concept of the "double exploitation" of women was such a new theme that *Weltbühne* reviewer Alfred Polgar mistook it for a propagandistic emotional appeal:

As in the old theater . . . the political hideousness of the villains is supposed to be brought by their human beastliness, of which they are full, into clearer light; actually it brings it into darker shadows. Just as Friedrich Schiller had Gessler [*Wilhelm Tell*] not only enslave the free people of Switzerland, but also carry off village maidens in order to make him appear more hateful, Friedrich Wolf makes his Chinese capitalist Tschu Fu not only an exploiter, but also a profligate abuser of twelve-year old working girls. The "private," which the politically engaged theater has tried to avoid, has smuggled itself, hidden behind principles, onto the new stage.³⁴

On the surface, this criticism may seem applicable, but it obscures the contribution of *Tai Yang* to the early feminist theater; it is *because* of her double exploitation as a woman that she becomes a leader of her fellow workers. This is far from being merely an emotional appeal.

In the other play, *Frau in Front* (*Woman in Front*), a Soviet play by A. Glebow, Loebinger played the director of a factory. She summarized the plot for me:

It was a romance. A commissar is so attracted to the dynamic woman director of the factory that he leaves his wife when they begin an affair. His wife has to find new meaning in her life, so she enters the factory herself and soon becomes a leading organizer on the shop floor. Her husband realizes that he had underestimated her in her traditional role as a housewife and asks for a reconciliation.

The reviewer of *Die Rote Fahne* responded favorably to Loebinger's performance: "As in *Tai Yang Awakes*, Lotte Loebinger showed the great develop-

ment of her talents."³⁵ Piscator, however, disdained to work on that production, again due to his own views about the focus of a political theater. Willett notes that he criticized the play for its personal rather than historical scale: "*Inga* [the Russian title] dealt with a woman running a factory, but not with the role of factories under the Five-Year Plan."³⁶ But the Collective had chosen the play for exactly that focus; in 1931, a play about "a woman running a factory" was as significant an event as a play about the Five-Year Plan, and fell more within the scope of the Collective's staging capabilities.

Nevertheless, the collaborative efforts of Piscator and his colleagues in the Collective were among the most innovative productions of those years, and, as Brecht recalled, in the *Piscator-Kollektiv*, "the logical development of the technical apparatus had at last allowed the machinery to be mastered and led to a beautiful simplicity of performance."³⁷ In those productions, collaboration with the authors was the most sensitive point in the process. As with *Paragraph 218*, Piscator adapted *Tai Yang* to increase the involvement of the audience. Loebinger described the new opening:

We actors entered from the audience in our street clothes and set up mirrors on the stage. As we put on our costumes and make-up, we discussed political events in Germany and their connection to developments in China. The audience saw us transform from Germans to Chinese, as they began to identify with political conflicts in China.³⁸

Occasionally the action of the play would be interrupted by planted "audience members" who would second guess audience skepticism by demanding proof from the actors on the stage of the conditions in China that they were depicting. Documentary films would be shown immediately to support the authenticity of the historical material.

The play was so freely adapted from the original that author Friedrich Wolf lost patience with the production. "We had a favorite anecdote about that," Loebinger recalled:

Fed up with the endless changes in the script, Wolf storms out. While he's waiting at the bus stop, the stage manager yells from the door: "Hurry back, Herr Wolf! An actor is delivering a line that you wrote!"

Piscator had had the same problem with authors' egos in the scriptwriting collective of the *Piscator-Bühne*. During the production of *Hoppla!*, for example, Piscator trimmed the Expressionistic lyricism of Toller's script. Like Wolf, Toller was frustrated by Piscator's liberties with the text:

I am sorry that I gave in to the current fashion and remodeled the structure of the play, substituting a structure suggested by the director. The form I had aimed for was stronger than the one shown on the stage. I have only myself to blame, but I have learnt my lesson, and today I would prefer a director who failed to bring out all that is in a play to one who put in too much of his own.³⁹

But Piscator blamed Toller's language rather than his structure:

Toller's language proved to be a serious handicap in dealing with a subject which I would have preferred to analyze soberly, clearly and unambiguously in the play.

Example:

(During the last sentences two policemen appear. They both go up to Thomas and grab him by the wrists.)

First Policeman: Well, young man, I suppose you just found that revolver?

[A calm, factual question from which a situation can develop, because it causes a certain tension. What reply does Toller give him?]

Karl Thomas: How do I know? How do you know? Even the gunman's revolver turns against him, and the barrel spouts laughter.

[This is supposed to mean: Thomas, who intended to shoot Kilmann, the minister, himself, but was beaten to it by a Nazi student, does not yet grasp the sequence of events and feels mocked by his own revolver. Toller himself can see that this reply is impossible, but it does not occur to him to cut it. Instead he tries to save it with the next line:]

Second Policeman: We'll have a little more respect from you, right?⁴⁰

Piscator had freed his machine-room from the poetic self-indulgence of Expressionism. He liberated the claustrophobic naturalism of the plays of the collective period with audience-participation. The long term response to this tense collaboration of writers and director varied greatly according to the organization of the theater at the time. During the *Piscator-Bühne*, the contest of egos between Toller and Piscator ended their collaboration, but Willett points out that, despite his irritation, Wolf was "the only playwright, apart from those involved in the collective, to remain an ally (for life)."⁴¹ His reaction to working with the *Piscator-Kollektiv* was enthusiastic:

I have never enjoyed rehearsals more, never been so freshly confronted with the theatre; they alone have taught me an awful lot. Truly, quite new things are involved, not sensational effects but real objective necessities, new points of view to correspond to our new awareness and approach to work and life.⁴²

The collaboration on *Tai Yang erwacht* between Piscator, Wolf, and the collective as a whole also influenced the content and structure of one of Brecht's major plays, *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*. Not only the Chinese set-

ting and the Shen Te/Shui Ta masquerade (like the on-stage costuming of the characters in *Tai Yang*) are reminiscent of the earlier play. The choice in *Tai Yang* of a woman as the central figure of a political play in 1931 was followed by several of Brecht's consequent and most political works: *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* (1932), *Die Mutter* (1932), *Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar* (1937), *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (1939), *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* (1940), and even *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* (1944–45).⁴³

I asked Loebinger if the impetus for the women's plays came from the women of the Collective:

No. Piscator selected most of the plays. We trusted his judgement. We didn't see "women's issues," as you call them, as a priority. We were doing political theater on all the important issues. For example, *The Case of Lieutenant Blumenthal* was about anti-Semitism in the army. Men and women were on an equal footing in the collective, and we were united by our sympathy with the Party's program of economic justice—for women and men. But in any case, I'm not a dramaturg, I'm an actress.

She is more than an actress, however; she is one of the organizers of a theater movement that, whether or not it was the conscious aim of its members, made a major contribution to women's theater.

In 1932, Piscator was working on a film in the Soviet Union, and the collective's members were devoting more time to direct political work in the midst of the growing crisis in Germany. As a result, the *Piscator-Kollektiv* was formally dissolved on June 18, 1932.⁴⁴

In the face of the Nazi's extreme racist policies, Loebinger turned her attention from women's issues to the problem of anti-Semitism. The collective had already produced the *Blumenthal* play (above) and worked with the Moscow Jewish Theater.⁴⁵ After Hitler's rise to power, she toured Eastern Europe with a Jewish acting ensemble (Loebinger is not Jewish herself).

After her return from wartime emigration in Moscow, Loebinger resumed her career as an actress, joining with many other surviving members of the Weimar collectives in the rebuilding of theater in the Soviet Sector. In 1949, she performed in Anatoly Sofronov's *Moskauer Charakter*; the play had an optimistic Socialist Realist message, which the ideal audience member (an education student) was supposed to have summarized as follows: "The Soviet people see labor not only as a means to earn a livelihood . . . , but much more as a possibility to fulfill their true destiny as human beings by considering life as a duty to help improve the world."⁴⁶ Sofronov's play was not distinguished by its propaganda content, but rather by the way in which its thesis was delivered. Instead of contrasting exemplary characters with villains (many plays of this period treated the fight against saboteurs

and agents of the overthrown Nazis or Western powers), *Moskauer Charakter* portrayed conflicts arising between normal people and the new Socialist society. Werner Mittenzwei's theater history research collective described this effect:

The conflicts of the dramatic development do not arise from the opposition of "positive" and "negative" characters. The force of the climax arrives when the protagonists recognize, through a dialectical process, the objectively believable correspondence of interests between individuals and the collective or their society as a whole.⁴⁷

The emphasis on social *Aufbau* (construction) in the theater was greatly increased by the involvement of politically active theater artists with the Brigade Movement in the factories. In an effort to raise post-war production, factories in the German Democratic Republic were organized into teams ("Brigades") that were placed in competition with one another for prizes and prestige. Loebinger remembered her work in the lead role of *Brigade Karban*, by the Czechoslovakian playwright Vasek Káňa, as the most fulfilling and significant at that time:

In 1950, we formed a collective company to take *Brigade Karban* on a tour of rebuilt factories in Czechoslovakia and Germany.

The spirit of the *Piscator-Kollektiv* was revived in the organization of this theater ensemble:

The production [of *Brigade Karban*] at the *Deutsches Theater*—awarded the National Prize in 1951—reached a new level of theatrical achievement by revolutionizing the methods of everyday work in the theater through a collective directing responsibility (Wolfgang Langhoff, Lotte Loebinger, Harry Hindemith) and the cooperative union of the performance ensemble with the production company.⁴⁸

While many of his Weimar colleagues helped develop the post-war theater in Germany, Piscator had made a contribution to the American political theater during his war-time work at the New School in New York by filling, as John Willett puts it, "a gap between the decline of the American Left theater and the rise and recognition of 'Off-Broadway.'" One of his students there, Judith Malina, who described Piscator as "my teacher: the one in whom I have most faith, in whom I trust, from whom I learned and still seek to learn," co-founded The Living Theatre with Julian Beck.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Brecht was busy leaving his mark on both sides of the Atlantic.

I asked Loebinger if collective theater was still a force in the German Democratic Republic:

Since the time of *Brigade Karban*, the GDR's theaters have preferred more and more to imitate the professional theaters of the West with their "star" mentality and top-down decision-making. The *Maxim Gorki Theater* where I usually work is a rare exception.

But Loebinger foresees a revival of the collectives. Last year she worked with a new Berlin collective, "Karl's Grandson," that writes and performs satirical and musical skits and, she feels, keeps alive the critical responsibility of the theater—the responsibility of treating relevant and difficult issues. Uwe Baumgartner, who works with a collective for children's theater, has also spoken highly of their work, particularly their satirical humour and their choice of subject matter which is significant for an audience in the GDR. Loebinger's involvement in the Toller revival was also contributing to her optimism:

The young woman who is playing Eva Berg in *Hoppla!* at the *Deutsches Theater* is planning to found a collective theater in Leipzig with some of the cast members after the run. There's a great ensemble feeling in that group.

Notes

1. For discussion and documentation of this workers' theater, cf. Hoffmann, Ludwig, *Deutsches Arbeitertheater, 1918–1933*, (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1977).
2. For a concise treatment of the American Depression theaters, see Chapter VI, "The Radical Stage and the Hollywood Film in the 1930's," in Richard H. Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974).
3. All the quotations from Lotte Loebinger are from the transcript of the interview I had with her on July 24, 1984. The interview was conducted in German, and I have translated her testimony.
4. Erwin Piscator, *The Political Theater*, Ed. Hugh Rorrison, (New York: Avon Books, 1978), pp. 201–221.
5. Ernst Toller, *Hoppla! wir leben!*, (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1980).
6. Lotte Loebinger was a member of the Communist Party (KPD), revolutionary mass organizations (IAH, IfA, RH) and "Sonderabteilungen der Volksbühne." *Theater der Kollektive*, Ed. Ludwig Hoffmann, (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1980), p. 72. All translations from this source are mine.
7. Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theater*, ed. by John Willett, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), pp. 130–131.
8. For descriptions of Piscator's staging, cf. Piscator, *The Political Theater*, and C. D. Innes, *Piscator's Political Theater*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1972).
9. Piscator, *The Political Theater*, p. 310.
10. Piscator, p. 298.
11. Piscator, pp. 289–299.
12. Piscator, p. 196.
13. Piscator, p. 197.
14. Piscator, p. 297.
15. The *Gruppe junger Schauspieler* is noted for its productions of Friedrich Wolf's *Cyankali* (1929) and Brecht's *Die Mutter* (1932).
16. Piscator, pp. 216–217. For a detailed description of the costs of running the *Piscator-*

- Bühne, cf. John Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator*, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979), pp. 67–71, 114–117.
17. *Brecht on Theater*, p. 65.
18. *Theater der Kollektive*, pp. 97–98.
19. *Theater der Kollektive*, p. 72.
20. John Willett, *Brecht in Context*, (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 91. The improbable success was particularly great for Brecht as an individual due to his manipulation of the financial arrangements: "the original *Dreigroschenoper* contract specified a division of the royalties as follows: Brecht 60% (net), Weill 25% (net), Hauptmann 12 1/2% (net) and . . . Klammer 2 1/2%." Brecht subordinated his "collective," Kurt Weill and Elisabeth Hauptmann (both of whom, according to John Fuegi, deserve equal credit with Brecht for the musical's success), to his financial and artistic hegemony. Cf. John Fuegi, "Personal Politics: The Business Deals of Herr Bertolt Brecht," forthcoming publication of the Kurt Weill Foundation, Yale University Press.
21. *Theater der Kollektive*, pp. 98–102.
22. Atina Grossman, "Abortion and Economic Crisis," *New German Critique*, No. 14, Spring 1978, pp. 119–137.
23. *Theater der Kollektive*, pp. 105–152.
24. See Joel Schechter, "Beyond Brecht: New Authors, New Spectators," *The Brecht Yearbook*, Vol. 11, 1982. I feel that Schechter has overemphasized Brecht's contribution to audience-participation theater, especially in light of the *Piscator-Kollektiv's* influence on him. Brecht has contributed much, however, as a recorder of the *Piscator-Kollektiv's* experiments.
25. *Brecht on Theater*, pp. 130–131.
26. Piscator, *The Political Theater*, p. 291.
27. Piscator, p. 296.
28. *Brecht on Theater*, p. 66.
29. *Theater der Kollektive*, p. 71.
30. *Brecht on Theater*, p. 132.
31. Constanze Menz premiered the role of Tai Yang, with Lotte Loebinger in the role of her factory comrade. Loebinger took over the role shortly thereafter. *Theater der Kollektive*, p. 239.
32. Wolf, like his fellow gynecologist Carl Credé (*Paragraph 218*), wrote a play advocating a reform of the anti-abortion law called *Cyankali*, which was performed by the other collective that emerged from the *Piscator-Bühne's* Studio, the *Gruppe Junger Schauspieler*. On February 19, 1931, Wolf and a woman colleague, Dr. Else Kienle, were arrested for giving illegal abortions. See Grossman, "Abortion and Economic Crisis," p. 128.
33. *Blätter der Piscator-Bühne* for *Mond von Links*
34. Alfred Polgar, "Piscator-Bühne," *Die Weltbühne*, No. 4, 1931, pp. 144–145 (my translation).
35. *Theater der Kollektive*, pp. 252–253.
36. Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator*, p. 125.
37. *Brecht on Theater*, p. 134.
38. See also: *Theater der Kollektive*, pp. 239–245.
39. Piscator, *The Political Theater*, p. 204.
40. Piscator, pp. 209–210.
41. Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator*, p. 109.
42. Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator*, p. 185.
43. For a critical discussion of Brecht's portrayal of women in these plays, cf. Sara Lennox, "Women in Brecht's Works," *New German Critique*, No. 14, Spring 1978, pp. 83–96.
44. *Theater der Kollektive*, p. 75.
45. *Theater der Kollektive*, p. 257.
46. Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften . . . , *Theater der Zeitenwende*, (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1972), p. 171.
47. Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften, p. 171.

48. Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften, p. 234.
49. John Willett, *The Theatre of Erwin Piscator*, p. 166.

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- Note: For photographs of Lotte Loebinger, see *Theater der Kollektive*, photo 18 (in *Tai Yang erwacht*); *Theater der Zeitenwende*, photo 113 (in *Und das am Heiligabend*); and *Theater-Bilanz*, p. 78 (in *Dostigajew und andere*).

In keeping with the spirit of this essay's subject, I would like to acknowledge the collective effort behind this work. The guidance I received from my professors at the University of Maryland—John Fuegi, Eric Bentley, and Peter Beicken—led to its realization, and the moral support of my colleagues in the Theater Collective of Baltimore made the way easier. I would also like to thank my editors: Maria Lima, Carl Chatzky and George Martin of the Baltimore Information Co-op, and my father, Dr. Gerald J. Gruman. To Berlin, I would like to send thanks to Uwe Baumgartner and, of course, Lotte Loebinger.

David Roberts. "Brecht and the Idea of a Scientific Theatre."

Striving to establish the experimental character of his theater, Brecht was influenced by experimental psychologist Kurt Lewin and by the scientific approach to Marxism of Karl Korsch. Developing from an Aristotelian to a non-Aristotelian, or Galileian, drama, he defined his own as a drama of a scientific age. Disaffiliating himself from the old cultic institution, Brecht sacrifices religion for the sake of science. His concept thus becomes an epic non-Aristotelian. Through the social-political situation of the time, it was self-evident to Brecht that a combination of Marxism and of a scientific approach needed to be achieved. Korsch's scientific study of Marxism, written in fact with Brecht's collaboration, complements the constituents of Brecht's theatrical concept: science, history, Galilei, Marxism, Lewin and Korsch.

David Roberts. "Brecht und der Gedanke eines wissenschaftlichen Theaters".

Brechts Bemühungen, den experimentellen Charakter seines Theaters zu etablieren, waren maßgeblich von dem experimentellen Psychologen Kurt Lewin sowie den wissenschaftlichen Untersuchungen über den Marxismus von Karl Korsch beeinflusst. Er definierte sein Drama als das eines wissenschaftlichen Zeitalters; er entwickelte sich von einem Aristotelischen zu einem nicht-Aristotelischen, oder Galileischen, Theater. Brecht ließ die alte kultische Institution hinter sich und opferte die Religion zugunsten der Wissenschaft. Auf diese Weise wird sein Konzept ein episches nicht-Aristotelisches. Die sozialpolitische Situation seiner Zeit ließ für Brecht keinen anderen Weg zu als den einer Kombination von Marxismus und wissenschaftlichem Ansatz. Korsch's unter Mitarbeit von Brecht entstandene wissenschaftliche Studie über den Marxismus vervollständigt die Charakteristika von Brechts dramatischem Konzept: Wissenschaft, Historie, Galilei, Marxismus, Lewin und Korsch.

David Roberts. "Brecht et l'idée d'un théâtre scientifique."

En s'efforçant d'établir le caractère expérimental de son théâtre, Brecht fut influencé par le psychologue expérimental Kurt Lewin et l'approche scientifique du marxisme de Karl Korsch. Accomplissant la transition d'un drame aristotélicien à un drame non-aristotélicien, ou galiléen, il définit son propre genre de drame comme le théâtre d'un âge scientifique. En se dissociant de la vieille institution religieuse, Brecht sacrifie la religion dans l'intérêt de la science. Son concept devient ainsi une épopée non-aristotélicienne. A travers la situation socio-politique de son temps, il était évident aux yeux de Brecht qu'une combinaison de l'approche marxiste et de l'approche scientifique doit être réalisée. L'étude scientifique du marxisme par Korsch, écrite en fait avec la collaboration de Brecht, est le complément des éléments de la théorie théâtrale brechtienne: science, histoire, Galilée, Marxisme, Lewin et Korsch.

David Roberts. "Brecht y la idea de un teatro científico".

Al esmerarse por establecer el carácter experimental de su teatro, Brecht se dejó influir por Kurt Lewin, un sicólogo experimental, y por el acercamiento científico marxista de Karl Korsch. Después que Brecht desarrolló su obra dramática desde su forma aristotélica a una no-aristotélica, o Galiliana, él la definió como el drama de una era científica. Al desafiliarse del culto antiguo institucional, Brecht sacrifica la religión en pro de la ciencia. Por ende, su concepto se convierte en la épica no-aristotélica. Debido a la situación socio-política de la época, era obvio para Brecht que una combinación del marxismo y el acercamiento científico se debería lograr. El estudio científico del Marxismo de Korsch, escrito de hecho con la colaboración de Brecht, complementa los constituyentes del concepto teatral Brechtiano: la ciencia, la historia, el marxismo, Galilei, Lewin y Korsch.

Brecht and the Idea of a Scientific Theatre

David Roberts

Eric Bentley's plan in 1946 to write on Brecht for the American public led Brecht to formulate certain key aspects of his theatre which he wanted emphasized, in particular the insistence that the "experimental" character of his work is no mere metaphor but the endeavor to establish the experimental approach as a definitive function of the theatre. The parallel Brecht draws is to the experiments of Francis Bacon, which represent not the decisive but the definitive introduction of experimental method into the sciences. The experimental approach, moreover, has the aim of transforming the audience itself into social experimenters.¹ The socially critical nature of Brecht's theatre has of course been generally recognized. To the best of my knowledge, however, there is as yet no systematic investigation of the ideas, drawn from the natural sciences, underlying Brecht's conception of an experimental theatre, constituted by the epistemological break which separates the drama of a scientific age from "non-scientific" bourgeois drama. The present paper is an attempt to investigate systematically the epistemology which informs Brecht's idea of a scientific theatre by reference to the empirical psychology of Kurt Lewin and the "scientific" Marxism of the later Karl Korsch.

As we know, Brecht never tired of insisting on the nexus of empathy and emotion, identification and passive, uncritical acceptance of the representations of the world as the determining characteristic of Aristotelian drama. And this nexus in turn is based on the ideological and epistemological primacy of the subject, of the individual. The liquidation of the subject is thus the central explicit problematic of Brecht's drama from *Mann ist Mann* onward. *Mahagonny* and *Die Maßnahme* represent two extreme conclusions—the contradictions of the capitalist utopia of the collective, and in

each case the sacrifice of the individual is presented as a passion. At first sight these two plays suggest an end and a beginning: the end of bourgeois-capitalist anarchy and the anticipation of the new collective order, apocalypse and millenium. In fact, however, Brecht's revolution was to take quite a different direction, a direction which in retrospect can be seen as determined by the catastrophe of 1933 and the disappearance of any revolutionary subject. The direction which Brecht took after his break with the commercial apparatus of the bourgeois theatre following the "culinary" success of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, and after the activist pedagogy of the *Lehrstücke*, was to lead him in the years of his enforced separation from the theatre in exile back to the theatre. The failure of the social and political revolution in Germany, the dark times of exile left as the core of Brecht's drama the epistemological revolution which was to be carried back into the bourgeois theatre. That is to say, the theory and practice of the non-Aristotelian drama, which found its fullest expression after 1933, but whose roots go back to the genesis of the epic theatre, is the articulation of the consequences of the disappearance of the subject. This is the epistemological break which constitutes the problematic of Brecht's work. The individual as object and not subject of events is not only the constant theme of his plays, it determines the method presentation of figures and events as objects of investigation, whose formula from the mid-thirties on was the term alienation.

Alienation would become the key term of Brecht's theory because it summed up in a word the antithesis to the drama of identification and catharsis. "Wir bezeichnen eine Dramatik als aristotelisch, wenn diese Einfühlung von ihr herbeigeführt wird, . . ." (15,240)² This opposition of alienation and identification would thus seem to adequately define a non-Aristotelian dramaturgy which takes over the opposition of reason and feeling of the epic theatre. However the choice of the self-characterization "non-Aristotelian" has a much wider significance than is immediately apparent. No doubt Brecht wished to upvalue the stature of *his* drama by taking as his opponent so illustrious an authority as Aristotle, but behind this lies the historical parallel of the epochal and the epistemological break which shattered the authority of the medieval Aristotelian world order (cf. 18,200). Brecht, who at the end of his life introduced himself to his Soviet readers—in the past tense!—as a playwright, who "lived so to speak between two ages" (17,952), was fascinated by the earlier dawn of a new age, of the brave new world which his hero Galilei celebrates so eloquently.

Brecht likewise conceives of his theatre as a Copernican turning point. It would thus be more to the point to substitute for the polemic negative "non-Aristotelian" the positive title of a "Galileian" drama, for although Brecht is careful to define his drama as a drama of a scientific age, and not as a scientific drama itself, there can be no doubt that his deepest

inspiration and debt was to the natural and social sciences. The dominant influence of Marxism hardly needs stressing. After all, in Marx's revolutionary science of society Brecht had the prime example of an epistemological revolution—nevertheless, we cannot fully comprehend Brecht's Marxism without taking into account its "scientific" appropriation and application in his drama. That is to say, we must pay close attention to the scientific metaphors and analogies which are integral to Brecht's theory of a non-Aristotelian drama.

What is the importance of science for Brecht? It is, as Voigts puts it, the one form of knowledge which transcends bourgeois consciousness,⁴ the one means to overcome the illusory perspective of the individual subject (and the corresponding techniques of identification):

Vom Standpunkt der Einzelpersönlichkeit aus können die entscheidenden Vorgänge unseres Zeitalters nicht mehr begriffen, durch Einzelpersönlichkeiten können sie nicht mehr beeinflußt werden. Damit fallen die Vorteile der Einfühlungstechnik, . . . (15,245)

How is the individual to be presented as part of the collective, that is, within a social and class context? Brecht's answer in the 1920s had been the break with an introspective psychology of the subject in favor of an objectivist experimental psychology (American behaviorism, the psychology of the Russians Pavlov and Bechterev). As he writes in a commentary on *Die Mutter*:

Die Gedankengänge, die zur nichtaristotelischen Dramatik führten, waren beeinflußt von den Gedankengängen einiger Wissenschaften, wie der neueren Psychologie, der empirischen Philosophie der Physiker und so weiter, . . . (17,1071)

A meeting place of these scientific tendencies was the Berlin Society for Empirical Philosophy, of which Karl Korsch was a member. Whether Brecht himself participated is unclear. It would be surprising, however, had he been unaware of its proceedings. Certainly there is one paper, delivered in February 1930 by the experimental psychologist Kurt Lewin and published in 1931, which is so central to Brecht's non-Aristotelian drama, that we must examine it closely. The paper "The Conflict between Aristotelian and Galileian Modes of Thought in Contemporary Psychology" offers one might say a "little Organon" for a non-Aristotelian, that is Galileian drama. Lewin's paper is built around the idea of the epistemological break. Galileian and post-Galileian physics are defined by the overcoming of the dichotomy between lawfulness and chance, inherent in Aristotle's attribution

of the essential nature and behavior of an object to its membership of a class. By definition individual unique events cannot be members of a class:

Lawfulness was considered as equivalent to the highest degree of generality, as that which occurs very often in the same way, as the extreme case of regularity, and hence as the perfect antithesis of the infrequent or of the particular event.⁶

For Lewin this view of regularity is historical (empiricist) and not systematic, anthropomorphic and not functional. Physical laws could not be arrived at by this empiricist approach, nor could the general validity of a law be recognized, that depended upon Galilei's idea of the unity of the physical world. This unification of the field, that is, the "homogenization of the physical world with respect to the validity of law" (Lewin, 10), was the condition of the elimination of the distinction between lawful and chance events.

Psychology, Lewin goes on to argue, finds itself today in the same situation as pre-Galileian physics. The question whether the physical world is lawful is still the basic issue. Psychology's view of laws is still governed by considerations of regularity and frequency. Individual cases are treated as chance events, scientifically indifferent. Thus psychology still awaits the unification of its field, the assumption of the unconditional general validity of psychological laws, which would allow the advance from a historical-empiricist to a systematic approach, that is, from the average to the "pure case" (Lewin, 22) of scientific, experimental method, where the assumption of the lawfulness of all events means that modern physics can investigate in detail individual cases.

After his forced flight from Germany in 1933, Kurt Lewin set out in the U.S.A. to construct a scientific "Galileian" psychology, to which he gave the name field theory. The basic idea of this later field theory is developed in his 1930 paper by means of the comparison of Aristotelian and Galileian dynamics. In Aristotle's dynamics we again encounter the dichotomy of lawfulness and chance, expressed in terms of value concepts: good (internal) causes, i.e. a body's tendency to perfection (*telos*) and thus the expression of its class membership, are opposed to bad (external) causes, i.e. disturbances due to chance and the opposing forces of other bodies (*bia*). This means that in Aristotelian dynamics the physical vectors "are completely determined in advance by the nature of the object concerned. In modern physics on the contrary, *the existence of a physical vector depends upon the mutual relation of several physical facts*, especially upon the relation of the object to the environment." (Lewin, 28) Whereas in the Aristotelian system the environment is conceived of only as the disturbance or modification of the object's *telos* (the vector belongs to the object once and for all), in the

Galileian system "the situation assumes as much importance as the object. *Only by the concrete whole which comprises the object and the situation are the vectors which determine the dynamics of the event defined.*" (Lewin, 29) By means of this conceptual clarification Lewin has laid the groundwork for his dynamic theory of personality, which situates the behavior of the individual within a life space or field of forces. From this it follows for a scientific psychology that what

is now important to the investigation of dynamics is not to abstract from the situation, but to hunt out those situations in which the determinative factors of the total dynamic structure are most clearly, distinctly, and purely to be observed. (Lewin, 31)

What Lewin is thus proposing as a program—the Galileian epistemological break which would constitute a science of psychical dynamics in analogy to the science of physical dynamics—is clearly of the utmost relevance to Brecht's own program of a drama which will "liquidate the remnants of the cultic" in the theatre, adhering to it from earlier epochs (15,236), a program which he summed up in the final sentence of *Der Messingkauf* as *in toto* the "secularization of the old cultic institution" (16,657).

The locus of these remnants in the theatre lies for Brecht in the process of identification, which he calls a form of religiosity (15,241). The secularization of the theatre requires that art relinquish its religious functions and take on the functions of science. It is for this reason that Brecht could not accept the autonomy of the work of art.⁷ The unhappy compromise of 1948 of an Aesthetic as a "Little Organon," prefaced apologetically by the assurance that an aesthetic of the exact sciences could now also be written (16,662), is not so much a corrective as a retreat from the position of the 1930s. On the contrary it is only by taking the scientific intention of Brecht's break with tradition seriously that we can arrive at a clear comprehension of the *specific quality* of his non-Aristotelian drama, by means of the systematic reconstruction of the *logic* of his theory and praxis from the standpoint of the epistemology and methodology of the experimental sciences.

Let us go back to Lewin's comparison of Aristotelian and Galileian dynamics. We have here a basic conceptual model for Brecht's own opposition of an Aristotelian and non-Aristotelian drama, the epistemological displaced as it were by some three-hundred years, because for Aristotle we must read Shakespeare and for Galilei Brecht. Aristotle's dynamics are the dynamics of Shakespeare's *tragedies*. The trajectory, the tragic hero, is the *telos* of his character that carries him to his fate through and against the resistance of external forces. In Lewin's words, the physical vectors "are completely determined in advance by the nature of the object concerned." In

Brecht's words, with reference to the Shakespearean hero: "Die Menschen handeln zwangsmäßig, ihrem 'Charakter' entsprechend, ihr Charakter ist 'ewig', unbeeinflussbar, er kann sich nur zeigen, er hat keine den Menschen erreichbare Ursache." (15,332)

Against this "freedom" of the heroic individual acting out his "fate"—unique, incalculable, without recognizable causes and thus the expression of *chance*—Brecht sets the Galileian dynamics of the situation. The actions of the individual can only be comprehended in terms of the "concrete whole" of which they form a part. The actions of the individual are always the *resultant* of the mutual relations of the vectors of the given situation. The concept of character is thus strictly speaking superfluous, it is the pre-scientific, "psychological" explanation of behavior, which rests on the assumption of the *identity* and *autonomy* of the subject given by his *telos*. In other words, the rejection of teleological explanation of behavior means the liquidation of the subject of the Aristotelian theatre, for which *Mann ist Mann* is the paradigmatic example. And if it be objected that Brecht in practice could not do without the concept of "character," the teleological ascriptions of his figures—Grusche's "mother instinct," Galilei's "curiosity," Shen Te's "goodness"—are introduced not as *fatum* but as the *datum* of the experimental investigation. With the disappearance of the *telos* of the character disappears the dramatic form of the Aristotelian theatre. Speaking of Engel's "epicization" of *Coriolanus* in the 1920s Brecht writes

Im Gegensatz zum dramatischen Theater, wo alles auf eine Katastrophe hinaus, also fast das Ganze einleitenden Charakter hat, stand hier die Totalität unbewegt in jeder Szene. (15,134)

The epic form derives precisely from the primacy of the part over the whole, of the scene as the basic unit of construction and this primacy follows of necessity from the determination of behavior as the product of the concrete situation (the scene). The function of the "Grundgestus" as the core of each concrete situation thus becomes clear in terms of a Galileian dynamics—it is the expression of the *resultant* of the vectors of the situation.

And what is this resultant as the product of interacting forces other than, as Benjamin expresses it, "the dialectic at a standstill"?

But the dialectic which epic theatre sets out to present is not dependent on a sequence of scenes in time; rather it declares itself in those gestural elements that form the basis of each sequence in time . . . The conditions which epic theatre reveals is the dialectic at a standstill.⁸

As we shall see, Brecht's epic dialectic is remarkably compatible with a Galileian dynamics by virtue of the methodological concentration on a space as opposed to a time continuum. Instead of the *arrow of teleology* of the Aristotelian (dramatic) theatre we have the *field of forces* of the non-Aristotelian (epic) theatre, whose structure is that of a series of discontinuous states, each of which forms an experimental situation, and which together have an end but no goal (17,998). The situation and not the individual is thus the starting point of inquiry:

Das epische Theater hat als Inaugurator und Fragesteller keineswegs das große leidenschaftliche Individuum, sondern die Frage wird immer wieder von der jeweiligen Situation gestellt, und die Individuen sind es, die sie durch ihr typisches Verhalten beantworten. (15,193)

Elsewhere Brecht speaks of the identification as the artistic technique of an age in which man was the variable and the environment the constant (15,300). The epic theatre's reversal of this relation—the environment as the variable, man as the constant—is later modified for the non-Aristotelian drama. "Die Auffassung des Menschen als einer Variablen des Milieus, des Milieus als einer Variablen des Menschen, das heißt die Auflösung des Milieus in Beziehung zwischen Menschen" (16,628) corresponds to the interactions of Galileian dynamics.

The structural and epistemological primacy of the scene, given by the *de-composition* of the teleological continuity of the Aristotelian drama and subject, is the direct consequence of what Lewin calls the "unification of the field."

Brecht too is committed to the "scientific" investigation of social behavior, the elucidation and demonstration of the lawfulness of social events. The scientific construction of reality is at the heart of the complex of concepts and methods which form the theory and praxis of the non-Aristotelian drama. But before we consider Brecht's construction of reality and his attempts to come to terms with the question of individual and social causality, we must preface this by placing the "unification of the field" in the larger context of Brecht's understanding of his age as a scientific age. Capitalist society is defined by the split between the natural and the social world. As Brecht expresses it in the *Little Organon*:

Der Grund dafür, daß die neue Denk- und Fühlweise die großen Menschenmassen noch nicht wirklich durchdringt, ist darin zu suchen, daß die Wissenschaften, so erfolgreich in der Ausbeutung und Unterwerfung der Natur, von der Klasse, die ihr die Herrschaft verdankt, dem Bürgertum, gehindert werden, ein anderes Gebiet zu bearbeiten, das noch im Dunkel liegt, nämlich das der

Beziehungen der Menschen untereinander bei der Ausbeutung und Unterwerfung der Natur. . . . Der neue Blick auf die Natur richtet sich nicht auch auf die Gesellschaft. (16,669)

From the time of his encounter with the sociologist Sternberg and the reading of *Das Kapital* Brecht repeatedly insisted that the writer needed the aid of the sciences if he is to understand and make visible the relations between men. Brecht's application of the new knowledge of society is that of simplifications by means of form: "Haben wir uns in den Stoffen einigermaßen orientiert, können wir zu den Beziehungen übergehen, die heute ungeheuer kompliziert sind und nur durch *Form* vereinfacht werden können." (15,198) But by 1931 there is a decisive addition: "Die neue Dramatik muß methodologisch den 'Versuch' in ihrer Form unterbringen." (17,999) And in 1936 Brecht writes in a retrospective of the development of the theatre in the 1920s:

Dieser Ausbau des Theaters und der Dramaturgie, die Anwendung teilweise sehr komplizierter neuer Methoden diene im Grunde nur der Vereinfachung in der Darstellung der großen Vorgänge. Niemand kann erwarten, daß die Vorgänge auf dem Weizenmarkt in Chicago oder in dem Kriegsministerium in der Berliner Bendlerstraße weniger kompliziert sind als die Vorgänge im Atom, und man weiß, welch komplizierter Methoden es bedarf, einfache Beschreibungen von den Vorgängen im Atom zu geben. Selbstverständlich sind die Methoden des Theaters, auch des fortgeschrittenen Theaters eines wissenschaftlichen Zeitalters, ganz außerordentlich weniger exakt als die der Physik, aber auch das Theater muß solche Beschreibungen der Umwelt geben können, daß der Zuschauer sich auskennt. (15,238)

The juxtaposition of the events on the Chicago wheat market and in the atom is an analogy which derives from the "unification" of the field in the wider sense indicated above. Brecht's theatre of the scientific age has as its premise the theoretical unification of the social field made possible by the scientific analysis of society. That is to say, the "science" of Marxism provides the bridge between nature and society. The juxtaposition of the *methods* of the theatre and of physics derives, however, from the "unification of the field" in the sense postulated by Lewin, and for Brecht that means the incorporation of the "experiment" into the form of the new drama. If the *purpose* of the "descriptions" of the world, whether of the wheat market or the atom, is not simply to describe but to change the world, it is nevertheless the case that description, in the sense of causal analysis, defines the function of the new drama. In other words, the revolutionary process of social-political change inaugurated by Marxism demands of the playwright the development of a methodology modelled on that of the natural sciences.

The combination of Marxism and scientific method is the ongoing concern of the non-Aristotelian drama of the 1930s.⁹

Brecht we can say has followed Lewin in moving from the behavioristic psychology of the epic theatre to the physics of the non-Aristotelian drama. But unlike Lewin he is not able to make the *theoretical* assumption which eliminates the dichotomy between lawfulness and chance in individual behavior.

In fact it is striking that he cannot cross the "epistemological barrier" (Bachelard) of the Aristotelian distinction between class and individual:

Der Philosoph: In Gesetzen habt ihr nur höchst allgemeine Richtlinien, Durchschnitte, Resumes. Der Begriff *Klasse* zum Beispiel ist ein Begriff, in dem viele Einzelpersonen begriffen, also als Einzelpersonen ausgelöscht sind. (16,615)

Brecht's commitment to the demonstration of causality leads him, however, in practice, that is, in terms of *method*, very similar to that of Lewin. The methodological conclusions for a scientific psychology Lewin drew from his distinction between historical and systematic causality help us analyze the logic of Brecht's method. Given that any individual event is only explicable within its given concrete situation, the investigator must "hunt out those situations in which the determinative factors of the total dynamic structure are most clearly, distinctly, and purely to be observed." Applied to the non-Aristotelian drama it means that the rules of method for the construction of reality in the model are best understood in the light of what Lewin calls the move from the (empirical) average case to the (scientifically) pure case. Precisely the indeterminacy of the individual demands the construction of situations in which the particular reveals the general—"Die Besonderheit ist ein Merkmal des Allgemeinen. Man trifft ganz allgemein Besonderes" (16,614). Or, as Brecht had already formulated it in 1931: "Kausalität zum Beispiel nur, wo sie herstellbar anzuerkennen." (20,148) And this is only possible by the process of de-composition, the "epic" breaking down of events (the fable) into their constituent parts, into a discontinuous series of concrete situations:

Die Fortführung der Fabel ist hier diskontinuierlich, das einheitliche Ganze besteht aus selbständigen Teilen, die jeweils sofort mit den korrespondierenden Teilvorgängen in der Wirklichkeit konfrontiert werden können, ja müssen. Ständig zieht diese Spielweise alle Kraft aus dem Vergleich mit der Wirklichkeit, das heißt, sie lenkt das Auge ständig auf die Kausalität der abgebildeten Vorgänge. (16,655)

The "autonomous" part corresponds to the experimental situation. Its autonomy lies in the fact that it is constructed in such a fashion that it is *comprehensible in itself*. This is the condition of the demonstration and recognition of the causality of the events. As Lewin puts it:

Only in experiment, that is, under artificially constructed conditions, do cases occur which approximate the event with which the law is concerned. (Lewin, 12)

Brecht makes the same point when he writes: "Bacon sagt: Die Natur verrät sich mehr, wenn sie von der Kunst verdrängt wird, als wenn sie sich frei überlassen bleibt." (16,509) In other words, causality and construction, reality and method are inseparable. When we speak of Brecht's "realism" we are speaking of the methods by which "reality" is constructed to produce knowledge. Reality is both the operation and the object of investigation, the invisible to be made visibly by means of the operations of art, by means of artificial constructions. The Philosopher in *Der Messingkauf* makes Brecht's conception of realism clear by reference to Galilei's famous experiment:

Ihr wißt, einer, der einen Stein fallen läßt, hat noch nicht das Fallgesetz dargestellt, noch einer, der den Fall eines Steines lediglich genau beschreibt. . . . Das Abbild, mechanisch genommen und vielen Zwecken dienstbar gemacht, muß unbedingt ein sehr genaues sein. . . . Diese Abbilder bringen den Forscher für gewöhnlich in dieselbe Verlegenheit wie die "genau" abgemalten Blumen. (16,517)

Surface naturalism is not the way to the "mastering of reality":

Die Schwierigkeit liegt darin: Daß die Realität auf dem Theater wiedererkannt wird, ist nur eine der Aufgaben des echten Realismus. Sie muß aber auch noch durchschaut werden. Es müssen die Gesetze sichtbar werden, welche den Ablauf der Prozesse des Lebens beherrschen. Diese Gesetze sind nicht auf Photographien sichtbar. (16,520)

The realism which the mastering of reality requires is the demonstration of social causality:

Das epische Theater . . . arbeitet Szenen heraus, in denen Menschen sich so verhalten, daß die sozialen Gesetze, unter denen sie stehen, sichtbar werden. Dabei müssen praktikable Definitionen gefunden werden, das heißt solche Definitionen der interessierenden Prozesse, durch deren Benutzung in diese Prozesse eingegriffen werden kann. (15,474)

The activation of the spectator is achieved by showing that what is determined is also capable of being changed. This is the meaning of what Brecht calls the "practicable view of the world" (15,296), offered by the non-Aristotelian drama.

Der Zuschauer wird als Abbildern von Menschen gegenüberstehend behandelt, deren Urbilder er in der Wirklichkeit zu behandeln, das heißt zu Äußerungen und Handlungen zu bringen hat und nicht etwa als streng ausdeterminierte Phänomene auffassen darf. Seine Aufgabe seinen Mitmenschen gegenüber besteht darin, unter die determinierenden Faktoren sich selber einzuschalten. Bei dieser Aufgabe hat ihn die Dramatik zu unterstützen. Die determinierenden Faktoren, wie soziales Milieu, spezielle Ereignisse und so weiter, sind also als veränderliche darzustellen. (17,1061)

The key to intervention in social processes is the knowledge of causality. Knowledge (begreifen) permits intervention (eingreifen). The production of knowledge thus determines the Brechtian realism: "Die Realität muß, bei aller Komplexität, schon durch eine künstlerische Gestaltung verändert sein, damit sie als veränderbar erkannt und behandelt werden kann." (15,251)¹⁰ The production of knowledge thus becomes one with the production of the subject: to know reality is to change it, and correspondingly only by changing reality do we know it. The audience thus acquires a new, "scientific" attitude:

Er bekommt den Abbildern der Menschenwelt auf der Bühne gegenüber jetzt dieselbe Haltung, die er als Mensch dieses Jahrhunderts der Natur gegenüber hat. Er wird auch im Theater empfangen als der große Änderer, der in die Naturprozesse und die gesellschaftlichen Prozesse einzugreifen vermag, der die Welt nicht mehr nur hinnimmt, sondern sie meistert. . . . Das Theater legt ihm nunmehr die Welt vor zum Zugriff. (15,302)

Such a scientific perspective makes the world material in the hands of the artist and its potential subject, the audience, and the means by which the world is made material is *alienation*. It is the process by which society is "de-natured" in order to reveal its nature as material:

Das "Natürliche" mußte das Moment des *Auffälligen* bekommen. Nur so konnten die Gesetze von Ursache und Wirkung zutage treten. Das Handeln der Menschen mußte zugleich so sein und mußte zugleich anders sein können. (15,265)

This alienating vision is of course that of the scientist: "um das Ding zu begreifen, tun sie, als begriffen sie es nicht; um Gesetze zu entdecken, bringen sie die Vorgänge in Gegensatz zu überkommenen Vorstellungen" (15,362). The definition of the "alienation effect" is therefore:

Er besteht darin, daß die Vorgänge des wirklichen Lebens auf der Bühne so abgebildet werden, daß gerade ihre Kausalität besonders in Erscheinung tritt und den Zuschauer beschäftigt. (16,652)

We note the insistence on causality in the definition of alienation. The techniques of alienation and the making visible of the workings of causality are the two sides of the one process—alienation and causality are thus mutual presuppositions and no adequate account of the alienation effect in Brecht's theatre is possible without recognition of its underlying "scientific" purpose.

The model is the paramount instance of scientific alienation in Brecht's theatre, *the* decisive alteration of reality directed to the manifestations of the workings of social causality, because it constructs the conditions closest to those of the pure of the scientific experiment.¹¹ When we speak of the model as the counterpart of the experiment, we mean that its function is the isolation and determination of the events and persons to be investigated. The isolation and determination of the field is the premise of comprehension and intervention, as we have already seen:

Das eingreifende Denken. Praktikable Definitionen: solche Definitionen, die die Handhabung des definierten Feldes gestalten. (20, 168)

The model is thus a "practicable definition": the isolation and definition of the field which is accomplished by the model makes the fable in turn a "concrete theorem" (Bachelard).

The isolation of the field is the task of the model, the task of the operations of alienation, and this process applied to the social field Brecht calls "historization":

Verfremden heißt also Historisieren, heißt Vorgänge und Personen als historisch, also als vergänglich darstellen. Dasselbe kann natürlich auch mit Zeitgenossen geschehen, auch ihre Haltungen können als zeitgebunden, historisch, vergänglich dargestellt werden. Was ist damit gewonnen? Damit ist gewonnen, daß der Zuschauer die Menschen auf der Bühne nicht mehr als ganz unänderbare, unbeeinflussbare, ihrem Schicksal hilflos ausgelieferte dargestellt sieht. Er sieht: dieser Mensch ist so und so, weil die Verhältnisse so und so sind. Und die Verhältnisse sind so und so, weil der Mensch so und so ist. Er ist aber nicht nur so vorstellbar, wie er ist, sondern auch anders, so wie er sein könnte, und auch die Verhältnisse sind anders vorstellbar, als sie sind. (15,302)

The alienation of events and persons reveal them as determined and contingent, that is, as *historical*, but historical in the scientific sense of unique events, points of intersection of forces in a social field. And it is in this scientific sense that Brecht speaks of the contemporary world as historical:

So wie die Einfühlung das besondere Ereignis alltäglich macht, so macht die Verfremdung das alltägliche besonders. Die allerallgemeinsten Vorgänge werden ihrer Langweiligkeit entkleidet, indem sie als ganz besondere dargestellt werden. Nicht länger flüchtet der Zuschauer aus der Jetztzeit in die Historie; die Jetztzeit wird zur Historie. (16,610)

This "historical" perspective is not what we normally think of as a historical perspective. On the contrary we could term it with greater justice ahistorical, structuralist in that the isolation of the field is essentially synchronic and not diachronic. When Brecht declares that the contemporary world can be viewed historically, i.e. historized, he means by this that it is delivered over to the realm of causality, the realm of freedom. From this scientific perspective past and present are equally material for study. All Brecht's plays are thus "historical" plays, but equally all history is contemporary, or to put the paradox another way: the distinction between past and present is the epistemological barrier which must be overcome. The present made past, historized, is the present relativized, treated as "zeitgebunden, historisch, vergänglich." The relativization of the present as the past does not serve a genetic function—Brecht is not setting out to understand the present in terms of its history—but the "historical" function of alienating and relativizing the standpoint of the audience. To return to Lewin, Brecht's "historical" perspective represents in relation to the study of society as historical formations the epistemological break given in Galilei's replacement of an Aristotelian historical-empirical causality by a systematic causality. The genetic-teleological perspective development gives way to the concrete world conceived as the totality of the relations of forces. The arrow of teleology is arrested in mid-flight, the process crystallizes into structure, the dialectic is frozen into a tableau of gestures. This is the essence of Brecht's "historical," that is, scientific, systematic vision. Specification and discontinuity are the two complementary aspects of the one "epic" operation of alienation of the social-historical world. The individual scene is thus the model in miniature, the model itself the "practicable definition" of the field. The "epic" self-sufficiency of the model, for the isolation of the field is the definition of the sufficient conditions of the field. Specification is the analytic procedure of abstraction which separates historical and systematic causality, and decomposes historical development into the specification of changes of state of the system. History and the

model are strictly incompatible. The "historization" of events and persons is their isolation (abstraction) from historical-genetic analysis. The historical and the empirical have no place in the Brechtian model. Thus the frequently noted characteristic of the absence of time and place that adheres to Brecht's "specifications," for these specifications can have neither time nor place as they have no history beyond the original conditions (data) of the demonstration. Thus the "historical" play *Mutter Courage* begins with a completely empty stage, it is the "nothingness," the *tabula rasa* from which the action will arise. The Brechtian model can abstract from history, for everything is history and all history is material.

This "scientific" view of history takes us from Kurt Lewin to Karl Korsch, and from science to Marxism—as science. In his "Svendborg book" *Karl Marx*, written in exile in Denmark in close collaboration with Brecht, there is a passage which reveals this progression—from Lewin to Korsch, and from Galilei to Marx—with complete clarity:

Wie die moderne Naturwissenschaft nicht mehr nach alter aristotelisch-scholastischer Manier *beliebige* an einem empirischen Gegenstand vorgefundene Merkmale verallgemeinert und z.B. von dem einen fallenden Stein zu einem allgemeinen Gesetz von dem Fallen der Steine, sondern von der Analyse des einzelnen Falles in seiner ganzen Besonderheit, oder von dem einzelnen unter genauer Feststellung der Versuchsbedingungen durchgeführten Versuch zu der Formulierung des allgemeinen Gravitationsgesetzes fortschreitet (welches nun, unter variierten Bedingungen mit einem entsprechend veränderten äußeren Resultat, ebenso für den fallenden Stein wie für den auf einer Unterlage ruhenden Stein, und auch noch für solche anderen Dingen wie Luftballons, Planeten und Kometen gültig ist), so kann auch eine strenge Gesellschaftswissenschaft sich ihre allgemeinen Begriffe nicht durch einfache Abstraktion von einigen und Festhalten von anderen, mehr oder weniger willkürlich ausgewählten Merkmalen der gegebenen geschichtlichen Form der Gesellschaft bilden. Sie gelangt zu der Erkenntnis des in der Gesellschaftsform enthaltenen Allgemeinen durch die genaue Erforschung des geschichtlichen Hervorgehens dieser besonderen aus einer anderen ebenso besonderen gesellschaftlichen Form und womöglich durch die unter bestimmten, genau festgelegten Bedingungen herbeigeführte Veränderung ihrer gegenwärtigen Form. Die Gesellschaftswissenschaft wird erst dann zu einer exakten, auf Beobachtung und Experiment beruhenden Wissenschaft.¹¹

Marx, for Korsch, marks the point of the epistemological break which constitutes the new science of society in analogy to the new science of nature (cf. Korsch, 157). Just as bourgeois materialism revolutionized the natural sciences, so proletarian materialism sets itself the task of subjecting the historical and social world of men to the same materialist principle. The mate-

rialism of natural science is constituted by critique of medieval theology, historical and social materialism is constituted by the critique of bourgeois metaphysics from Kant to Hegel (Korsch, 156). The radical rupture is that *between Marx and Hegel*, the rupture between the philosophy and the science of history. For Korsch the weakness of Marx's materialism is its origins in Hegel's philosophy. To break with Hegel remains to be completed (Korsch, 204). Thus Korsch's insistence that the theory of the new revolutionary movement, as a proletarian and no longer bourgeois theory, possesses a new, no longer philosophical, but strictly scientific character: "Der geschichtliche Materialismus ist in seiner Haupttendenz nicht mehr eine 'philosophische,' sondern eine *empirische wissenschaftliche Methode*." (Korsch, 203)

Our progression from Lewin to Korsch now enables us to define more precisely the Brechtian "science of history" developed in his non-Aristotelian drama. For indeed it is this *copula* which is crucial, science *and* history, Galilei *and* Marx, Lewin *and* Korsch. As we see from the quotation from *Karl Marx* (p. 50) above, the essential step of the new science of society is the step from (Aristotelian) classification to (Galileian) specification. It is clear that the epistemology of Kurt Lewin is the model for Korsch's—and Brecht's—principle of *historical specification*.¹² This principle provides the methodology of the new organon of historical-social investigation (Korsch, 203). The "Copernican turning point" (Korsch, 117), given by Marx's *Critique of Political Economy*, lies for Korsch in the transformation of the absolute concept of truth of bourgeois social science into the materialist concept of truth: "Sie (die Politische Ökonomie) wird aus einer unbedingten und zeitlosen in eine geschichtlich und gesellschaftlich bedingte Form der Wissenschaft umgedeutet." (Korsch, 117) The decisive role which the "unification of the field" (Lewin) plays for the revolution of natural science is fulfilled by "historical specification" in the revolution of social science:

Das erste Grundprinzip der neuen, revolutionären Gesellschaft ist das Prinzip der geschichtlichen Spezifizierung aller gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse. Marx faßt alle Institutionen und Verhältnisse der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft in ihrer geschichtlichen Besonderheit auf. (Korsch, 8)

The revolutionary step from nature to society, from natural to social science is achieved through the science of history, that is, through the scientific-historical analysis of social formations. Historical specifications, as the example of Lewin shows, signifies the operation of isolating the field in order to determine its causality. Marxism as social science thus gains a universally applicable methodology but loses in the processes its universal object (and subject)—history. As Korsch puts it, Marx rejects a naive metaphysics of development. Earlier social forms are not just preformations: "Sie sind in ihrer

Totalität betrachtet, selbständige, aus ihren eigenen Kategorien zu begreifende geschichtliche Gebilde." (Korsch, 28) Bourgeois society likewise can claim no privileged position: "Sie (die bürgerliche Gesellschaft) ist nur noch die in der gegenwärtigen Epoche erreichte und für diese bestimmte Epoche vorübergehend gültige, dann von einer anderen ablösenden Stufe einer geschichtlichen Bewegung." (Korsch, 31) It is thus clear why the scientific laws of society are historical laws. Every historical period has its own laws. Korsch appeals here to the evidence of modern science.

Die Naturwissenschaft des 20. Jahrhunderts hat gelernt, daß die "kausalen" Beziehungen . . . überhaupt nicht in der Form eines allgemeinen Kausalitätsbegriffs oder Kausalgesetzes zu definieren, sondern für jedes besondere Gebiet "spezifisch zu bestimmen" sind. (Korsch, 200)

At the same time, however, the historical nature of all social laws reveals not only the ongoing dialectic of change (Wechsel der Dinge) but also the dialectic of causality inherent in Brecht's emancipatory project. If the science of society reduces history to historicity, society to the positivity of nature, and the subject to object, it is because all history belongs to the realm of necessity. The determinability of the laws of society is the index of the determination, the unfreedom of society (Korsch, 132). The laws of society are thus not the same as the laws of nature, they are, as it were, society's collective unconsciousness (in Brecht's words "das Tiefenfeld des sozialen Seins")¹³ which, brought to consciousness, "alienated," reveal their contingency. That is to say, the science of society reveals the *nature* of society as *historical*, reveals the essential historicity of all social formations, past and present. As with Korsch, historical specification is the key to Brecht's Marxism. Indeed we must regard *Karl Marx* as the joint work of Korsch and Brecht.

The epistemological and epochal break which constitutes Brecht's "scientific" theatre is for him the imperative of an age of world war and revolution in which the "possibility and necessity of a new formation of society emerges" (16,631). To liberate the future from the past, the otherness of history must be shown: there can be *no standpoint within history*, no place of *identification*, for the dialectic of change casts the light of alienation on all history as man's pre-history. The present alienated from itself is the historical line of rupture, the radical discontinuity, the dissociation at the heart of Brecht's work, effected by the perspective of "historization," whose instrument is the "alienation effect."

Bei der *Historisierung* wird ein bestimmtes Gesellschaftssystem vom Standpunkt eines anderen Gesellschaftssystems aus betrachtet. Die Entwicklung der Gesellschaft ergibt die Gesichtspunkte. (16,653) Historische Vorgänge sind einma-

lige, vorübergehende, mit bestimmten Epochen verbundene Vorgänge. Das Verhalten der Personen in ihnen ist nicht ein schlechthin menschliches, unwandelbares, es hat bestimmte Besonderheiten, es hat durch den Gang der Geschichte Überholtes und Überholbares und ist der Kritik vom Standpunkt der jeweilig darauffolgenden Epoche unterworfen. Die ständige Entwicklung entfremdet uns das Verhalten der vor uns Geborenen. Der Schauspieler hat nun diesen Abstand zu den Ereignissen und Verhaltensweisen der Jetztzeit zu nehmen. Er hat uns diese Vorgänge und Personen zu entfremden. (15,347)

But if the past is to be judged from the standpoint of another social system or of the following epoch, what is the standpoint from which the present is to be judged and relegated to the past? Each epochal break is an epistemological break. The historical perspective of judgement is made possible by the discontinuities, the "epic" jumps of development. Applied to the *present* it means the utopian standpoint of alienation and not identification, of discontinuity and not continuity. Utopia is present in its absence, it is as it were the fourth dimension of time to be released from the timeless spatial field of the "dialectic at a standstill" as the other possibility of the given, specific, historical world. It is thus of necessity a utopian standpoint which we are given in Brecht's theatre, whose "transcendental" representative and surrogate here and now is "alienation"—the rationality of the "historical," that is, scientific perspective. And indeed there is telling exchange in *Der Messingkauf* which reveals the nature of the alienation at the heart of Brecht's position. Speaking of the titles of the scenes of *Mother Courage* the actor asks "Wieso hat der letzte dieser Titel einen historischen oder sozialpolitischen oder sittengeschichtlichen Charakter?"

Der Dramaturg: Es wird als Charakteristikum der Zeit gezeigt, daß gutherzige Handlungen teuer zu stehen kommen.

Der Schauspieler: Das ist auch ein Charakteristikum unserer Zeit, und wo war eine Zeit, die anderes sah?

Der Dramaturg: Eine solche Zeit kann in unserer Vorstellung sein. (16,606)

"And when was there a time which was different"? This question leaves only the utopian standpoint of alienation *vis a vis* a present that perpetuates the unfreedom of the past.

It is the question posed by the "dark times" of exile, the question expressed in other form when Brecht writes

Ich habe gehört, daß die Elenden die Herren von morgen sind.

Das sei das Natürliche. Ein Blick genüge

es zu sehen. Das
kann ich nicht finden. (9,752)

History has yet no subject. This is the central, crucial paradox of Brecht's non-Aristotelian drama. The scientific alienation of the social world is both the methodological consequence and answer to the political absence of the revolutionary subject. But the rationalist and revolutionary optimism of a scientific method directed to the "mastering of reality" stands in the sharpest contrast to the negativity of the world thereby revealed. The standpoint of alienation which separates past and future is reflected in the separation of subject and object, *teleology and causality* in Brecht's drama. It is the paradox of a "revolutionary" method which reduces society to nature and man to object and drives the opposition of unfreedom and freedom to its antithetical limit, with the result that the project of the mastering of reality is brought dangerously close to the "exploitation and objection" of nature, of which Brecht speaks as the achievement of the natural sciences. Certainly Brecht's project betrays an operative intention which lays him open to the charge of the confusion of technical and emancipatory interest. The proximity of social experiment, social engineering and social manipulation is indeed given, as the following quotation makes clear. Here we see the "social scientist" reducing the emancipatory interest of Communism to "practical," that is, technical operations of manipulation (*Handhabung*):

Unter dem Begreifen eines Menschen verstehen wir nämlich nicht weniger als: ihm gegenüber Griffe haben. Jener "totale" Überblick über ihn, der ihn uns umreißt und der momentan sein muß, genügt nicht, sondern ist nur eine Voraussetzung unserer eigentlichen entscheidenden Operation des Begreifens, die ihn *handhabt*, dazu jenen Überblick als eine Art Situationsplan braucht. . . . Wir können den anderen nur begreifen, wenn wir in ihn eingreifen können. Auch uns selbst können wir nur begreifen, indem wir in uns eingreifen. Der Mensch scheint zunächst als ein von Menschen benutzbares und Menschen benutzendes Wesen nicht zu Ende definiert. Aber zumindest ist es für jene Bewegung, die die mißbräuchliche Benutzung des Menschen durch den Menschen zu bekämpfen hat, die kommunistische, praktisch, ihn so zu definieren. (17,1062)

Here Brecht is in danger of falling victim to the scientific separation of subject and object through the equation of scientific and social experiment:¹⁴ man defined as the object, the communist movement as the experimenter. The operations (method) express only the interests of the experimenter. The scientific interests of Brecht's dramatic method—the construction of causality comes from and is directed at the disappearance of the subject. Without

the subject, however, there can be no emancipatory interest for Brecht's theatre. The defeat of the Left in 1933 undoubtedly reinforced the scientific tendencies of Brecht's theatre. What are the "dark times" of exile but the darkness cast by the absence of the revolutionary subject? Social determination—causality—fills as it were the vacuum, fills it in a double and contradictory sense. On the one hand Brecht is confronted by the causality of capitalist "nature," the determination of the subject by what he calls "*das Tiefenfeld des sozialen Seins*," on the other hand he is convinced that the only revolutionary weapon he possesses is the analysis of social causality, which means in practice the determination of the subject. This contradiction could not of course be overcome by the temptation of technical manipulation (politically speaking Brecht's attraction to Stalinism). The scientific study of society leads him into the contradiction, scientific study must lead him out. That is to say, causality points in two directions for Brecht—in the direction of determination and of autonomy. The contradiction is resolvable into the paradox of Brecht's method: the scientific study of society demands the replacement of teleological explanation by causal, but causal explanation in the service of teleology. Causality and teleology are separated in the non-Aristotelian drama. Instead of the subject-object relation of the Aristotelian drama—in terms of dynamics, the conflict of *telos* and *bia*—we have the experimental situation, the model of the Brechtian drama, in which the actions of the individual are a function of the dynamic whole. The mimetic drama of identification subsumes the audience of individuals in the dramatic (teleological) *subject*, the non-mimetic drama of alienation separates the audience from the dramatic *object* of causality. Autonomy is present in terms of its absence on stage. That is to say only the reconstitution of the subject *in the audience* transforms the technical interest of control—"die Kunst, die Welt so zu zeigen, daß sie beherrschbar wird" (15,260)—into a true emancipatory interest. Just as the disappearance of the subject demands the separation of causality and teleology, so in turn this separation is the precondition of the reconstitution of the subject. This is the logic of Brecht's "science of Marxism." The *social* unification of the field by the revolutionary subject (the reunion of teleology and causality) must proceed via the scientification of the field, that is through the demonstration of causality.

The intention of this paper has been expository rather than critical, despite the obvious objections, only touched on here, which can be made against Brecht's scientific reductionism in the interests of showing the changeability of the world. The aim has been rather to demonstrate the logic and coherence of Brecht's appropriation of scientific epistemology in the definition of his own experimental method, which he saw as the establishment of the experiment as a definitive function of the theatre.

Notes

1. Bertolt Brecht Briefe, ed. Günter Glaeser (Frankfurt 1981), 532.
2. All quotations from Brecht, except where otherwise identified, are from Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke in 20 Bänden*, Frankfurt 1967.
3. Brecht's definition above is 1933 or later, the term "non-Aristotelian" appears however to be first used in the title of one of the *Versuchsbefte* in 1931.
4. Manfred Voigts, *Brechts Theaterkonzeptionen. Entstehung und Entwicklung bis 1931* (Munich 1977), 39.
5. Whether Brecht in fact knew of this paper through his association with Korsch, who later collaborated in social psychological studies with Lewin in the U.S.A. (Karl Korsch, Kurt Lewin, "Mathematical Constructs in Psychology and Sociology," *Journal of Unified Sciences*, vol. 9, 1939), is not important for our argument. What is important is rather that Lewin's paper reflects precisely those "trains of thought" which influenced Brecht in his development of a non-Aristotelian drama.
6. Kurt Lewin, *A Dynamic Theory of Personality. Selected Papers* (New York 1935), 7.
7. Cf. Helge Hultberg, *Die ästhetischen Anschauungen Bertolt Brechts* (Copenhagen 1962), 123: "Der Abstraktionsprozeß, den Brecht anstrebt, ist nicht ein künstlerischer, sondern ein wissenschaftlicher. Die einzelnen Aufschlüsse über die Welt sind es, die Brecht interessieren, jeder Gedanke an ein selbständiges künstlerisches Universum—entweder vom Künstler oder von der mitschaffenden Phantasie der Zuschauer hervorgebracht—war ihm ein Greuel."
8. Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht* (London 1973), 12.
9. For a discussion of the problem of Marxism and positivism in Brecht see Meinhard Adler, *Brecht im Spiel der technischen Zeit. Naturwissenschaftliche, psychologische und wissenschaftstheoretische Kategorien im Werk Bertolt Brechts. Ein Beitrag zur Literaturpsychologie*, Berlin 1976.
10. Cf. Adler, *Brecht im Spiel der technischen Zeit*: "Die stärkste positivistische Kategorie ist die Definition. Die zentrale Stellung, die die Definition hat, ist gleichzeitig die stärkste Gegenposition gegen das, was man gemeinhin als Realismus bezeichnet. Geht es hier nicht um ein 'Abbild', sondern um eine 'Bestimmung'." (176) "Das Problem des Realismus ist nach Brecht, in Übereinstimmung mit erkenntnistheoretischen Aspekten, eine Frage der Verallgemeinerung. Diese ist wiederum definitorisch zu lösen und mündet in die Gleichung: Erkenntnis = Handhabung." (204)
11. Cf. Brecht's distinction between *Galilei* as a historical play and the parable plays: "so ist der *Galilei* in meiner produktion immerhin interessant als gegenbeispiel zu den parabeln, dort werden ideen verkörpert, hier eine materie gewisser ideen entbunden." *Arbeitsjournal II*, ed. Werner Hecht (Frankfurt 1973), 747.
12. Karl Korsch, *Karl Marx*, (Frankfurt 1967), 50.
13. L. Ceppa, "Korsch's Marxism" (*Telos*, Nr. 26), p. 110: "Probably referring to the epistemology developed by Kurt Lewin within psychology, Korsch begins with the fundamental 'historicity' of all scientific knowledge. Experimental science does not discover constants but, rather, concrete law-like relations: it neither classifies nor collects phenomena but, rather, establishes their specific genetic and conditional structure. Thus Korsch overcame the false alternative between nomothetic and idiographic science, natural and social science, empiricism and historicism. In fact, both sides of the couple have 'structured wholes' as their objects."
14. Brecht, *Arbeitsjournal I*, 446: "immerhin zeigt ein vergleich zwischen dem verhalten der arbeiterschaft 1914 und dem 1939, daß das tiefenfeld des sozialen Seins sogar verstärkte wirkungen ausstrahlt."
15. Cf. Adler, *Brecht im Spiel der technischen Zeit*, 84, 188, 222 ff.

Carl Weber. "The Actor and Brecht, Or: The Truth is Concrete: Some Notes on Directing Brecht with American Actors."

Carl Weber addresses the old prejudices against "Brechtian" acting which, in his opinion, are as alive in America today as they were thirty years ago in East-Germany. Weber believes that an approach to the actor's work that is informed by Brecht's practice would serve American theater well, and not only in Brecht productions. Against focussing on a mode of acting based on identification, which nourishes a performance style that relies heavily on the personality of actors, Weber suggests that the ability of creating a specific and new *gestus* for each role be cultivated.

Weber also emphasizes Brecht's rehearsal practice which demonstrated the greatest flexibility, an aversion to dogmatism of any shape or color, and a pragmatism of sometimes astounding consequence. The American theater, according to Weber, would profit from a similar openness and flexibility. As a possible solution to the failure of many Brecht productions to achieve the desired artistic impact, Weber advises that American directors take from Brecht what might work in the here and now while also exploring techniques developed since Brecht, and use whatever might contribute to a fresh reading of his texts.

Carl Weber. "Der/Die Schauspieler/in und Brecht, oder Die Wahrheit ist konkret: Einige Anmerkungen zur Regieführung Brechtscher Stücke mit amerikanischen Schauspieler/innen/n".

Carl Weber nimmt sich der alten Vorurteile gegenüber "Brechtscher" Darstellung an, die seiner Meinung nach heute in Amerika so lebendig sind wie vor dreißig Jahren in der DDR. Er glaubt, daß ein Annähern an die Arbeit des/der Schauspieler/s/in, die sich an Brechts Praxis orientiert, dem amerikanischen Theater gut täte und dies nicht nur für Brecht Produktionen. Anstatt sich auf eine Methode des Schauspielens zu konzentrieren, die auf Identifikation basiert und damit einen Darstellungsstil nährt, der sich extrem auf die Persönlichkeit des/der Schauspieler/s/in verläßt, rät Weber, daß die Fähigkeit, einen spezifischen und neuen *Gestus* für jede Rolle zu schaffen, gepflegt werde.

Er betont auch Brechts Verfahrensweise während der Proben, die größte Flexibilität zeigten, eine Aversion gegenüber Dogmatismus jeglicher Art und einen Pragmatismus von mitunter erstaunlicher Konsequenz. Nach Webers Ansicht würde das amerikanische Theater von einer ähnlichen Offenheit und Flexibilität profitieren. Als möglichen Ausweg aus dem Versagen vieler Brecht-Produktionen, den gewünschten artistischen Effekt zu erreichen, empfiehlt er amerikanischen Regisseuren, von Brecht direkt zu nehmen, was hier und heute anwendbar ist, während sie auch Techniken erarbeiten sollten, die seit Brecht entwickelt wurden, und schließlich all das zu nutzen, was zu einer neuen und erfrischenden Interpretation seiner Texte beitragen kann.

Carl Weber. "L'Acteur et Brecht ou: La Vérité est concrète: Quelques notes sur la manière de mettre en scène Brecht avec des acteurs américains."

Carl Weber s'attaque aux vieux préjugés contre le jeu "brechtien" qui, à son avis, sont encore aussi vivaces dans l'Amérique d'aujourd'hui qu'ils l'étaient voilà trente ans en Allemagne de l'Est. Weber estime qu'une approche du travail de l'acteur inspirée de la pratique de Brecht servirait avec profit le théâtre américain, et pas seulement dans les productions de Brecht. Contre une concentration sur un mode de jeu basé sur l'identification qui entretient un style de performance s'appuyant lourdement sur la personnalité des acteurs, Weber suggère de cultiver l'aptitude à créer un gestuel nouveau et spécifique à chaque rôle.

Weber insiste également sur la pratique de répétition de Brecht qui a démontré la plus grande flexibilité, une aversion pour tout dogmatisme, de quelque forme ou couleur qu'il soit, et un pragmatisme de conséquence parfois stupéfiante. Le théâtre américain, selon Weber, bénéficierait d'une ouverture et d'une flexibilité semblables. Comme solution possible à l'échec de nombreuses productions de Brecht à atteindre l'impact artistique souhaité, Weber conseille aux metteurs en scène américains de prendre de Brecht ce qui peut marcher dans l'immédiat tout en explorant également les techniques développées depuis Brecht, et d'utiliser quoi que ce soit qui puisse contribuer à une lecture originale de ses textes.

Carl Weber. "El Actor y Brecht, o: 'La verdad es concreta': Observaciones sobre la dirección de obras Brechtianas con actores norteamericanos".

Carl Weber confronta los prejuicios antiguos en contra del estilo de la actuación "Brechtiana" que, en su opinión, están hoy día tan vigentes en los Estados Unidos como lo estuvieron hace treinta años atrás en Alemania Oriental. Weber piensa que el acercamiento al trabajo del actor inspirado por la práctica Brechtiana sería muy útil para el teatro norteamericano, y no sólo en las producciones de las obras de Brecht. Contrario al enfocar en el modo de actuar basado en la identificación, el cual fomenta el estilo de actuación que depende mucho en la personalidad de los actores, Weber sugiere que se cultive la habilidad de crear un gestus específico para cada papel desempeñado.

Además Weber enfatiza el modo del ensayo Brechtiano que demostraba la mayor flexibilidad, una aversión al dogmatismo de cualquier forma o color, y un pragmatismo a veces de consecuencias asombrosas. El teatro norteamericano, según Weber, se beneficiaría de la flexibilidad y la franqueza similar. Como una solución posible al fracaso de muchas producciones Brechtianas para lograr el impacto artístico deseado, Weber aconseja que los directores norteamericanos tomen de Brecht lo que podría funcionar en el presente mientras se explora las técnicas desarrolladas después de Brecht, y utilicen todo lo que pueda contribuir a una nueva interpretación de sus textos.

The Actor and Brecht, or: The Truth Is Concrete

Some Notes on Directing Brecht with American Actors
Carl Weber

The history of Brecht's reception in the American theatre has still to be written. It is, however, evident by now that his plays have become a staple of the international repertoire on the American stage, albeit of a repertoire quite limited in comparison to that of other countries. Since the early seventies Brecht has emerged as one of the four dramatists in translation who are most frequently produced by American non-profit, regional companies. Along with Chekhov, Ibsen and Molière, he has been firmly accepted by the predominantly middle-class audience which subscribes to these theatres. In terms of 'best seller lists,' Molière usually occupies the first place each season while Chekhov, Brecht, and Ibsen are the runners-up, leaving all other translated authors far behind, with the exception of Feydeau in some years.

For example, during the 1977-79 seasons regional companies presented 14 Brecht productions, 41 of Molière, 21 of Chekhov, and 17 of Ibsen. Last season, 1984-85, Brecht received 6 productions, as did Chekhov and Ibsen, while Molière again was in front with 17 stagings. There have been 10 Chekhov productions announced for the present season 1985-86, versus 9 by Molière, 6 by Ibsen, and only 4 by Brecht. (Such shifts in attention to specific playwrights deserve a detailed study.) The quoted numbers don't include independent productions in New York City and elsewhere; there are, for instance, each season two or three such productions of Brecht plays staged Off- or Off-off-Broadway in New York along with many similar productions in theatrical centers as Chicago, Los Angeles or San Francisco's Bay Area. And the American academic theatre with its multitude of stages all over the country began to perform Brecht already in the late forties and has continued to do so consistently. There is no question

that Brecht has become something of a "classic" in the American theatre, for better or for worse.

While his established position in the repertoire is generally acknowledged, we hear nevertheless persistent complaints by critics, academics, and theatre people about the failure of many Brecht productions to achieve the desired artistic impact. The American actor is often blamed. Insufficient skills, inappropriate training, and lack of political awareness are alternately pin-pointed as reasons for our actors' failure in performing Brecht roles with the complex, socially determined *gestus* they require.

It is a truism by now that Brecht rejected all acting based on mere identification with character, on "psychological" or "emotional truth," while it is striving for a mainly visceral impact on the spectator. It is equally known that the majority of today's dominant American "schools" of acting derived from Stanislavsky's work and have developed into several systems as, for instance, the "Method." They are focussed on a mode of acting based on identification and have been especially effective in the training of film and television performers. Such training nourishes a performance style that relies heavily on the personality of actors and on their individual experience which are to inform the characters they play. In Brechtian terms: the personal *gestus* of the actor is cultivated whereas the ability of creating a specific and new *gestus* for each role is neglected. Naturalistic texts, especially those of little literary merit as most film and television writing, are well served by this kind of acting. It is deficient when the performer is confronted with Brecht's plays, as with Shakespeare's and many others for that matter.

Still, I never accepted that actors trained in this mode should lack all prerequisites for performing Brecht. In fact many of their "tools" are perfectly valid for it.

It is useful to remember that Brecht himself pointed out aspects of Stanislavsky's system he felt he could readily agree with. On occasion of a Stanislavsky Conference in East Berlin in 1953, he specified his views on Stanislavsky's work and its relation to the practice at the Berliner Ensemble. This discourse certainly was forced on Brecht by the cultural policies of party and government which made concerted efforts to establish the "Stanislavsky System" as model, and Stanislavsky's writings as the bible, for a theatre of "Socialist Realism" proclaimed to be the only theatre suitable for a new society "building Socialism." Without such pressure, Brecht probably wouldn't have spent the time and energy to investigate specifics of Stanislavsky's teaching, having dismissed them previously whenever he wrote on acting, and in a quite caustic way to boot. He had already published in the volume *Theaterarbeit* a brief list "Things that can be learned from Stanislavsky," (John Willett, *Brecht on Theatre*, New York, 1964, pp. 236-37) where he

took care to emphasize some aspects of the Russian master's work as important and worth emulating by the Ensemble while, at the same time, he maintained the necessity of further experimentation and of the freedom for it. Brecht had asked all his assistants to attend the conference and he had given me a brief statement to read to one of the sessions. Its contents are recapitulated in his *Stanislavsky-Studien* which include various remarks and reflections on the conference in edited and mostly paraphrased form. (*Schriften zum Theater*; vol. 7, Frankfurt/Main, 1964; pp 204–09.)

As much as these comments on Stanislavsky were triggered by the cultural policies of the GDR in the early fifties, they are none the less a genuine effort to extract from the great Russian's heritage what Brecht regarded as valid for his theatre while also dispelling certain misconceptions about his own directorial method and position as a theorist. Among other things, he pointed out that Stanislavsky arrived at his theories mainly as an actor whereas he, Brecht, did so as a playwright and dramaturge. He mentions specifically Stanislavsky's idea of "physical actions" as applicable to his own work, and he stressed Stanislavsky's high regard for observation—something Brecht always advised actors to do—, his instinctive use of dialectical thinking, and his untiring struggle against clichés of any kind. Many of these conclusions had originated in Brecht's daily work with his ensemble of actors.

During the last years of his life, the playwright became much more a man of the theatre than a man of letters. His energies were focussed on directing, the education of young directors and dramaturges, and—most of all—on the shaping of a collective of actors. Most of them had been handpicked by him for a company conceived to be at the 'cutting edge' of art and society. His was to be a 'new theatre' in every respect that would set standards and provide models to be emulated on other stages of the German speaking countries and eventually revive and revolutionize a theatrical culture he had found in such a despicable state when returning from exile.

During most of his earlier attempts as a director he had, more or less, been an outsider, invited—if not rather suffered—because he either was the playwright or another author, Arnolt Bronnen for instance, had insisted on his directorial services. Beginning in 1949, he faced the much more demanding task of building an institution rather than merely a production. In need of collaborators whose talents he could trust, he had to collect them from a pool of theatre people who had survived twelve years of Fascism with its cultural deprivation, five years of a devastating war, and four post-war years of shortages and hunger. He couldn't afford to be too picky. Actors and other members of the company came from the depraved theatre the Nazis had left behind, out of theatre schools that taught either an outmoded empiricism or the newly embraced Stanislavsky System, and some even

from the remnants of the German music-hall. There were talented youngsters who grew up in the Hitler Youth, mature actors who had survived the Fuehrer by joining the party or just by keeping silent, and others who outlived those years in exile like he himself, or in prisons and concentration camps. A few came from Switzerland, having grown up in the climate of a neutral, conservative country. Not many had worked with him before he had left Germany sixteen years ago. Faced with this motley crowd, Brecht couldn't but develop new directorial strategies fitting his actors and adapt them with each production to new problems and challenges. He set out to create a highly efficient collective of theatre artists that was to be unique in its working methods and capacity to perform texts of an unfamiliar dialectical complexity in an unfamiliar acting "style"; so, at least, the critics observed while Brecht himself loathed the term "style." He achieved his goal in an incredibly short time.

How did he get results so quickly from a group of actors barely beginning to resemble a true collective? First of all, he used wisely and pragmatically what everyone had to offer while gradually changing their working habits and their perception of theatre. He demonstrated a profound understanding for their idiosyncrasies, their unfulfilled potential, and their individual shortcomings. Though always a most demanding taskmaster, he was never on an "ego-trip" (so often to be observed in directors), nor arrogant when rehearsing with actors who were no intellectual match for him. He had one habit which can't be highly enough esteemed in a director: unflagging patience with his actors as long as they showed genuine commitment to the work. He truly enjoyed, even loved, actors and they sensed it and returned it in kind. This was an impression everyone had who worked with him at the Ensemble, whatever many anecdotes tell us of a younger Brecht who supposedly liked to insult and yell at actors.

What was most surprising to many observers of his rehearsals may have been that he didn't insist on a particular mode or method of working on a role. For instance, he preferred actors to rehearse book in hand for a long period but if an actor didn't like that, Brecht didn't mind; there always was the prompter present to feed them their lines. Angelika Hurwicz who played Katrin, Grusha, and many more leading roles, has stated that she liked to employ identification for an extended time in rehearsal and only later take the crucial step of creating detachment and critical distance versus the character. In this she followed a sequence Brecht later recommended in his comments on Stanislavsky. Actors trained in the "System" used its techniques as long as they found them useful; others worked in a more or less strictly exterior way, even sometimes using the mirror in shaping specific gestures of a character or a moment, like Ekkehard Schall fre-

quently did; a few company members whose background was the obsolete music hall or the operetta theatre employed their skills of quite shameless pandering to the audience. Brecht knew how to use them all in their own ways while subtly educating them as they grew into performers who were conscious of the uniqueness of their work with Brecht and of its aesthetic and socio-political significance.

Acutely aware of the potential and limitations of his acting company, Brecht equally acknowledged the problems of his audience. His notes from the fifties demonstrate this awareness along with his frequent disappointment. He knew, of course, that his theatre was attracting spectators who came mainly from the middle class, considerable numbers of educated professionals among them, but only a rather small segment with working class background. Their viewing habits had been formed either by the theatre and other media of the Third Reich, or by the clichés "Socialist Realism" kept presenting on stage and in films of the GDR. It was an audience hardly corresponding to what Brecht had called "the children of the scientific age" when imagining the spectators of his Epic Theatre. This was certainly one reason why he always emphasized that the Ensemble's performances were not examples of Epic Theatre, the other being the limitations of his acting company. Neither actors nor audience were ready for a theatre he once had called "epic" though now he preferred to talk of a "dialectical theatre."

The ruminations on the dialectics of theatre which he began to note down in his very last years show clearly that he was re-evaluating many of his earlier assumptions as a result of his experiences with the Ensemble, its productions, company, and audience. The international success of the Ensemble hadn't silenced the many critics in the party, government, press, and the theatrical establishment of the GDR, who kept attacking his theory—as they understood it—and his practice as a director. Brecht's answer wasn't only given in his various statements on Stanislavsky and other sacred cows of the cultural establishment, it consisted mainly in his work with actors and other collaborators at the Ensemble. When people asked him about his theories of epic theatre, his answer inevitably was: 'Come and watch our rehearsal.' And in his rehearsal practice he demonstrated the greatest flexibility, an aversion to dogmatism of any shape or color, and a pragmatism of sometimes astounding consequence. 'The truth is concrete' wasn't merely a favorite quote he pinned on the walls of houses he lived in during his exile, it was a rule he applied with relish in his directorial work at the Ensemble.

Faced with the potential and limitations of the American theatre, its actors and audiences, a similar openness and flexibility should be assumed

by any director working on Brecht texts. Close study of the playwright-director's notes on his work at the Ensemble would show him the dialectics of precedent and innovation which were so successfully practiced by Brecht.

The malaise many American Brecht productions seem to suffer from is caused either by a bent to rigid dogmatism, or its opposite—a studied rejection of notions Brecht supposedly stood for. There is, on the one side, the director who, having thoroughly perused his *Organon* and whatever else is available in translation, proceeds to implement “rules” he has deduced from those “sacred” texts. On the other hand, we see the proud iconoclast who negates everything he has read—or often merely heard—of “Brechtian” dogma and applies any technique or device he’d regard as “contemporary” or “indigenous” to the American theatre; the latter often turns out to be a watered-down distillate of the Stanislavsky System. Both approaches are, of course, simply undialectic. They ignore that the theatre is an on-going process of interaction and change; they rather should take from Brecht what might work in the here and now while also exploring theatrical techniques developed since Brecht and use whatever might contribute to a fresh reading of his texts. In defence of theatrical and literary experimentation Brecht used to point at the incredible leaps in dramaturgy and style the German classics, like Schiller or Büchner, took throughout their work. He always emphasized that any “freezing” of a form to create a perennially valid model, as it was done in the period of so-called “Socialist Realism,” is an un-historic and un-dialectic attempt doomed to failure. We certainly ought to take this position towards his own work. Not to do so, as Heiner Mueller once said, means to betray him.

Ten of the twenty-three Brecht productions I have staged were done in the U.S., under conditions ranging from leading regional non-profit companies to Off-off-Broadway productions, university theatres, and the short-lived institute ‘Epic West’ which R. G. Davies founded in Berkeley for the study of Brecht’s theory and practice. In other words, I have worked on Brecht texts with professionals, students, and also amateur-actors interested in Brecht’s theatre. I have encountered performers who were quite familiar with his thinking or who had seen the work of the Ensemble but also others who were steeped in a quasi religious belief in the transformative powers of the “method” or another Stanislavsky-based technique. But even if such true believers were often sceptical, if not outright suspicious, of Brecht’s supposedly “cold” or “mechanical” view of acting, they were also very curious and willing to give it a fair try. Discovering that many “tools in their kit” were quite useful, that there is still truth even when “emotional” truth is not at the center of the effort, they usually didn’t take long and began to enjoy the playfulness and freedom of an approach that explores in detail the dialectics of each scene while treating it in rehearsal as an inde-

pendent unit to be investigated for its own sake. Soon the actors begin to critically observe actions and also the “non-action” of their characters in a given moment. The next step, doubting and questioning the character’s conduct instead of merely justifying it, comes quite naturally. It will, of course, still take a long process until such discoveries are translated into appropriate patterns of behavior, or “gestus” in Brecht’s terminology. Within this process, identification with character, exploration of physical actions, etc., will have their place once the character’s progress in the play has been scrutinized step by step. Eventually, everything obtained by way of identification will be judged against the discoveries of the primary exploration and will be retained or eliminated from the gestus in its final shaping.

Experience showed that actors, once they became familiar with the approach, found great satisfaction in the detective-like search for clues of behavior and its sources, be they social, historical, biological, or rooted in personal psychology. Sorting out of clues, setting of priorities, evolving of appropriate gestic patterns, i.e. the experimentation with variants of character conduct as it manifests itself in gait, carriage, gesture, pitch and inflection of voice, rhythm of speech, and so forth, tends to quickly engage the actors’ imagination and stir their creativity. Most important: little if anything is achieved by longwinded discussion; only actively trying out all considered options leads to results. In this mode, actors assemble a “catalogue of gestures” feasible for each segment of a scene and eventually make their choices in consensus with the director. This may sound somewhat mechanical to a reader but it is far from it in its practical application.

Actors will still search for “objectives” and “motivation” as most of them have been taught to do, but they do it now with concrete material to work from and much more solid ground to stand on.

There looms, of course, a central question: What about the actors’ philosophical position, their ideological commitment, what about their understanding of Brecht’s dialectics and socio-political convictions? Compared to their European colleagues, the American actors’ experience, thinking, and feeling are less imprinted by an awareness of historical and social forces than by the matrix of family, personal psychology, and a quasi ‘anti-historical’ individualism. It is inevitable that such frame of mind, conditioned and reinforced as it is by education, life styles, the media, and—most important—by the market where actors are selling their craft, doesn’t mitigate the problems a Brecht play will present. However, the slow and patient investigative process employed in exploring the play in its smallest fragments can’t help but confront the actors with the text’s social and historical aspects and also their own contemporary context. A director guiding this investigation needs, of course, historical perspective and the corresponding knowledge. The convinced detractor of Brecht’s positions won’t

be able to provide such guidance; the dogmatic "Brechtian" may fail here just as easily. All dogmatism tends towards the abstract and Brecht's theatre can only be tackled with utmost concreteness, as he himself demonstrated in conducting his rehearsal. This is evidenced, for instance, by notes on his production of the play *Katzgraben*.

He never bothered actors with abstract explication but had them experiment with concrete details of behavior, line readings, stage business, and the like. Excerpts from the posthumously published '*Katzgraben*' - *Notate* (*Schriften zum Theater*; vol. 7, Frankfurt/Main, 1964; pp 114-15) may serve to illustrate the concreteness of his directorial intervention; they will also show how he perceived the work of his performers and spotted flaws in the gestus of a scene.

Katzgraben by Erwin Strittmatter was the only play about contemporary East German society Brecht staged at the Ensemble. It portrays events and conflicts in a small village south-east of Berlin shortly after World War II when the "Bodenreform" resulted in a redistribution of farmland, giving many former farmhands their own small farm. It was a time of shortages, foodstuffs were still rationed and the black market was thriving. Our samples deal with details from two scenes which Brecht corrected, making them more specific and significant.

Erna, the maid, is ordered to leave the dinner table since the farmer wants to talk about her with his wife. The actress is instructed to stop after having left the playing area and to stand there, waiting. She had taken a potato from her plate and now begins to eat it.

B: Why do you eat your potato without the cheese? That would please your boss, you eating the plain potato and he saving the cheese. Keep the potato in your hand until they'll call you back to the table.

After his victory in a village meeting where a vote defeated the proposal to construct a new road to the city, the rich farmer returns to his house. He is accompanied by another farmer. The actor playing the second farmer exits in the opposite direction from his entrance.

B: Stop! Please, turn around and walk your way back. If you seem to live in a house further down the road, that is: continue in the same direction you took when entering, we can't recognize that you walked the rich farmer home in a fawning fashion. This may seem irrelevant as far as your character is concerned since the audience doesn't know who you are, but you must play the fable.

"Fable" was, of course, Brecht's preferred term designating a play's plot as it is retold on stage from a specific point of view, in a clearly defined gestus; a fable was always to reveal the contradictions of a plot.

These condensed transcripts of notes taken during rehearsal provide a glimpse at Brecht's way of observing his performers and his strategy in proposing changes. It is obvious how utterly concrete, practical, and plot-related his discourse with actors was, and the central function the fable had in his directing is evident as every bit of stage-business is evolved from it. Our samples serve also to illustrate Brecht's attention to each move on stage, each position of actors and objects, as "signs" to communicate the fable. The grouping of characters in space and time—what Brecht liked to call "erzählendes Arrangement"—was to him the most important and efficacious tool the director has in his efforts to tell a play's fable. His actors became very much aware of this and contributed their own inventions to the grouping of their scenes. I frequently found in my work with American actors that they tend to regard blocking as something rather mechanical, to be done for the sake of pleasant "stage-pictures" or "interesting" choreography. Many believe the blocking will fall into its appropriate pattern when the actors have found their objectives, motivations, and emotional "through-line." It is very important to make them familiar with Brecht's concept of grouping and its central function in his theatre. It will help them also to understand the role of "signs" on stage, and that all their moves, gestures, and other patterns of physical behaviour constitute a complex system of signals an audience reads and processes in performance.

Brecht kept emphasizing in his last years that what he did "is still theatre," that a great number of old rules were "of course never changed." But there was, of course, a great number of new rules too. The old dialectician was a master in implementing the new while retaining whatever was useful of the old. In his rehearsal, there was a lively dialectic of the "tried and true" and the surprising and new at work. The one enhanced the other. American actors have a great store of "tried" skills and "true" experience at their disposal. It is the director's task to challenge those along with their imagination and engage them in a playful exploration of Brecht's texts into every nook and cranny.

Whoever studies Brecht's writings on theatre, the volume *Theaterarbeit*, etc., will discover countless practical hints and tactics distilled from his directorial practice. Unfortunately very little is available in English. I'll mention one example that may stand for many others: Brecht occasionally employed a device he liked to call 'Episierung' (Epization) as a rehearsal exercise. He had actors put the character they played in the third person, prefixing each line with "He/she said," before speaking the text. Eventually he refined this technique by having them add adverbs or other qualifiers and

use more specific verbs, as in "He/she screamed, muttered, whispered, etc." Sometimes he asked them to include the "other option" he so much tried to make an audience aware of in his Epic Theatre; they had to prefix a line with, for instance: "Instead of accepting the offer he/she complained sur-lily." The procedure makes actors think in narrative terms about their character's conduct, and it channels their imagination away from identification towards an objective stance versus their roles. I have found this exercise extremely helpful on various occasions when working with American actors on a Brecht text, and other texts too. After some initial reluctance, they soon discovered not only the advantages but also the fun of it, since it helps them to achieve the appropriate inflections, speech rhythms, even gestures that manifest the *gestus* of character and situation.

They eventually define for themselves each moment, each sentence in a scene with the greater precision, and concretely to boot. An "epicized" moment or sentence usually coincides with what actors call a "beat" in their professional jargon, the term for a specific fragment within a larger action. Such closeness to a familiar technique helps actors to quickly get the knack of the exercise. Other devices Brecht employed or recommended, like switching roles, using dialect for an extended period in rehearsal when working on text with heightened language like blank verse, etc., I found also beneficial though not always effective.

Brecht often demonstrated to an actor the gestic or vocal pattern he wanted for a specific moment, enacting it so the actor would understand it in its total physicality, not only intellectually as mere explanation would probably achieve. He did this in a manner that the actors were not compelled to parrot him but rather translated the proposed pattern into equivalent behavior of their own. Brecht's talent as an "actor" in such demonstrations was truly impressive and his performers loved to see him do this, often even provoked it. I use the technique occasionally with American actors and it produces results, though most of our actors don't like the director to demonstrate. They fear it might push them into copying behavior alien to their own. It consequently works best with a group the director is thoroughly familiar with so there is mutual trust. It is important to exaggerate the proposed move, gesture, or vocal pattern to a degree that the actor clearly gets the essence of the desired behavior without feeling compelled to ape the director's execution of it. I have found such demonstration to be especially helpful when actors had difficulty in understanding the advantage and importance of playing "breaks" instead of what their jargon terms "transitions." Brecht always insisted on performances that made contradictions in a character's behavior clearly visible to the audience. He asked actors to play any change of *gestus* as an abrupt break ("Bruch", as he called it,) of behavior rather than a smooth transition. More or less smooth transitions are,

however, what most American actors are used to play; there is a great tradition of playing breaks in slapstick comedy and the old vaudeville, but most contemporary training of actors tends to fight that heritage. Explaining a "break" in a given moment or scene is usually much less effective than demonstrating it to the actors in somewhat exaggerated fashion. Seeing a graphic image of the desired *gestus* change, they quickly grasp its meaning and advantage.

The writings on theatre by Brecht that have been published in English are mainly concerned with theory and his views on playwriting or dramaturgy. Important as they are, it would be of greatest value to have more of his comments on acting, directing, design, his notes from rehearsal and discussion touching on practical aspects, available in English. *Theaterarbeit* should, for instance, be most helpful and instructive to American actors and other theatre workers. They would be amazed how pragmatic his directorial practice was, and how applicable in our present-day theatre.

Brecht rejected the label "system" for his lifelong research and experimentation. He kept insisting that the many essays he wrote and comments he made were never intended as prescriptions for actors and their craft. He merely stated what he as a playwright "of the scientific age" expected from his performers. Emphasizing the unfamiliar in his ideas, the new that was in conflict with ingrained traditions, he didn't bother to mention what ought to be retained from such tradition. We know that in his years at the Berliner Ensemble he became as a director acutely aware of the many misunderstandings his earlier writings had provoked and he began to correct them. Some of these comments, derived as they were from his work with an acting company, might offer the American actor an opening to a deeper understanding of the actor's role in Brecht's theatre. An irony is that Brecht articulated them in an attempt to clarify his position while under attack by Stanislavsky's epigones in Germany and by a political cultural establishment that supported them. Though in America the work of Robert Wilson, Mabou Mines, Richard Foreman, the Wooster Group, and other author/directors, has employed the concept of *gestus* and developed it in different context and to different ends, the old prejudices against "Brechtian" acting—whatever each user of this misbegotten term means by it—are as alive here as thirty years ago in East-Germany. South of the border, in Colombia for instance, the reception and creative adaptation of Brecht's practice and theory has practically revolutionized the theatre. Social and economic conditions of our theatre are, of course, completely different yet, an approach to the actor's work that is informed by Brecht's practice would serve our theatre well, and not only in Brecht productions. It would help in the overdue shedding of many obsolete habits. Brecht frequently liked to quote an answer Charles Laughton once gave when asked why he acted: "Be-

cause people don't know what they are like and I think I can show them." This statement represents a challenge most performers I have worked with found irresistible. Accepting it, they took a first step towards understanding what the actor does in Brecht's theatre where the truth always is concrete.

John Rouse. "Brecht and the Art of Scenic Writing."

Brecht was among the first to declare scenic writing equally important to dramatic writing. Roger Planchon, appropriating Brecht's ideas, sees the director as primary author of all constituents of scenic writing and understands performance as a reflection of both scenic and dramatic writing. From Brecht's desire to write and direct result his endeavors to elaborate on the subject of what Planchon calls scenic writing. The way music is used in the 1928 production of *The Threepenny Opera* underlines the clear distinction of both forms of writing; performance then bringing the two together and establishing the theatrical significance. Brecht, who made apparent the constituents of performance in connection with his operas, developed the possibilities of a theatrical production which made the dramatic text performable by the help of scenic writing. Scenic writing thus intends to advance and complete the dramatic text; it reflects the text's substance by its own artistic means. By systematically formulating the principles of scenic writing while never using the term itself, Brecht also showed that scenic writing can offer new dimensions of interpretation. John Rouse follows his thesis by examining Brecht's directing of Lenz's *The Tutor* to further outline the specific ideas of the playwright's and director's approach.

John Rouse. "Brecht und die Kunst des szenischen Schreibens".

Brecht zählte zu den ersten, die szenisches und dramatisches Schreiben als gleichwertig betrachteten. Unter Verwendung von Brechts Ideen erklärt Roger Planchon den/die Regisseur/in zu/m/r Primärautor/in aller Bestandteile des szenischen Schreibens und versteht die Aufführung als Spiegel der beiden Schreibarten. Sein Doppelinteresse als Autor und Regisseur bewegte Brecht, die Ideen bezüglich des szenischen Schreibens genau auszuarbeiten. Die Anwendung von Musik in der 1928er Aufführung von der "Dreigroschenoper" unterstreicht die klare Unterscheidung von szenischem und dramatischem Schreiben. Die Aufführung vereint die beiden letztlich und bringt so die theatralische Bedeutung hervor. Brecht, der die Konstituenten der Darstellung und Aufführung in Verbindung mit seinen Opern deutlich machte, entwickelte die Möglichkeiten einer Theaterproduktion, die den dramatischen Text mit Hilfe des szenischen Schreibens zur Aufführung bringt. Insofern beabsichtigt szenisches Schreiben den dramatischen Text zu verbessern und zu vervollständigen; es spiegelt den Gehalt des Textes mit eigenen artistischen Mitteln wider. Durch das systematische Formulieren der Grundlagen des szenischen Schreibens hat Brecht auch aufgezeigt, daß es neue Dimensionen der Interpretation eröffnen kann. John Rouse verfolgt seine These anhand von Brechts Regie von Lenz' "Der Hofmeister" und untersucht die Ideen des Autors und des Regisseurs Brecht im einzelnen.

John Rouse. "Brecht et l'art de l'écriture scénique".

Brecht fut un de premiers à déclarer que l'écriture scénique était aussi importante que l'écriture dramatique. Roger Planchon, appliquant les idées de

Brecht, voit le metteur en scène comme auteur primordial de tous les éléments de l'écriture scénique et conçoit la représentation comme le reflet des deux écritures, scénique et dramatique. Du désir de Brecht d'écrire et de mettre en scène sont nées ses tentatives de réflexion sur le sujet de l'écriture scénique. La façon dont la musique est utilisée dans la version de 1928 de l'*Opéra de quat'sous* souligne la distinction établie entre les deux formes d'écriture; la représentation étant alors ce qui opère leur fusion et établit leur signification théatrale. Brecht, qui voulut mettre en évidence les éléments de la représentation en ce qui concerne ses opéras, développa les possibilités d'une production théatrale qui rend possible la représentation d'un texte dramatique grâce à l'écriture scénique. De ce fait, l'écriture scénique vise à développer et à compléter le texte dramatique. Elle reflète la substance du texte par ses moyens artistiques propres. En formulant systématiquement les principes de l'écriture scénique, Brecht a montré également que celle-ci peut offrir de nouvelles dimensions à l'interprétation. John Rouse développe cette thèse en examinant la mise en scène par Brecht de la pièce de Lenz, *Le tuteur*, en établissant la distinction entre les idées qui procèdent de l'auteur et celles qui procèdent du metteur en scène.

John Rouse. "Brecht y el arte de la creación escénica".

Brecht fue uno de los primeros en considerar que la creación escénica es tan importante como la creación dramática. Roger Planchon, al apropiarse de las ideas Brechtianas, considera al director como autor principal de todos los constituyentes del arte escénico y entiende que la actuación refleja el arte escénico y dramático. El deseo de Brecht de escribir y dirigir crea sus esfuerzos para elaborar el tema del arte escénico. La manera en que se emplea la música en la producción de la *Opera de los tres centavos* de 1928 enfatiza la distinción obvia de ambas formas del arte; la actuación entonces une las dos artes y establece la significancia teatral. Brecht esclareció los constituyentes de la actuación en sus operas y desarrolló las posibilidades de una producción teatral y crea la actuación de un texto dramático al emplear el arte escénico. Por tanto el arte escénico intenta a desarrollar y a completar el texto dramático, y refleja la sustancia del texto por sus propios mecanismos artísticos. Al formular los principios del arte escénico en forma sistemática, Brecht demostró también que el arte escénico puede ofrecer dimensiones nuevas de interpretación. John Rouse prueba su tesis al examinar la dirección de *El Tutor* de Lenz por Brecht para enfatizar además las ideas específicas del acercamiento al texto del autor y el director.

Brecht and the Art of Scenic Writing

John Rouse

In a 1960 conversation with the writer Arthur Adamov and the designer René Allio, Roger Planchon identified Brecht's most important insight for directors as a redefinition of the relationship between a dramatic text and its theatrical production:

When I started out in the theater [c. 1950], we all thought directing a production meant doing very partial work. One always wavered: 'Am I overwhelming the play? Or am I in fact impoverishing it?' The lesson of . . . Brecht was to have declared that a performance combines dramatic writing and scenic writing; but this scenic writing—he was the first to say this, and it seems to me to be very important—has *a responsibility* equal with the dramatic writing. In fact, a movement on the stage, the selection of a color, scenic element, or costume, etc. [ie., the choices through which scenic writing is elaborated] engages a complete responsibility. Scenic writing is totally responsible, in the same way as writing in itself—I mean the writing of a novel or a play.¹

Planchon's use of the term scenic writing may not seem odd in light of the directions taken by European and North American performance and performance theory over the past several decades. This was hardly the case in 1960, however. When the conversation was reprinted in *Theater der Zeit* in 1961, for example, the translator replaced "écriture" with "Leistung" and had Planchon claim that scenic writing is completely responsible *to* dramatic writing ("diese szenische Leistung ist der dramatischen Leistung voll verantwortlich").²

The translator's problems here are substantive rather than linguistic. Scenic writing is, of course, not writing at all, if by writing we mean a cre-

ative act that involves putting words on a page. On the other hand, scenic writing is a kind of writing, in the sense that it can be "read" according to the same general rules of semiotics as a universal science of signification that governs writing itself as a separate semiotic activity. More importantly, scenic writing is not writing in the sense that it is literary. It is not an activity that puts words on pages according to its author's manipulation of the fictional conventions that govern the larger structures of signification those words combine to produce. But it is also not literary in the sense of being under literary control; it is not a series of operations involving colors, costumes, and actors rather than words but nonetheless subservient to the literary structures and conventions of an already-completed text.

These assumptions—that a dramatic text can be adequately defined in terms of the conventions it supposedly shares with other literary texts and that production merely translates this text onto the stage—are, of course, central to the traditional view of the relationship between text and production, one still shared by many literary scholars and theatre directors. But Planchon is not appropriating the word "writing" for his activity as a director only to hide the underlying conservatism with which his German translator credited him. On the contrary, his appropriation is doubly subversive: In the first place, Planchon grants the director, or the entire production team, the status of primary author over the signifying systems that constitute scenic writing.³ But he also elevates performance to the status of final text, a text of which dramatic writing—no longer "the text" but "dramatic writing"—constitutes only one part.⁴ The relationship between text and production thus becomes one of interpretation rather than translation, a relationship in which the fundamentally incomplete dramatic text is both fulfilled and displaced through the combination of scenic and dramatic writing to elaborate performance as the completed text read by the spectator.

Admittedly, this redefinition of the relationship between text and production is only implied in Planchon's brief statement and implied through the subversive use of a word laden with traditional connotations. Planchon's choice of language is, however, eminently suitable as a description of his debt to Brecht. For Brecht's productions, of his own plays and of plays by other writers, went one step beyond Planchon's statement (if not his theatre work)—Brecht's productions did not simply contain both scenic and dramatic writing, but revealed the degree to which production involves the re-writing of a dramatic text through scenic writing. Brecht's work, as Planchon presciently understood, forces a reconsideration of basic questions: about the characteristics and authorship of scenic writing; about the relationship between scenic writing and dramatic writing in performance; about the status of dramatic writing's author, who no longer dominates performance but appears alongside the director in the seams between the two

kinds of writing; and, finally, about the nature of the dramatic text itself. Brecht, of course, provided quite specific answers to all these questions. But his importance to the theatre of his half-century derives equally from his success in liberating directors like Planchon to ask again the basic questions, and to find their own answers.

Brecht's own elaboration of the relationship between dramatic and scenic writing is grounded in his desire to be both a playwright and a director, in his mastery of both types of work and, most particularly, in his willingness to leave his own dramatic texts open for completion through scenic writing. It is worth remembering that Brecht engaged in both activities throughout his career, beginning with his abortive production of Bronnen's *Patricide* in 1922 and proceeding through productions of his own and other people's plays, including productions also, if sometimes nominally, directed by others. It was Brecht, for example, who developed the staging that clearly separated the songs from the action in the 1928 *Threepenny Opera* production, over the objections of the production's progressive but experienced director, Erich Engel (whose very experience may here, perhaps, have induced a conservatism regarding staging conventions).⁵

This staging provides a clear, if thematically limited, initial example of the differences between dramatic and scenic writing. By darkening the stage, lowering lamps from the flies, and illuminating a mocked-up organ and real musicians at the back of the set, the production made clear to its audience that the songs belong to a discourse different from the dialogue. Within this discourse, moreover, the music sometimes supports, sometimes contrasts the content of the lyrics: The brightest music of the "First Threepenny-Finale," for example, is reserved for its grimmest—and most ideologically contradictory—assertion: "The world is poor and man is bad" (GW 2: 431–32).

The content, the "sense," of songs written to be staged in this fashion is not part of the written text, which could at best present only the lyrics and the score. Rather, the sense of these songs is generated only in performance, and generated by structuring together at least five independently constituted systems of signification: the lines sung (the text); the singing style of the actors; the music as performed; the scenic space elaborated through signifying objects (including, here, the band); and the lighting. Further, the sense of the performance as a whole is generated in part through the contrast between the elaboration of these systems during the songs and their very different elaboration (or, in the case of music and lyrics, their absence) during the non-singing passages that precede and follow them.

This is the signal insight of Brecht's concept of "Separation of the Elements," first systematically formulated in a discussion of text, music, de-

sign, and acting in the notes to *Mahagonny* (GW 17: 1010–16). To be sure, these notes concern themselves with opera, a form in which the combination of words and music necessarily redefines the supposedly self-contained identity of the exclusively dramatic text. But that is precisely the point, for *Mahagonny*, like the *Threepenny Opera*, used the musical theatre to demonstrate an interpretive use of the signifying systems of performance that the traditional dramatic theatre, operating from the conviction that performance merely reproduces the dramatic text in an outward form appropriate to contemporary aesthetic sensibility, was not yet willing to seize.⁶

Brecht on the other hand, actively explored these possibilities, and his explorations grew more technically and dramaturgically sophisticated with practice. This is particularly true of his postwar work at the Berliner Ensemble (the work directors like Planchon saw on tour), in which Brecht developed the practices he discussed conceptually under the terms “defamiliarization” and “fable.” Indeed, the two terms are focused specifically on theatrical production as the interpretive mediation of the dramatic text through scenic writing, on performance as a non-literary final draft. Brecht’s various discussions of fable, for example, all regard it as a “total composition,” a composition of “individual happenings” (“Einzelgeschehnisse”) that theatrical production structures together in time; and time is one of the two definitive characteristics of all performance art-forms.⁷ Brecht’s discussion of how the theatre should discover and present the meaning of each of these events is equally performance oriented. For Brecht proposes that each individual happening’s central significance lies in its “underlying social Gestus:” “the mimic and gestural expression of the social relationships in which the people of a particular epoch stand to each other” (GW 15: 346). And gesture requires real space, within which a fictional space is created by the actor, scenery, and lighting. Finally, although—or precisely because—defamiliarization intends the demonstration of social reality as changeable, Brecht uses the term most specifically to indicate the interpretational approach through which all the theatre’s signifying systems work together to mediate the fable’s structure of individual social events to the spectator (GW 16: 696–97).

Moreover, the presentation of gesture in a concretely delineated space is not a semiotic possibility available to dramatic writing. These elements of scenic writing necessarily appear as “holes” in the text; and they remain holes when the text is merely read. Nor can the text tell the story it proposes. Dramatic writing can at best “sketch in” a possible world according to prevailing conventions of dramatic fictionalization.⁸ These conventions allow the text to mark the places beyond which its literariness cannot go, to suggest a direction for the elaboration of gesture and to propose its own interpretation of the fictional space in which this elaboration will take place. But the elaboration itself can only be undertaken by scenic writing. By fill-

ing in its holes, scenic writing fulfills the text. But it also displaces the text: it situates itself in the breaches of the text's literary form, introduces its own signifying systems to tell the story it finds in the text, and reconstitutes the text's basic substance, its dialogues and situations, as only one of these systems—using the text, in Brecht's terminology, as material.

The displacement of dramatic by scenic writing always takes place, and always has taken place; Brecht is, of course, neither the inventor of scenic writing nor the sole fountainhead of a modern tradition of innovation that includes Craig and Meyerhold. Brecht did, however, formulate the principles out of which the modern use of scenic writing has grown more systematically and effectively than anyone else in his generation. More importantly, his practical work revealed scenic writing's interpretational possibilities with a unique lucidity. In a very literal sense, Brecht wrote the plays he directed on stage, and in so doing made scenic writing's displacement of the text appear as both interpretation and completion.

Limited illustrations of this lucidity can be gleaned from every beat of any Brecht production. In 1.3 of Lenz's *The Tutor*, for example, the Major's Wife has the newly-hired Läufer execute first a *compliment*, then a *pas* from the minuet. The textual passage contains no stage directions describing either these figures or their execution; readers are left to fill in these holes, inferring the execution of each because one line asks for the performance of a dance figure and the next indicates a response to the presumed performance. Now the inference as to "what" happens—the performance of dance figures—is a very safe one. Nonetheless, we are dealing here with holes left open by the text to be filled in by scenic writing. A reader can only imagine, however incompletely, the execution of both dance figures. This raises a particular problem for modern readers unfamiliar with the minuet, and it also raises the more general problem of the reader's competence to effectively imagine not simply what happens, but how. But the reader is not the primary receiver of a play, the spectator is. And theatrical production must fill in the holes, must provide a concrete execution of each figure for the spectator's response. This is its one unavoidable duty to this passage of the text.

But it also provides scenic writing's basic possibility for interpreting the text, for scenic writing elaborates not only the what but also the how. And, as Brecht's general theory of defamiliarization indicates and his 1951 production of *The Tutor* clearly demonstrates, the how can be used to interpret the what. Although Brecht had changed and added lines just before this part of the scene, he used Lenz's text for this beat. He only altered the order of two lines because his staging had Läufer standing from the beginning of the scene, whereas Lenz has Läufer sitting as the scene opens. On the other hand, the execution provided by the actor Hans Gaugler in creat-

ing his Läufer added a core of meaning that is not readily apparent in the text, if, indeed, it can be said to exist in the text at all. Here is the way Brecht describes what happened in the space the text leaves between a request and a response:

The Major's Wife demands a *compliment* from the minuet. She begins immediately to pound on the delicate keys [of the spinet at which she is sitting]. Läufer isn't ready, for a moment it appears that he can't dance at all; but then it becomes clear that this is only confusion, he only needs a few seconds to collect his thoughts. Holding himself very erect, his fists propped up on his hips, he executes several perfected steps along the front of the stage, raising his legs very high and carefully measuring out the space available for the choreographic figure. His head seems to be a bit twisted, screwed onto his shoulders. He proceeds as if walking on eggs, but the set of his shoulders has something provoking about it; he strides, so to speak, like a tamed tiger, with a wild grace. In the middle of the stage he executes a turn towards the Major's Wife and arranges a *compliment* as extensively planned as if he had an entire ballet at his disposal.⁹

And this is only the *compliment*—the bow. The Major's Wife has still to demand the *pas*, and Gaugler's Läufer to execute it.

What Gaugler did with these dance figures is not a realistic illustration of the text's implied action but an interpretation, a defamiliarization, of the text grounded in realism but moving beyond it through self-referentiality, through the actor's demonstration of his own skill and energy. We can easily grasp from reading the text that Läufer is being tested to see if he knows the minuet, a dance we all know was common during this historical period. But this particular minuet is presented for our inspection as an interpretive statement of its own—indeed, as the central statement of the staged scene: "Gaugler's art in exposing the rebellious, brutal vitality of the low-born Läufer bound into the lace-boots of feudal etiquette gives the scene its significance. The tragicomedy's core has now been sketched in" (GW 17: 1250). Brecht here clearly indicates the scene's importance; the contradiction between Läufer's vitality and his social situation is central to the building up of both Lenz's and Brecht's fable. But Brecht indicates just as clearly how this importance has been intimated to the audience by scenic, not dramatic, writing.

Of course, the core may be sketched in, but it has not yet been developed. One moment of clarity does not an interpretation make—a statement that would be banal were it not for the fact that so many productions never move beyond isolated moments of clarity to develop a structure of interpretation sustained over the course of an entire performance. Gaugler's "rebellious minuet" is, however, one key moment in the development of just such a structure. Precisely because the contradiction between Läufer's vitality

and his need to constrain it out of economic necessity is so central to Brecht's interpretation, Brecht continually reinforced this contradiction for his audience. The stage directions in Lenz's first scene suggest that Läufer greets the Major and the Privy Councillor with "many friendly bows" as they enter and he exits.¹⁰ Brecht's text changes this to "Läufer passes with four bows. He is not greeted back" (GW 6: 2335). This stage direction can itself, however, only be understood properly as the record of the scenic writing Gaugler and Brecht created.¹¹ Each of Gaugler's four bows was a highly artificial, exquisitely executed defamiliarization of the "normal" bows of this period. Each bow was also more obsequious than the last. But Brecht added the line "Go to the devil, louts" for Läufer to say under his breath during his last, most fawning bow—creating a contradiction between the repeated obsequiousness of the bows and the contemptuous resentment Läufer feels for his "betters" but dares not reveal to them. This contradiction combined with the high-handed response of Läufer's potential employer and his brother to provide an interpretation of the bows even as they were being executed, to reveal them as a conscious contortion of the body by a man who wants something from other men with more economic power.¹²

Gaugler "quoted" this gesture, and with it its significance, whenever Läufer bowed later in the text. He also quoted it by standing in a cramped, stooped posture—a kind of constant bow—whenever he was in the presence of his employers. This use of posture served to physicalize both Läufer's willingness to bow (literally) to economic necessity and also to reveal the constraints that his social situation places on his "natural" instincts.¹³ The staging of the minuet scene, the next scene in which Läufer appears, is in part a further elucidation of the sense already provided by this gestural writing; this is presumably why Brecht's Läufer stands from the beginning of the scene.

Nor did Brecht stop developing this gestural writing after the minuet. In the very next scene, for example—one added to Lenz's text by Brecht—we see Läufer and his charge Leopold "ice-skating" on a stage bare but for a bench, a few bullrushes, and some poles from which lanterns are strung. From three young girls skating by we learn that Läufer has already earned a reputation for unbridled sexuality by crassly chasing various maidens around town; the frightened girls will have nothing to do with such a character. Frustrated, Läufer executes a number of violently energetic figures on the ice, until he is tripped up by Leopold, much to the amusement of the maidens. Quite apart from being the kind of *coup de théâtre* that joyously reminds spectators that they are in a theatre watching artists at work, this little scene served to show both the trouble Läufer is having keeping his sexual energies in check and the reasons why he can find no outlet for his

needs in Insterburg—two factors critical to the development of the fable. Indeed, Brecht considered this scene so important that for it alone he hired a young actress who could giggle; as he noted, “In the event, this giggle alone showed the sexual alertness and inhibitedness of the young girls” (GW17: 1242; photographs in *Theaterarbeit*, pp. 70 and 102).¹⁴

The minuet with which Brecht and Gaugler filled in the holes of one beat of Lenz’s text was, then, part of a structure of significant gesture developed in time, one that clarified a basic contradiction out of which the spectator was invited to structure the meaning of the fable—and clarified this contradiction in a way the text does not, and cannot, do. This clarification was not elaborated through gestural writing alone, however. Rather, the spectator was invited to interpret this developing structure of gesture from moment to moment by structuring its statements together with those of such other systems as costume and scenery.¹⁵ The minuet, for example, took place in a realistically depicted room. (Other scenes took place in much more selectively realistic sets; see for example, the photographs of Gustchen’s room on pages 97–99 of *Theaterarbeit*). The realism of the room’s appointments helped specify the historical and social situation within which the scene’s action takes place. But the room did not pretend to be real; it was pretended as a stage set. Its walls reached a height of only about fifteen feet in a stage space nearly twice that high and it was backed by a projection carefully designed to suggest the etching style of the play’s period. The audience could respond to the realism of the characters and their situation, but the room’s placement inside a stage space carrying other kinds of commentary created the kind of aesthetic distance that Brecht in his theoretical writings continually demanded was necessary for interpretation of the action as well as reaction to it.

The point here is not that Brecht’s practice fulfilled his theory in this respect but that the design helped suggest an interpretational direction, quite apart from whatever specific insights the visual conjunction of its elements (furniture pieces, properties, etc.) with the actors’ gestures may have provided. And this point is part of a larger one. The illustrations I have discussed are just that—illustrations of a lucidity in the practice of scenic writing that could only be adequately delineated by tracing the interweaving of acting, set, lighting, costume, text, etc. from moment to moment over the entire length of a production. This is, however, one of the tasks theatre historians as well as critics and Germanists, whose training frequently still includes a traditional literary bias, seem to have avoided. Yet if my examples have any force at all, they surely suggest that the published texts of the plays Brecht directed cannot be studied in isolation from the productions out of which they grew.¹⁶ Indeed, considering the degree to which the particular thrust of Brecht’s theatre is created through the combination of

scenic and dramatic writing in performance, it may be necessary to grant Brecht's productions the status traditionally accorded the literary text as a starting point for analysis and interpretation. Brecht's notorious attempts to protect the thrust of his work by demanding that other directors first copy the carefully documented models of his productions (or, better yet, hire one of his assistants to oversee the production), only reinforces this possibility. This does not mean, as Brecht's discussion of variants in his modelbooks amply demonstrates, that there is only one way to stage his texts, nor does it mean that we must cling to the now-dated stylistic elements of Brecht's scenic writing. But it does mean that we need to mediate consideration of strategies that operate in the dramatic writing through consideration of strategies that operate in the scenic writing.

Such a mediation could also be extended to the plays Brecht wrote but did not stage; if the specific examples are missing for these plays, the direction Brecht would have taken this scenic writing at the time the texts were written can be established fairly clearly. This mediation would also permit a restructuring of the contradictory relationship between Brecht's contributions as playwright, theoretician, and director: Brecht's theoretical statements could then be understood as the ongoing—and hence changing—elaboration of a directorial methodology to guide the mediation between dramatic and scenic writing. This would, in turn, allow us to avoid the pits into which too many critics still stumble when they attempt to read the plays in light of a supposedly ahistorical, because generally valid, theory of drama, only to be confronted by such a reading's inability to account for the frequently differing character of Brecht's own theatrical interpretations, particularly in the matter of acting style and emotional response.¹⁷

A reconsideration of the relationship between Brecht's dramatic and scenic writing will yield improved insight into Brecht's work and greater accuracy in describing it. To be fully effective, however, this reconsideration will need to be situated in its historic context. Precisely because he attempted to complete his dramatic writing through scenic writing, Brecht's work involved a constant reaction to the practical and ideological character of the scenic possibilities available to him. It is no coincidence that Brecht's comments on "Separation of the Elements" in the *Mabagonny* notes is directly combined with a demand that writers, designers, musicians, and actors take over and "re-function" the tradition-bound theatrical "Apparatus" that controls the elaboration of scenic writing; that although they think they control the "Apparatus" it in fact controls them.¹⁸ Indeed, this insight is as valid today as it was in the 1920s—or in the 1950s when Brecht's scenic writing at the Ensemble was forced to constitute itself in part as a re-functioning of the uncritically maintained conventions of the Göring Theatre.

The new, as Brecht himself pointed out, always arises in conflict

with the old, not from thin air (GW 19: 314). Brecht's productions had the tremendous impact they did on directors in Europe not because people like Planchon saw something new and unheard of, but because they saw the new theatre hidden within the theatre they had always known, or could have known had they been able to work past its conventional restrictions to seize its possibilities. By the same token, however, innovation is always limited by the limits of existing possibilities. There are passages in his methodological speculations where Brecht is able to think past these limits. But the lucidity of his practical work, his dramatic and scenic writing, is tied to a use of existing conventions and a response to existing audience expectations. Without an adequate understanding of this historically determined element of Brecht's work, we will not be able to grasp the particular character of his impact on the theatre of his time. Nor will we be able to make use of the insights Brecht's particular elaboration of the relationship between dramatic and scenic writing offers for a more general understanding of this relationship. And these insights might help scholars and critics discuss plays with less dependence on literary models, rethink more rigorously the relationship between text and stage, and assist more directly the redefinitions between dramatic and scenic writing that contemporary practitioners are attempting within the restrictions of the theatre as we have inherited it, from Brecht and others.¹⁹

Notes

1. "Où en sommes-nous avec Brecht?" In Adamov, *Ici et maintenant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 214. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.
2. *Theater der Zeit*, Vol. 5-6 (1961), pp. 938-947. This translation was reprinted in *Theater heute*, July 1962, pp. 28-31.
3. Since it involves those who control each of the stage's signifying systems (author, actors, musicians, designers), scenic writing has many authors. At the same time, the director's power in the modern theatre resides both in her direct interaction with the actors in creating gesture and blocking (see n. 14 below) and in her final control over the total writing out of the performance text—her editorial control, as it were. Brecht's efforts at ensemble interpretation (and the efforts since him), encouraging each producer to rediscover the independence of his interpretive means while at the same time subordinating this independence under an interpretational concept ultimately controlled by the director, reflects this contradiction. I will reflect it too by referring to the director as the primary author of the scenic writing.
4. As John Fuegi has pointed out, it is hard to countenance the uncritically maintained approach to drama as a fundamentally literary genre when the dramatic text's "specific aesthetic purpose" is to be a part that will then be subsumed in another "whole system of signs." The quoted passages here are among those from Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* that Fuegi uses against themselves in a closely argued critique of the way this bible of traditional scholarship treats the drama—itsself part of a more far-reaching attack on the way drama is traditionally studied, and taught. See "Toward a Theory of Dramatic Literature for a Technological Age," *Educational Theatre Journal* 26 (1974): 433-40.
5. See Klaus Völker, *Bertolt Brecht: Eine Biographie* (Munich: DTV, 1976), p. 142.
6. For an astute overview of the traditional theatre's premises see Günther Rühle, *Anarchie in der Regie?* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), pp. 92-102.

7. See GW 16: 693. Since I am using terms from the *Organon* within the context of practical theatre work, I should note that *Einzelgeschehnis* is both a dramaturgic and a practical term; it refers to the smallest, most concrete unit of completed action in the text, and hence of the actors' interpretation of the text. The term can be compared to "beats" in American theatre jargon, but the comparison reveals both the differences and the similarities between the traditional American way of rehearsing and Brecht's: Brecht's term is focused on clearly telling the story; American actors think of beats as units of emotional motivation and response on the part of their characters; Brecht's individual happening is focused on clearly telling the story in units that most often include more than one beat, and are in any event not intended to display emotional conflict as the primary message of interpretation. For fuller discussion see Manfred Wekwerth, "Sechs Punkte zum erzählenden Arrangement Brechts," in *Schriften: Arbeit mit Brecht* (Berlin: Henschel, 1975), pp. 117–126; see also my "Brecht and the Contradictory Actor," *Theatre Journal* 36 (1984): 29–32.
8. Patrice Pavis, *Languages of the Stage: Essays in the Semiology of Theatre* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), pp. 153 and 135. My discussion in this section draws heavily from Pavis.
9. GW 17: 1249. The passage may also be found, accompanied by a sequence of highly informative production photographs, in *Theaterarbeit: 6 Aufführungen des Berliner Ensembles*, ed. Ruth Berlau, Bertolt Brecht, et al., 2nd ed. (Berlin: Henschel, 1961), pp. 105–107.
10. J.M.R. Lenz, *Der Hofmeister, oder Vorteile der Privaterziehung* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), p. 5.
11. This distinction is worth stressing, given the tendency to regard the printed text of Brecht's *Tutor* as one playwright's response to another playwright's text, a response that can then be staged, as it was by Brecht in 1951. On the contrary, of the six different distinct drafts through which the play progressed, four were created during rehearsal. And the final draft, the one printed in the *Gesammelte Werke* is the final text as staged.
12. For a fuller examination of this beat see "Brecht and the Contradictory Actor," pp. 32–34. Brecht discusses the bow in GW 17: 1223 and 1240. There is a photograph of the bow in performance on p. 69 of *Theaterarbeit*, and a sketch by Neher on p. 114.
13. Although it attains its greatest significance in his Ensemble productions, Brecht developed this notion of "quotable Gestus" early on in his theatre work, as Walter Benjamin discussed in *Versuche über Brecht* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), pp. 26–27.
14. As my examples of gestural writing hopefully make clear, Brecht's concept of "Arrangement"—"the placing of the figures, the determination of their position [*Stellung*] to each other, changes in their position, entrances and exits (GW 16: 755)—is much more sophisticated, much more focused on scenic writing's interpretational possibilities, and much more a part of acting itself than the concept we traditionally associate with the equivalent term, "blocking." The original of Brecht's definition includes a pun that carries some sense of this difference: "*Stellung*" can mean both physical and attitudinal position. For fuller discussion, see Wekwerth.
15. Roland Barthes combines a very insightful discussion of Brecht's use of costume as a kind of writing with a devastating attack on the more traditional use of costumes in the French theatre of the 1950s in "The Diseases of Costume"; in *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), pp. 41–50.
16. Fuegi (pp. 436–40) makes precisely this point while discussing several excellent examples of performance writing from Brecht's stagings of his own plays. Fuegi also points out that the complicated situation of text and variant Brecht created by altering his plays every time he directed them militates against drawing too strict a line between text and performance.
17. For example, Fuegi (pp. 438–39) demonstrates the inability of such a reading to account for either the emotional impact or the continuity between scenes in Brecht's productions of such plays as *Galileo*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, or *Mother Courage*.
18. GW 17: 1005. See also the various attacks on the traditional theatre collected under the heading "Der Weg zum zeitgenössischen Theater 1927–1931" in GW 15: 125–225 and Walter Benjamin's essay "Der Autor als Produzent" in *Versuche über Brecht*, pp. 101–19.
19. See Fuegi, pp. 439–40.

ATINT Symposium "Brecht in Latin America."

The proceedings of the Symposium "Brecht in Latin America," organized by ATINT (Association of New Theater Workers and Researchers), offer a unique exchange of ideas on the reception and creative adaptation of Brecht's practices and theories of acting, directing and staging through the North-South dialogue. The different workshops were conducted by directors and members of a variety of theater groups as well as by Brecht scholars and critics who, together, have discussed the elements of contrast evident in the dramatic activities of the two hemispheres.

The Symposium has made clear that the analysis and understanding of Brecht's thought and creativity on all the elements of the dramatic phenomenon are central to an evaluation of the New Theater in Latin America. What Santiago Garcia, playwright and director of the Colombian group "La Candelaria," considers most important in Brecht's thought, in light of Latin America's circumstances, is the theater's capacity to transform reality. Since for Latin America this transformation of reality is a social need, theater becomes neither a religious nor a political crusade, but a crusade of an aesthetic kind in which politics is important, and also ideology—fundamentally the Marxist thought.

ATINT Symposium: "Brecht in Lateinamerika".

Die Sitzungsprotokolle des Symposiums "Brecht in Lateinamerika", organisiert von ATINT (Vereinigung der Arbeiter und Wissenschaftler des Neuen Theaters), offerieren einen einzigartigen Gedankenaustausch über die Rezeption und kreative Adaption von Brechts Vorgehensweisen und Theorien bei Schauspielkunst, Regie und Aufführung anhand des Nord-Süd Dialogs. Die unterschiedlichen Arbeitsgemeinschaften wurden von Regisseur/inn/en und Mitgliedern einer Vielzahl von Theatergruppen, als auch von Brecht Wissenschaftler/inne/n und Kritiker/inne/n veranstaltet, die gemeinsam die kontrastiven Elemente diskutierten, die in den dramatischen Aktivitäten der beiden Hemisphären deutlich werden.

Das Symposium machte deutlich, daß zu einer Bewertung des Neuen Theaters in Lateinamerika das Verständnis und die Analyse von Brechts Theorien und Kreativität bezüglich aller Elemente des dramatischen Phänomens notwendig sind. Santiago Garcia, Dramatiker und Regisseur der kolumbianischen Gruppe "La Candelaria", hält, im Lichte der Situation Lateinamerikas, die Fähigkeit des Theaters, Realität zu transformieren, für das wichtigste in Brechts Theorien. Da diese Transformation von Realität in Lateinamerika ein soziales Bedürfnis ist, ist das Theater weder ein religiöser noch ein politischer Kreuzzug, sondern ein Kreuzzug ästhetischer Art, in dem sich Politik ebenso wie Ideologie—im besonderen marxistische Theorien—als wichtig erweisen.

Symposium ATINT "Brecht en Amérique Latine"

Les actes du symposium "Brecht en Amérique Latine" organisé par l'ATINT (Association des travailleurs et chercheurs du Nouveau Théâtre) offrent un échange

unique d'idées dans le dialogue Nord-Sud sur la réception et l'adaptation créative des pratiques et théories de Brecht en ce qui concerne le jeu, la conduite et la mise en scène. Les différents ateliers étaient conduits par des metteurs en scène et des membres de toute une variété de groupes de théâtre ainsi que par des universitaires et des critiques brechtiens qui, ensemble, ont discuté des éléments de contraste évidents dans les activités dramatiques des deux hémisphères.

Le symposium a rendu clair le fait que l'analyse et la compréhension de la pensée et de la créativité de Brecht sur tous les éléments du phénomène dramatique sont au centre d'une évaluation du Nouveau Théâtre en Amérique Latine. Ce que Santiago García, auteur dramatique et metteur en scène du groupe colombien "La Candelaria" considère le plus important dans la pensée de Brecht, à la lumière des événements d'Amérique Latine, est la capacité du théâtre à transformer la réalité. Dans la mesure où, pour l'Amérique Latine cette transformation est un besoin social, le théâtre devient une croisade ni religieuse ni politique, mais une croisade de type esthétique dans laquelle la politique est importante, tout comme l'idéologie—fondamentalement, la pensée marxiste.

Simposio ATINT. "Brecht en América Latina".

Las ponencias del Simposio "Brecht en America Latina", organizado por ATINT (Asociación de Trabajadores e Investigadores del Nuevo Teatro) ofrece un intercambio único de las ideas sobre la recepción y adaptación creativa de las prácticas y teorías Brechtianas sobre la actuación, la dirección y el montaje a través del diálogo entre Norte y Sur América. Se organizaron varios talleres dirigidos por los directores y los participantes de diversos grupos teatrales y también por especialistas y críticos de Brecht quienes juntos han discutido los elementos evidentes de contraste en la actividad dramática de los dos hemisferios.

El Simposio ha señalado que el análisis y el entendimiento de la creación y el pensamiento Brechtiano sobre todos los elementos del fenómeno dramático son cruciales para la evaluación del Nuevo Teatro en América Latina. Lo que Santiago García, dramaturgo y director del grupo colombiano "La Candelaria", considera más importante en el pensamiento Brechtiano, a la luz de las circunstancias en América Latina, es la capacidad que tiene el teatro para transformar la realidad. Como para América Latina la transformación de la realidad es una necesidad social, la actividad teatral no se convierte ni a una cruzada religiosa y tampoco a una cruzada política pero sí a una cruzada estética en la cual la política es significativa, y también la ideología—principalmente el pensamiento marxista.

IBS and ATINT are naturally allied organizations. This has become apparent since August of 1984 when John Fuegi participated in the "Brecht in Latin America" Symposium—organized by ATINT—which took place within the Joseph Papp Latino Festival in New York. Although many months have gone by, the ease with which shared projects have arisen testifies to the presence of mutual interests and objectives. Brecht is a driving force in Latin America and the rest of the Third World, as well as in some minority theaters in the United States. ATINT is dedicated to the "New Theater" in these areas both as critics and promoters. IBS has Brecht himself as a reason for being. Together, IBS benefits from the area of influence of ATINT, and ATINT learns from the specificity of IBS. A very good working team that will surely grow together.

In this volume, IBS is publishing the proceedings of the "Brecht in Latin America" Symposium which first brought together the two organizations. Several long and short term projects have followed. The 1985 Modern Languages Association Convention in Chicago hosted an IBS session organized by ATINT on "Brecht in Latin America" as a continuation of that "dialogue among the Americas on Brecht" which began in the New York Symposium. The possibility of an IBS-ATINT Convention in Latin America—within the context of a Latin American Theater Festival—is strongly taking form, and it promises to be an enlightening event. And ATINT is looking forward to the opportunity to organize sessions or workshops on Latin American Theater within the IBS Convention in Hong Kong, as it learns more about Brecht in Asia.

The possibility for joint endeavors is endless. Tours, lectures, seminars, workshops, symposiums, publications, translations of major works, are just a few that come to mind. Their success depends on our effort and willingness to bring them about. And if we look at the past as an indication of the future, that will happen quite naturally because, after all, IBS and ATINT are naturally allied organizations.

*Dr. Marina Pianca
ATINT Board of Directors
Coordinator for Latin America*

ATINT Symposium: "Brecht in Latin America"

August 16–17, 1984

Shakespeare Public Theater, New York

Review and Synopsis by Maria H. Lima

ATINT (Association of New Theater Workers and Researchers) is an organization of scholars and critics whose primary interest is the documentation and critical evaluation of the New Theater in Latin America. Joseph Papp's Latino Festival in New York was the fourth of its kind, and included music, film, literature, and painting as well as contemporary popular theater works, all from a broad base of Latin countries and American Hispanic communities.

The International Brecht Society congratulates both ATINT and Joseph Papp in their collaboration, for having offered a unique opportunity for both Anglo and Hispanic audiences to experience the richness and diversity of the popular Latin cultural tradition, and the invaluable encounter of critics and directors who—through the North-South dialogue—not only discussed the influence of Brecht, but the elements of contrast evident in the dramatic activities of the two hemispheres.

As the Symposium organized by ATINT made clear, The New Theater Movement represents the stage's answer to questions posed by a historical situation to societies struggling for re-definition of an identity in the midst of economic dependency, cultural imperialism and political subservience. The analysis and understanding of Brecht's thought and creativity on all the elements of the dramatic phenomenon is central to an evaluation of the New Theater in Latin America.

Santiago Garcia, the Colombian director(*La Candelaria*), playwright, and critic, opened the Symposium with his retrospective view of Brecht's influence on the development of the New Theater in Latin America. According to Garcia, the period 1930–50 is still to be investigated in order to determine which elements of Brecht's theory and his impact on the European

theater at that time may have had repercussions in Latin America, since a great interest in Brecht and in the staging of his plays only becomes evident with the social and political commotions of the 1960's. "Political concerns that have somehow united the whole continent have created the need to search for our own reality." Garcia emphasizes that "this translation of our own reality into images cannot be the merely realist, or worse yet, naturalist transcription," since the goal has not been to reflect reality, but, as Brecht proposes, to investigate the causes behind the conflicts and contradictions; actors, dramaturges and directors themselves have had to create texts to historicize the present.

Garcia explains how a collective creation can emerge from any pre-existing text. In Colombia, for example, stories by García Marquez, Cepeda Samudio and others have been translated into epic theater after undergoing a whole process of theatricalization in which the actors have played a very important role: it is from the actors' improvisations from the narrative material that new fables have been created. Besides short stories, many groups have used reports and testimonies, and one of the best examples from the new Colombian theater is *Guadalupe años sin cuenta*(1), which was based on the testimonies of some of the people who actually participated in the rebellion of the fifties, a period (1950–57) which came to be called "the time of violence" and which cost the country more than 300,000 lives. *Guadalupe años sin cuenta*(2) is the story of a popular revolt that initially appeared to be a revolt of the liberal Party against the Conservative, the party in power at the time. As the revolt gradually takes on a very different connotation—it is not the traditional political party animosity but rather a revolt of the people against the dominant class—the members of the Liberal Party back off, and the Army takes over. More than 20,000 men agree to amnesty, are disarmed, and the Army starts to slowly kill all the peasants who had rebelled. Because the story could not have been told from the available official documents, the fact that the popular songs of the streets (3) had preserved the memory of those facts long lost from the history books made the group investigate the event further. It was based on the testimonies of people who have actually survived the rebellion, that a collective creation has managed to retell history from the point of view of the oppressed.

What Garcia considers most important in Brecht's thought, in light of Latin America's circumstances, is the theater's capacity to transform reality. As Athaulpa del Cioppo emphasizes to his drama students, theater has become a necessity, and talent in Latin America has developed from privilege to responsibility. Santiago Garcia adds: "since for us in Latin America this transformation of reality is a social need, theater becomes neither a religious nor a political crusade, but a crusade of an aesthetic kind in which

politics is important. And also ideology, fundamentally the Marxist thought." Brecht's concern—"what is life worth if the conditions that must be described demand vengeance"—was at the time what it is again today: a more than valid incitement to produce a new dramaturgy.

Because the New Theater Movement has as its main goal to win a new public, the theater often goes to the working masses. Many times, in places where there are no technical resources available, some of Brecht's formal postulates are inexorably followed: the people smoke because it is a popular place; dogs many times wander in front of the scene—a precious distancing effect. As Santiago Garcia points out, there is a form of aesthetic motivation from the public which is not to be found in the usual stage circumstance where actors face a dark casket. A popular setting offers beautiful images to the public, images of an aesthetic quality conducive to the actors' production of beautiful images.

The second session of the Symposium addressed the issue of the use of Brechtian techniques in the process of creating and staging a play. Carlos Rosset, the Brazilian director of the *Teatro do Ornitorrinco*, whose *Mahagonny* opened the Festival Latino, refers to a fundamental and insoluble opposition between the Brazilian and the European-American way of doing Brecht in regard to representational patterns for the "classics" and the relation between scenic space, actors and public.

Speaking about his adaptation of the *Mahagonny Songspiel*(4), Rosset offers his indelible image for Brecht's influence on Latin American dramaturgy: "an anthropophagic people, Brazilians have swallowed Brecht whole and vomited him back—the same . . . yet very different." Because Rosset does not see Brecht or any other author as a fixed thing, he is not inhibited by the work's classical status: any text for him works as a pre-text. Rosset mentions Brecht's article about the classics where he speaks of the need to "see the work afresh" because if we "allow ourselves to be inhibited by a fake, superficial, decadent, petty bourgeois idea of what constitutes a classic, then we shall never achieve lively and human performances of the great works(5)."

Rosset finds the American, institutionalized way of doing Brecht very distant from Latin American tradition, which in itself is almost a non-tradition since it is much closer to popular street performances, to circus, to cabaret, to vaudevilles than the Berliner Ensemble model. Rosset at this point reminds the audience of Brecht's work in the cabaret of Karl Valentin for whom he wrote some one-act plays.

Rosset seemed to exult over the not very positive reviews his *Mahagonny* suffered in the New York City Press. To the accusation of having betrayed Brecht, Rosset answers that he believes that "in order to be faithful to Brecht, we have to betray him because we cannot simply make a

mechanical transposition of the Germany of the 1920's to 1984 Brazil." Rosset feels the need to actualize the issues from our perspective and not from some theoretical framework.

When asked about his reasons for doing *Mahagonny*, Rosset points to the similarities between 1927 Germany and the situation people are facing in Brazil now: a huge debt and an economic crisis with no precedent in the country's 500 years of history. "Discussions about money can be found in our periodicals daily. It is also part of the population's everyday talks. The metaphor for *Mahagonny* is very close to Brazilian reality today: there has been the so called 'Brazilian miracle' during dictatorship years, with an increase in the consumption of superfluous goods, and now the middle-class dream is over. The economy is broke. It is exactly like the song in *Mahagonny*: 'there is no money in this town, the whole economy has broken down.' The play is the discussion of the crisis, of the dreams, of the pleasure city where everything is allowed. Because we have been a Mahagonny in Brazil, the end of the dream when there is no more money is very close to our reality."

The version the New York audience has seen is the third since Rosset considers *Mahagonny* a work still in elaboration. The dialectical nature that is at the core of collective creation in the New Theater Movement functions at two levels: among the members of the group through constant revision and in their relationship with the audience which also proposes changes.

Rosset concludes his talk with the feeling that perhaps it is in Brazil that Brecht has been best produced, and he is not referring only to his work because a lot of Brecht has been done in Brazil. What he seems to refer to is a certain Manichean approach he has sensed from the confrontation of American and Latin American directors and critics; that is, on one hand he sees the Hispano-Americans who seem to emphasize mostly the political side in Brecht, and on the other, Rosset finds the Americans doing Brecht by the book. Rosset feels that, in Brazil, directors have managed a dialectical synthesis since they do not fail to incorporate Brecht's politics with his humor, his sensuality. Rosset sees an advantage in not having the weight of Brecht academics, of a Brecht tradition of production since this freedom allows Brazilians to come closer to the anarchism of the young Brecht in all its sensuality. It is in this sense that Rosset calls the Brazilian a tropical Brecht: it is an irreverent Brecht who has shocked the American audiences.

I—Presence of Brecht in Latin America

Moderator: Patricia Gonzalez

Participant: Santiago García (*La Candelaria*, Colombia)

Santiago García(1928) es uno de los pilares del teatro colombiano. Desde su contacto con el director japonés Seki-Sano en 1956, Santiago García entró de lleno a la creación, formación y producción de un teatro nacional. Después de que Seki-Sano fue expulsado del país, García y otros forman el grupo de teatro experimental *El Bubo*, para más tarde salir del país y realizar estudios de dirección teatral en Praga, y tocar base con El Berliner Ensemble en Berlín. A su regreso al país, Santiago García entra como director de teatro de la Universidad Nacional donde realiza una tarea ardua y consciente que enardece el teatro en las universidades colombianas.

En 1965 dirige *Galileo Galilei*, producción que marca hito en el teatro nacional y crea olas de polémica, euforia y disgusto. Este montaje le cuesta a García el puesto; es expulsado de la Universidad y sale a formar un grupo independiente en 1966, La casa de la cultura, que más tarde tomará el nombre de La Candelaria. Desde entonces García se convierte en figura clave del teatro colombiano.

En la década del setenta el grupo inicia trabajos de creación colectiva, y hasta la fecha llevan cinco trabajos colectivos. Santiago García ha recogido sus experiencias de montaje y dirección en un libro titulado *Teoría y práctica del teatro*, publicado en diciembre de 1983. Este es sólo un aporte más que el gran director dá al nuevo teatro colombiano y latinoamericano. En la siguiente charla Santiago expondrá la significancia de Brecht en su trabajo y cómo ve la colaboración del dramaturgo alemán en América Latina.

Santiago García:

En el segundo semestre del 83, de agosto a diciembre, la Corporación Colombiana de Teatro (CCT) hice un taller para investigar la presencia de Brecht en el proceso creativo de "un nuevo teatro" en América Latina. El primero es un material sobre uno de los módulos del taller que estuvo a cargo de Helios Fernández del Teatro Experimental de Cali (TEC), que trató sobre el problema de la tercera persona, tan importante en la teoría Brechtiana. Esta experiencia práctica y teórica hecha con los miembros del taller fue recopilada por tres de ellos: Bernardo Baycroft, Fernando Peñuela y Cesar Badillo. La segunda parte del material recopila el seminario que dirigí yo y que consistía en tomar algunos postulados de Brecht para poderlos poner en práctica en un taller, en un laboratorio de investigación, hacia la conquista de elementos importantes para una dramaturgia. Recopilamos cuatro experiencias del taller, de cuatro equipos, en las que cada equipo, con un proceso de trabajo de unos dos o tres meses logró hacer una pequeña piecita de teatro a partir del modelo de la escena callejera propuesta por Brecht en su material sobre la discusión sobre el bronce. A partir de esos enunciados, cada uno de los equipos, haciendo un proceso de trabajo que está descrito en el material distribuido, logró hacer una pequeña pieza, que también aparece ahí escrita.

A nosotros nos pareció muy interesante el poder publicar esto porque no fue exactamente un taller de discusiones teoricas, de meta-teorías sobre la teoría de Brecht sino que a partir de la teoría poder llegar a una práctica concreta. Es por ello que fue muy interesante haber terminado el taller con obras escritas, porque aunque su calidad no es la de una obra teatral, si es una especie de ante-proyecto de una obra teatral, que es lo que nos interesa: cómo un grupo de actores, no de dramaturgos, logra invadir ese terreno sagrado del autor y poder hacer una pequeña obra de teatro. Estas obritas son apenas un paradigma, un ejemplo que pueda servir como un proceso a seguir para culminar con una obra para representar ante un público.

Quisiera hacer una exposición de algunos de los puntos que logramos aclarar un poco durante este laboratorio que tuvimos por seis meses sobre la influencia que Brecht ha tenido en el desarrollo del nuevo teatro en América Latina, sobre todo en estos últimos veinte años. De los años treinta, cuarenta y cincuenta, o sea, desde la aparición de Brecht en Europa a finales de los años veinte hasta finales de la segunda guerra mundial, nosotros realmente no tenemos muchos datos de la presencia de Brecht en América Latina. Esto sería materia de investigación por parte de conocedores. Seguro que debe haber muchos ejemplos de la influencia que ya pudo haber tenido Brecht en nuestros dramaturgos y en las puestas en escena en ese período, pero realmente conocemos muy poco y no era la materia exacta del taller. De todas maneras esos datos serían muy importantes para nosotros, y una tarea que está por hacer sería, por ejemplo, explorar esas tres décadas para ver qué elementos de Brecht, de su teoría, y de la conmoción que su presencia produjo en Europa durante esa época en el ámbito teatral, pudieron haber repercutido en América Latina. Sabemos muy bien toda la experiencia de Brecht en los Estados Unidos, a partir del exilio en Hollywood y posteriormente en New York, su relación con Charles Laughton, su influencia en el cine de la década de los treinta y de los cuarenta en Estados Unidos; o sea que conocemos la influencia que Brecht pudo haber tenido aquí durante su presencia, inclusive la famosa entrevista que le hicieron por sus actividades "anti-americanas", pero la influencia de todos esos acontecimientos en el teatro latinoamericano realmente la desconocemos, y sería muy importante tener datos sobre ella.

Ya a partir de 1956, es decir, a partir de la muerte de Brecht, empezaron a llegar muchos materiales. A partir de la aparición de Brecht en el Festival del Teatro de Naciones de París, sí empezaron a publicarse muchas cosas en español en revistas en América Latina. En esos años cincuenta si nos consta que empieza a haber producciones de las obras de Brecht. Conocemos un buen número de puestas en escena de obras de Brecht y hasta finales de los años sesenta lo que nosotros vemos es que hay una gran preocupación por ese gran dramaturgo, por esa nueva figura, y lo

que más se ve son montajes de sus obras. Todavía no detectamos bien una influencia en lo más importante de cualquier movimiento teatral, de cualquier dinámica teatral, que es la influencia en la dramaturgia, que es la influencia en el espectáculo original de cada país, de cada sociedad, de cada ámbito teatral. El fondo del pensamiento de Brecht, su substancia, solo empieza a tener verdadera repercusión en Latinoamérica a partir de los años sesenta cuando hay realmente una conmoción política y social. En 1968 hay acontecimientos bien importantes y empezamos a ver cómo hay una tendencia en la mayor parte de los grupos latinoamericanos y en muchos sectores del quehacer teatral, de buscar la realidad, nuestra propia realidad, para de ella empezar a construir una nueva problemática teatral. Surge la inquietud de explorar la realidad inclusive valiéndose de asesores científicos, o sea de historiadores, de sociólogos, de conocedores de la realidad desde el punto de vista científico, para que a través de ese conocimiento se pudiera entrar al nivel artístico de la producción. Para que eso pudiera suceder hubo la necesidad de construir equipos teatrales de investigación.

Aparecen a finales de los sesenta muchos grupos y se puede citar como un ejemplo el caso del grupo Escambray, en Cuba, compuesto por algunos actores que resuelven salirse del Teatro Estudio de la Habana, para irse a una de las provincias más atrasadas del país y de más conflicto social. Los actores se fueron al Escambray, junto con sociólogos e hicieron una investigación sobre esa realidad; de esa investigación empezaron a producir obras de teatro. Por esa época en muchos países suceden cosas similares. En nuestro país, que es el caso que yo obviamente más conozco, los grupos que había más o menos inestables, empiezan a estabilizarse en el número de personas; o sea, a formar ensembles, conjuntos que pudieran en equipo investigar la realidad y de esa realidad producir obras de teatro, con un autor, o con creación colectiva, o siguiendo muchísimas vías, muchísimos caminos. Lo que me parece más importante es que haya esa gran preocupación unida a una preocupación política, importante en todo el continente, de explorar nuestra realidad para traducirla en imágenes.

Ahora, esa traducción de la realidad no podía ser la traducción meramente realista, o peor aún, naturalista, sino que la teoría de Brecht empieza a influir ya sobre esa exploración de la realidad. No se trata de reflejar el estado de las cosas, y en cierta manera traducirlo a otra realidad, que sería la artística, sino que además, que es lo que propone Brecht, habría que buscar la causa del estado de las cosas; o sea, entrar al problema de reflejar las causas, que precisamente es el núcleo de la polémica entre Brecht y Lukács. Este reflejo de las cosas que para Lukács debería ser el que en la novela pudiera dar cuenta de toda la riqueza de la vida, a Brecht no le es suficiente; él exige que además de esa primera instancia de reflejo tan importante de la riqueza de la vida, se encontraran sus causas, las causas de

los conflictos humanos. El dice: "Para qué sirve toda la riqueza de la vida si las condiciones que deben ser escritas claman venganza," y esta frase para nosotros en América Latina, era en esa época, y lo es hoy, más que valedera, más que incitante para producir una nueva dramaturgia.

Este buscar nuestra realidad para encontrar las causas de estos conflictos, de estas contradicciones, nos llevaba a estudiar no solamente lo que el teatrista tiene a la mano—el presente, sino a buscar las raíces del presente, las causas del presente, que es precisamente el pasado; nos llevaba a historizar el presente para poderlo entender. Este trabajo que habitualmente es acometido por autores, por individuos, ya no podía ser así. El desarrollo de las técnicas de la civilización nos llevaba a pensar que semejantes empresas deberían ser acometidas por equipos, por grupos de trabajo que no solamente fueran de teatristas, sino que estas personas que se ocupaban del quehacer teatral fueran asesoradas por otras personas. Es decir, abrir el compás hacia un elemento muy importante que es la ciencia, como co-ayudadora del proceso artístico.

Al tratar de profundizar esta realidad para aprenderla, para conocerla y poderla transformar en obra teatral, en obra de arte, nosotros recurrimos a finales de los años sesenta y comienzos de los setenta a la narrativa. En el caso de Brecht se trataba no solamente de desdramatizar el teatro, de quitarle su presentización, sino de al historizarlo, hacer que los elementos de tipo narrativo tuvieran una gran importancia. O sea que la estructura de tipo aristotélico dramático iba a ser bombardeada, iba a ser rota e íbamos a buscar un nuevo tipo de teatro que conviniera más a estas necesidades; un tipo de teatro épico-narrativo, un teatro en el cual la estructura tuviera como fundamenta la fábula, o sea el encadenamiento de acontecimientos a la manera de la narrativa épica. Pero se buscaba una épica popular, una épica de acontecimientos populares, una épica de acontecimientos que históricamente tocaran el fondo de las causas, que era el pueblo.

Muchísimos de los teatristas que nos metimos en esta empresa echamos mano de la narrativa existente en América Latina. En nuestro caso, de los relatos de García Marquez, Cepeda Samudio y otros. Tal vez una de las primeras obras que se vale de la narrativa para volverla obra de teatro sea la obra *Soldados*, adaptada de la novela de Cepeda Samudio, *La casa grande*, por Carlos José Reyes, y más adelante trabajada de nuevo por Enrique Buenaventura con su grupo el TEC. Conozco muchos casos de grupos y autores que se han valido de cuentos, e inclusive de novelas, para trasladarlas al teatro épico, en nuestras condiciones latinoamericanas, y que han tenido una validez muy importante. Pero ese traslado no pudo, y no puede ser un traslado mecánico. Ese traslado tuvo que sufrir todo un proceso de teatralización en el cual el actor contó y cuenta mucho. Uno de los

elementos para esa traducción, importante para el proceso creativo, ha sido la improvisación. Los actores empezaron a hacer improvisaciones a partir del material narrativo y esas experiencias fueron dando los elementos fundamentales de esa nueva concatenación de elementos, de esa nueva fábula.

Otro elemento muy importante en la búsqueda de esa nueva posibilidad teatral fue la colaboración del testimonio y del reportaje. Además de los cuentos, muchísimos grupos empezaron a valerse de reportajes y de testimonios para sus producciones teatrales. De esos testimonios, de esos reportajes, se fue encontrando un material muy válido para ponerlo a funcionar dinámicamente en búsqueda de elementos de una nueva narrativa. Coincidió que ese género testimonio empezó a tener una validez de tipo literario, de tipo artístico, precisamente en esos años sesenta. En concursos tan importantes como el de Casa de las Américas apareció ya como un género que merecía una categoría aparte con premio y todo.

En nuestro caso, una de las obras que ha tenido más trayectoria dentro del nuevo teatro colombiano, *Guadalupe años sin cuenta*, fue precisamente una obra originada en unos testimonios que el escritor Arturo Alape había elaborado con varios participantes de una revuelta del partido liberal que hubo en Colombia en los años cincuenta. Leyendo los testimonios de los protagonistas de los acontecimientos, empezamos a recrearlos con improvisaciones por parte de los actores casi durante un año. De este proceso resultó la obra, estrenada en 1975, y que todavía se está representando después de ocho años.

Además de otros géneros literarios, de otras artes, de reportajes y de testimonios, que fueron muy importantes, había otros elementos que entraron a jugar de parte de esta gran creación colectiva. Fue importante, por ejemplo, la colaboración, la postura de nosotros los artistas con relación a la ciencia, con relación a la colaboración de los científicos. Empieza a manifestarse la necesidad de una colaboración mucho más estrecha con sociólogos, con investigadores, con historiadores, con semiólogos, con lingüistas. Dicha colaboración ha sido puesta muchas veces en tela de juicio. Hemos sido calificados de cientifistas, de pseudo-teóricos, por el hecho de haber tenido ese tipo de colaboración con la ciencia, que fue muy bienvenida.

Tengo una nota muy importante del diario de Brecht, relacionada a su experiencia con dos obras en el análisis que él hace de *Galileo Galilei* y de *Los fusiles de la madre Carrar*. Dice don Bertolt: "La vida de Galileo representa, desde el punto de vista técnico, un grave retroceso, así como *Los fusiles de la madre Carrar* es muy oportunista. Habría que re-escribir el drama totalmente para lograr obtener esa brisa que viene de playas todavía ignotas, de esa rosacea aurora de la ciencia." O sea que su estrecha colaboración con esos sectores de la ciencia, en esas obras, a pesar de haberlos

tenido, no era el deseado. *Galileo Galilei* es una obra que precisamente entra en colaboración con historiadores, con una profunda investigación sobre los acontecimientos que vive Galileo en el siglo XVII. *Los fusiles de la madre Carrar* no tiene ya nada que ver con la ciencia; es una obra de contingencia hecha para colaborar con los republicanos durante la guerra civil española, por eso él la llama oportunista. Según sus propios testimonios esas obras requerirían de una elaboración más estrechamente ligada con la ciencia para poder desempantanarlas de elementos dramáticos que todavía existen en ellas. Tiene que ser así porque las nuevas relaciones entre la escena teatral, entre nuestro quehacer y el nuevo público tienen que entrar en estrecha colaboración con nuevas ciencias, con las ciencias de la comunicación especialmente ya que estamos precisamente haciendo un arte en el que la comunicación entre la obra y el público es esencial. Por lo tanto, si desconocemos las ciencias que en este siglo han ganado espacios muy importantes, si desconocemos los terrenos ganados por ellas, pues estamos hundiendo un poco la cabeza en la arena. Esas nuevas relaciones entre escena y público son elementos que tenemos que tener en cuenta para poder decir a conciencia que estamos haciendo un nuevo teatro, para un nuevo público y para una nueva clase social que aparece en el mundo entero, muy poco estudiada puesto que es nueva, que sería el proletariado. En nuestro continente este proletariado es todavía más nuevo y tiene elementos que requieren ser explorados e investigados para que la relación escena-público llegue a un nivel estético y no quede en un puro nivel de información.

Esta problemática de relación entre escena y público plantea otras dos instancias bien importantes: la polisemia a nivel textual y la polisemia a nivel operativo. La obra teatral, como obra artística, no es una obra unívoca, no tiene un solo sentido. La palabra teatral es una palabra polivalente, polisémica. Una de las riquezas más grandes de las obras de Brecht, precisamente durante el período en que se monta un gran número de sus obras, es ese carácter polisémico. Es decir, que a pesar de que está hablando de cosas conocidas, concretas y reales, también esta hablando de otra cosa al mismo tiempo; son ambiguas, son ambivalentes.

Es el caso de *Santa Juana de los mataderos*, considerada por Brecht como obra importante, una especie de clásico dentro de sus postulaciones. En esta obra vemos como existe una convivencia de tres niveles históricos. Uno, el inmediato, sería Jean Dark en los mataderos de Chicago, en los años treinta; o sea, la primera línea narrativa evidente. Pero al mismo tiempo que se está desarrollando esa línea, hay otra que convive con ésta, y a la cual se hace permanente alusión, y que es la de Santa Juana de Arco. La polivalencia aparece desde el mismo título: Santa Juana . . . de los mataderos. Y una tercera, y la más importante línea narrativa y que convive con

las otras dos, es la relativa al presente de Alemania en ese momento de la transformación del capitalismo alemán tradicional a un capitalismo monopolístico. Esas tres líneas están permanentemente funcionando y es lo que le da la riqueza, la polivalencia, la espesura de lectura de niveles que adquieren las obras de Brecht.

Esta polivalencia se ha intentado muchas veces en la dramaturgia nuestra latinoamericana. Se ha intentado alcanzar ese grado de riqueza que le da a la obra la más profunda calidad estética, pero sin embargo no se ha llegado todavía a ese nivel a pesar de los muchos intentos. Porque no se trata de imitar . . . No estoy planteando yo que vayamos a hacer un decálogo de los asuntos de la propuesta de Brecht y seguirlo al pie de la letra, sino de ver cuales son los elementos esenciales, los más profundos, para desarrollar nosotros una nueva dramaturgia. Brecht en su pensamiento siempre tiene en cuenta esa "rosacea aurora de la ciencia" del futuro.

Aunque la riqueza y la polivalencia que encontramos en la dramaturgia Brechtiana no se haya encontrado en latinoamerica en la dramaturgia, sí se ha logrado en montajes importantes de autores clásicos. Es decir, tomar el autor clásico y darle la polivalencia que lo instala en el presente; con ejemplos extraordinarios como el caso del montaje de *Pluto* de Aristófanes del grupo El Galpón, o de montajes de Lope de Vega, de Shakespeare. Todos esos montajes han logrado esa espesura, esa ambigüedad, esa riqueza para su nueva lectura ante un público de hoy, que también es nuevo y que lo que quiere es que le hablen de su presente, de sus intereses inmediatos, de sus sueños, de su vida. A pesar de que esto se haya logrado hacer en montajes de obras, en la dramaturgia propiamente dicha, todavía, ese ejercicio no encuentra una holgura, una destreza, una habilidad que permita esa polivalencia.

El otro aspecto de la polivalencia, o sea el de la polisemia a nivel operativo, sí lo encontramos más o menos desarrollado en latinoamérica. Hablamos del nivel de la actuación, de la puesta en escena, de niveles técnicos, y ésta sería la parte más pertinente a nosotros que sería la parte actoral. En esta parte hay toda una teoría de la que más o menos se especula; la teoría del gestus, el *Verfremdung* o efecto de distanciamiento. En eso sí encontramos muchísimos elementos que han desarrollado técnicamente en teatro en latinoamérica, precisamente a partir de esos años sesenta, como por ejemplo: las apariciones de las máscaras, la inclusión de la música en el espectáculo, una actuación rarófona o sea enrarecida y una cantidad de cosas interesantísimas. En el taller práctico de esta tarde podemos mostrarles cómo esos elementos del nivel operativo funcionan en cuanto a la polivalencia; o sea, que el gesto no quiera decir una sola cosa sino que de cuenta de un pasado, de un presente, de un particular que englobe al general.

En la parte operativa también tenemos una extraordinaria colaboración de la ciencia, la ciencia de la comunicación, del gesto, de todo lo que se ha trabajado sobre el lenguaje no verbal, la kinesis, la proxemia, o sea, todos los aportes de hoy en día, o lo que pueda haber de aporte a ese aspecto en ese sentido técnico. Esto nosotros lo consideramos muy importante, muy rico, pero que en el fondo casi hasta podríamos pasar un poco por encima de él, aunque es bien importante ya que sin una técnica, sin una forma, no se puede dar cuenta de un nuevo contenido.

Quisiera decir algunos pensamiento que considero importante sobre ese aspecto polivalente, para concluir la exposición. Esa necesidad de buscar no solamente en la palabra la polivalencia, sino en el gesto ya que el mismo refrán popular dice, "a buen entendedor pocas palabras bastan", merece otro comentario. El lenguaje es capaz de desarrollar una gran cantidad de elementos alusivos y asociativos cuya re-construcción es obra del lector y condición necesaria para la comprensión del mensaje mismo. Ya al entrar a este grado de riqueza polivalente, la descodificación del mensaje fundamentalmente va a quedar a cargo del lector, o sea del espectador dinámico, de una nueva relación entre la escena y el público en la cual el público entra a formar parte dinámica del espectáculo. El trabajo de fantasía que es necesario en la producción de los trabajos estéticos actúa de manera selectiva sobre una realidad cultural y lingüística ya totalmente constituida y co-presente del poeta mismo. O sea que vamos a trabajar con un público que nos es un imbécil, un público que ya está instalado en el siglo veinte, en la era atómica, que aunque pertenezca a niveles económicos bajos eso no lo condiciona para pertenecer a niveles culturales, intelectuales bajos, sino que es un público co-presente del autor, ya con un lenguaje y con unas posibilidades de desentrañarlo de un alto nivel, lo cual exige necesariamente, por parte del autor, por parte del espectáculo, una elevación al máximo de la calidad estética, en ese sentido de la polivalencia.

Esta introducción yo quería concluir la diciendo que para nosotros en América Latina el aporte de Brecht no se debe tomar como habitualmente se ha hecho, como el aporte de unos elementos técnicos, de un decálogo de fórmulas que, evidentemente, si se toman así hoy pueden parecer fórmulas completamente superadas . . . el viejito Brecht ya no nos tiene nada que decir sino que debemos tomar lo más dinámico, lo más progresista de ese pensamiento de Brecht, y de la traducción de sus pensamientos que son sus obras, en el sentido de colaboradores muy estrechos en la tarea más importante que tiene que hacer un artista, que es la tarea de inventar, la tarea de crear, la tarea de hacer una verdadera dramaturgia y ahí sí nos es necesario Brecht; ahí sí va de nuestro brazo, y ahí sí es el joven Bertolt Brecht.

II—The Use of Brechtian Techniques in the Process of Creating and Staging a Play, Part I

Teatro do Ornitórrinco Presents Mahagonny

Moderator: Leslie Damasceno

Participants: Cacá Rosset and Members of Teatro do Ornitórrinco (Brasil)

L. Damasceno: El espectáculo que abrió el Festival Latino, *Mahagonny*, presentado por el Teatro Ornitórrinco de São Paulo, Brasil, ocasionó grandes debates, como se puede ver en la charla informal que sigue. Demostró una curiosa, sin embargo recurrente, división de perspectiva entre lo americano y lo latinoamericano sobre lo que es teatro, cuáles son los padrones de representación de los "clásicos", y cuál es la relación entre el espacio escénico, los actores y el público.

Un artículo del *Village Voice* de 21/8/84 ("Short of Brecht", por Michael Feingold), le acusa al Ornitórrinco de haber hecho un espectáculo de payaso, de juego barato y colegial, y de haber, como dice Cacá Rosset el director del grupo, "deformado por completo a Brecht." Sin embargo era exactamente la desfachetez de la obra que le gustó, y que le comunicó más al público latino.

De todos modos, la manera en la que trabaja el Ornitórrinco parece tener mucho que ver con el carácter del animal que le da al grupo su nombre: es un animal híbrido, una especie de transformación biológica entre lo reptil y lo mamífero. Como animal híbrido, tenaz y de combinación original e inventiva de partes (recursos sacados de lo que hay), refleja perfectamente un teatro de transición y de belleza no común que es el teatro brasileño.

El grupo Ornitórrinco comenzó sus actividades en 1977, con un trabajo de Strindberg. Comenzó a trabajar Brecht y Weill en seguida, con "Ornitórrinco Canta Brecht & Weill." El espectáculo actual, *Mahagonny*, figura como continuación de aquel trabajo. Ya con casi tres años, *Mahagonny* tiene una exitosa carrera: representó Brasil en el VI Festival Internacional de Teatro en Caracas (1983), en el XI Festival Internacional Cervantino en México (1984), en el Festival Latino en Nueva York, el Festival de Valladolid y el Bienal de Teatro de Colombia.

El modo antropofágico que Rosset comenta es, de veras, la marca principal del teatro contemporáneo brasileño. Se refiere a una manera feroz, sin trégua, de tomar lo que convenga de las tradiciones ajenas—sean europeas, sean americanas o asiáticas—para hacer un teatro que hable a la mezcla racial y cultural brasileña. Se caracteriza por un estilo carnavalesco, anárquico. Como estética nacional, tiene su inception en los manifestos y actividades asociados con La Semana de Arte Moderna (São Paulo, 1922).

En teatro, recupera los textos de Oswald de Andrade y de otros, la representación seminal siendo la producción que hizo Teatro Oficina de la obra de Oswald, *O Rei da Vela*, en 1967. Desde esos tiempos ha sido talvez la tendencia más fuerte del teatro brasileño, y con certeza la, que ha viajado más para el exterior (como *Macunaíma* del grupo Macunaíma).

Cacá Rosset: Lo que yo quería hacer es contar un poco para ustedes la experiencia del trabajo del grupo del Teatro Ornitórrinco con Brecht, especialmente con *Mahagonny*. Bueno, lo que está más presente en este momento para mí es el tipo de reacción que nosotros sentimos acá en Estados Unidos al presentar *Mahagonny*. Lo que yo sentí, y lo que ocurrió, fue más allá de simplemente una oposición de ideas, una oposición de visiones de Brecht. Yo creo que acá, en Estados Unidos, Brecht es casi una institución, es casi un museo no solamente desde el punto de vista teórico, sino también jurídico y legal. Nosotros tuvimos diversos problemas: una hora antes de empezar nuestro espectáculo—estábamos todavía arreglando la luz, teníamos mil problemas—me llamaron de la oficina porque una señora, abogada de Kurt Weill, estaba en la línea queriendo prohibir la obra porque nosotros no teníamos la autorización, el *copyright*, para presentar a Kurt Weill acá en Estados Unidos. Por supuesto, la tenemos en Brasil e hicimos una carrera de dos años con la obra. Y, bueno, esto es un festival, no es una cosa comercial, no estamos en cartelera por dos meses. Y comenzó una confusión: se llamaba a Chicago, se llamaba a no sé qué, se hablaba con uno, se hablaba con otro, se empezó a hacer muchas preguntas sobre cómo yo había hecho la adaptación y se volvió una cosa kafkiana, una cosa absurda. Y ella me preguntó: pero, ¿tú cambiaste la música?; pero, ¿quién ha hecho la traducción?; pero . . . no sé lo que, bueno . . . y acabó diciendo: "Pero bueno, esto es en general lo que se hace, and we don't like this." Quiere decir, ¡"Mira! Esto es una cosa sagrada, con la que no se pueda jugar, es una cosa estratificada, una cosa de museo."

Nosotros no vemos a Brecht, o a cualquier autor, como una cosa fija. Hay, incluso, un artículo de Brecht sobre los clásicos, en él que dice que uno no debe dejarse atemorizar por los clásicos. Y lo que yo sento acá en Estados Unidos es que Brecht se quedó un clásico en el peor sentido del término, en el sentido de una cosa muerta, de una cosa culturalista, a la que las personas asisten, aplauden pero que en el fondo lo sienten una cosa aburrida. Pero es cultura, es como se hace un poco a Shakespeare acá en Estados Unidos, que es una cosa simplemente cultural. Bueno, volviendo a los aspectos jurídicos y legales. Esto—más que ser una metáfora—yo creo que es un tipo de visión, un tipo de *approach* que ocurre acá en América, y creo que también en algunos países de Europa, de tornara Brecht en una institución, de traer el peso cultural de una tradición que para nosotros está muy distante. Yo creo que no tenemos el peso, la responsabilidad, de hacer

un Brecht según un modelo preestablecido. O sea, el modelo del Berliner Ensemble de los años 50, de los Modell-Büchern brechtianos en donde hay casi una decoupage fotográfica de cómo Brecht, en la década de 50, hizo sus espectáculos en Berlín.

Ni tampoco sentimos la necesidad de seguir los presupuestos teóricos. Yo creo que nosotros somos más antropafágicos. Nosotros comemos a Brecht. Nosotros deglutimos a Brecht como los indios brasileños eran antropafágicos con los portugueses. Y yo supongo que como los indios colombianos eran antropafágicos con los españoles. Los deglutimos antropafágicamente y los devolvemos so otra forma. Yo creo que eso es una premisa inicial.

Bueno, hay otra cosa que ocurrió—ustedes deben haber leído. Salió una crítica en el *Village Voice* sobre nuestro espectáculo en la que la crítica pidió que se instaurara un proceso contra nosotros. Y el subtexto era esto: porque nosotros habíamos desfigurado la obra de Brecht. Y que entonces el Brecht-Weill “estate” debería procesar a Joseph Papp porque era una cosa iconoclasta lo que nosotros hemos hecho. Entonces, mira, es una cosa absurda; pasamos a defender una cosa que va más allá de una disputa académica, tipo divisiones de Brecht como hay en Europa, donde hay, por ejemplo, un tipo de cosa que Bernard Dort hace en Francia, que es muy diferente de lo que hace Martin Esslin, etc. Pero esto va más allá que una disputa académica; se trata de un respaldo jurídico para la defensa de la tradición y de la familia brechtiana. Que es exactamente lo que ocurrió con nosotros. Yo me quedé muy chocado. La abogada me explicó que hay una especie de lucha entre la familia de Brecht y la de Weill porque en el *New York Times* no salió el nombre de Kurt Weill, solamente el nombre de Brecht. Ellos se quedaron muy ofendidos. Entonces, cuando se preguntaba cual sería la solución dijeron: “Money.” Como *Mahagonny*, claro. Todo es permitido para quien tiene plata. Es exactamente la metáfora de *Mahagonny* lo que ocurrió acá. Perfectamente, “Ustedes pueden hacerlo si pagan.”

Yo creo que Brecht para nosotros, más que un texto, es un pretexto. O sea, Brecht para nosotros sirve como inspiración. Lo que intentamos transportar de Brecht para nosotros no es una transposición mecánica, porque la situación de Brecht, en Alemania en la década de 20, o en Estados Unidos en la década de 40, es muy distinta de la situación de Brasil en 1984. Esto es obvio. Entonces, nosotros no queremos un Brecht de anticuario, un Brecht de museo, un Brecht para “voyeurs”, un Brecht simplemente culturalista en el mal sentido del término. Brecht, como cualquier otro autor, tiene que ser vital porque el fenómeno teatral solo ocurre cuando hay, efectivamente, una electricidad entre los actores y el público. Hay que ocurrir alguna cosa en un espectáculo, sino no vale para nada.

Otra cosa que acá sucedió—una cosa un poco escandalosa también—fue la cosa de tocar. Porque acá en Estados Unidos la “privacy” es una institución. Si una persona toca a otra, simplemente, esto es una violación de “privacy”. Acá las personas no se miran en los ojos. En nuestro espectáculo había una participación del público, un contacto—no un contacto autoritario, no una participación fascista, autoritaria en el sentido de obligar que uno participe como en la década de 70—sino una participación amorosa, cariñosa. Pero yo sentí que esto pasa a ser una agresión acá—más que una agresión, una transgresión. Porque, según el punto de vista vigente acá, según el pensamiento dominante, según el Brecht-Weill Estate, según la tradición de la familia brechtiana, se está traicionando a Brecht. Cuando, por el contrario, creo que es para ser justamente fiel a Brecht que tenemos que traicionarlo, porque no se trata de una transposición mecánica de Alemania de la década del veinte para '84. Las personas son diferentes. Los problemas también. Las personas cambiaran. El mundo cambió. La influencia de la *mass media* es muy fuerte. Esto no era un problema muy fuerte en la época de Brecht, en la década de veinte. Las cuestiones de la comunicación de masa, de la televisión, de la radio, del rayo laser, de todas esas cosas.

Bueno, en resumen, lo que más me llamó la atención acá, con nuestras presentaciones de Brecht en Estados Unidos, fue que hay efectivamente una oposición fundamental e insoluble entre una forma, digamos, brasileña de hacer Brecht y una forma americana y europea. Nosotros no tenemos nada que ver—nada que ver—con la forma americana o la forma europea de hacer Brecht. Nosotros hacemos Brecht de una forma personal, que no tiene nada a ver con el Berliner Ensemble, no tiene nada a ver con el Brecht-Weill Estate, no tiene nada que ver con abogados, no tiene nada que ver con burocracia, no tiene nada que ver con “privacy”. Es otra cosa. Es un Brecht personal, es un Brecht de nosotros, es un Brecht tropical.

(En el período de discusión y debate que siguió a la charla, había varios intercambios que aportaron clarificaciones y amplificaron puntos centrales de la charla, tales como: que sería un Brecht tropical; como sería la elaboración escénica de esta visión; y cuales son las propuestas estéticas y/o didácticas de esta visión. En suma: ¿qué es Brecht para Ornitorrinco? Se resumen, seguidamente, estas discusiones, agregando varios fragmentos sacados de una entrevista posterior hecha con la moderadora.)

Pregunta: ¿Qué representa *Mahagonny* para ustedes, y cómo se encaja en esta visión el juego erótico, sensual, que hemos visto en la presentación?

Rosset: Todo el mundo sabe que Mahagonny es la ciudad de los placeres: el alcohol, el sexo, etc., etc. Yo creo que—incluso para ser

didáctico—nada es mas anti-didáctico que hablar de placer. Placer, uno o lo siente o no. El alcohol también; no se puede hablar didácticamente del alcohol. O uno se emborracha y bebe, o no. Entonces, yo creo que la propuesta de la participación del público, la propuesta de tener efectivamente una forma epidérmica y no discursiva, no cartesiana, no aristotélica es en el sentido de traer al mismo tiempo la vivencia y la reflexión. Pero, no solamente desde el punto de vista discursivo, retórico, sino también de la forma epidérmica, del contacto mismo.

Nuestra presentación juega con el estilo digamos erótico, pero el juego es un juego simbólico, no es el juego por el juego, no se trata de una provocación para ir a las drogas, el alcohol, etc. No se trata de esto. Yo creo que es un juego simbólico porque se juega exactamente con los temas que la obra discute: sexo, dinero, alcohol. Claro, pero dentro de un juego simbólico porque es teatro. No es la vida. Es el teatro.

Para la adaptación de la obra que nosotros hicimos, nosotros utilizamos la estructura de *Mahagonny Songspiel*, que tiene una estructura de pelea de boxeo, que es en *rounds*: el “Prólogo y Fundación de Mahagonny,” “La Vida en Mahagonny” en diez *rounds* y, finalmente, el epílogo—“Revolución en Mahagonny”—que es la destrucción muy por encima de arquetipos bíblicos, de la ciudad de los placeres, de Sodoma y Gomora y esas cosas. Pero, tiene una estructura casi de un “show”, de un musical, de *strip-tease*, de emociones baratas, de tiroteos, sexo, rock-n-roll; todo esto.

Pregunta: ¿Cuál es la manera de trabajar escénicamente esta idea de tropicalismo con Brecht? Idea que es muy importante, porque es una manera que tenemos, los latinoamericanos, de deglutir a Brecht casi naturalmente.

Rosset: Bueno, yo creo que, por un lado, es exactamente el hecho de que nosotros no tenemos una tradición, sea en Brecht o sea una cosa como acá el “actor’s studio”, o de un método de representación de un Stanislavsky, de un Grotowski, sea lo que sea. Yo creo que la tradición del actor brasileño está mucho más cerca de las *performances* populares, de circo, de cabaret, del teatro de revista, de *street performances*, que propiamente de un método europeo o americano constituido. Sí, de verdad, esto está en los orígenes del trabajo de Brecht, que trabajó mucho con el cabaret, que trabajó mucho con un cómico popular alemán de la época, que era Karl Valentin—un cómico, un payaso muy conocido, muy popular que tenía su cabaret. Y que Brecht, incluso, trabajó como actor con él, escribió algunas obras en un acto para Karl Valentin. Entonces, yo creo que esta tradición del cabaret, de circo, del *street performance* esta más cerca de nosotros como estilo de representación que métodos elaborados, digamos, por Stanislavsky o mismo el método brechtiano según el Berliner Ensemble. Entonces, yo

creo que es más por este lado que nosotros asimilamos el estilo de representación de Brecht.

Pregunta: Pero, entonces, ¿no había ningún tipo de propuesta cuando ustedes empezaron a trabajar en la obra?

Rosset: No. Había en el sentido de esencializar las discusiones, en el sentido de traer para el aquí y el ahora. A partir de nosotros, no a partir de una cosa teórica. A mí no me gustan los actores o los espectáculos que no tienen una relación vital con las personas que están haciendo la obra. Para mí es muy importante que el actor, o el director, o la compañía que está trabajando una obra, tenga de alguna forma una relación vital y que las discusiones que la obra aporta sean también discusiones de los actores. Sino queda una cosa distanciada—no en el sentido del distanciamiento brechtiano, sino una cosa distanciada en el sentido que no tiene más relación.

Pregunta: La obra quiere provocar ciertas discusiones, pero me quedó un poco oscura. ¿Cuáles son las discusiones que tú intentabas provocar con *Mahagonny* y si no se habría logrado, ¿por qué no? O sea, ¿por qué Brecht para estas discusiones?

Rosset: Yo creo que la obra *Mahagonny* tiene algunos puntos de discusión que son muy contemporáneos. Yo creo que la situación de crisis que Brecht describe en el '27 cuando escribió *Mahagonny* está muy cerca de la situación de crisis que nosotros vivimos en Brasil ahora, por ejemplo. Hay una deuda y una crisis económica como nunca tuvimos en 500 años de historia. Hay una crisis económica que es realmente muy fuerte. La discusión del dinero es una cosa que está diariamente en los periódicos, en la vida cotidiana de las personas. Y la metáfora de *Mahagonny* está muy cerca de la historia de Brasil de hoy: hubo el llamado "milagro brasileño", en la época de la dictadura, y hubo un aumento de los bienes de consumo superfluo, y la clase media empezó a comprar automóviles, máquinas a lavar, etc. Ahora el sueño acabó. *The dream is over*. La economía se quebró. Es como en la música en *Mahagonny*: "There is no money in this town, the whole economy has broken down. Where is the telephone, etc., etc. . . ." La discusión de la crisis, de los sueños, de la ciudad de los placeres. Todo es permitido. El fin del sueño cuando no hay más dinero es una cosa muy cerca de nuestra cotidianeidad. Entonces, yo creo que eso fue una de las cosas que nos incitó para hacer *Mahagonny*. Porque nosotros fuimos a Mahagonny en Brasil.

(En las preguntas e intercambios finales de la hora se mostró una preocupación que surge muy a menudo con el público conscientizado norteamericano—y a veces con los hispanos—al ver presentaciones brasileñas: ¿Hay, o no hay, una reificación de la mujer en la valorización

escénica del cuerpo femenino? La discusión siguió varias tendencias, entre ellas comentarios sobre el sexismo del propio Brecht. Pero quien respondió la pregunta de modo visceral fue Dadá Cyrino, la actriz que desempeñó el papel de Jenny en la obra.)

Cyrino: ¿Quiere que yo reponda como Jenny o como Dadá? [las dos] O.K. Como Dadá, entonces. Yo veo una lucha para la libertación de la mujer. Nosotros sabemos que la mujer no tiene chance. La gente siente esto. Como Jenny, ella se somete como objeto, pero en la medida en que ella sigue su trabajo de prostituta ella tiene que asumir la explotación, y en este sentido no puede ser usada porque participa en la explotación. Entonces, yo uso esas dos imágenes de Jenny. En verdad, ella no podría apasionarse. Ella solo pasa a ser usada cuando se apasiona por Jimmy. Entonces ella es, y no es, cosificada. Ella se envolvió, y una prostituta no se puede apasionar. Solamente cuando ella se apasiona, es que ella se siente explotada. Ahora, para mí, Dadá, *Mahagonny* fue una cosa muy importante como actriz y como persona porque me despertó a muchas cosas en mi propia vida que yo bloqueaba. Y ahora soy mucho más feliz.

Pregunta: ¿Puedes contar, con más detalles, cuál fue el proceso de elaboración de la *Mahagonny* de ustedes?

Rosset: Nos gustó *Mahagonny* también porque el texto era más como un guión. Es decir, estábamos queriendo más así un tipo de "show". Entonces, justamente este guión propiciaba esto. Porque al mismo tiempo que tenía una estructura muy fuerte, muy bien acabada, muy bien elaborada—esa estructura de *rounds*—no era una cosa cerrada, era una cosa abierta. Utilizamos la versión de *Mahagonny Songspiel* como fue recuperada y editada por el inglés David Drew [Universal Edition, 1969], en la cual Drew recupera las indicaciones de la elaboración escénica de Brecht y Weill para el festival de Baden-Baden.

Entonces, a partir de este guión, más algunas cosas de la ópera, ya la *Gran Mahagonny*, hicimos un guión, utilizando también una adaptación hecha por el Berliner Ensemble, que presentó el espectáculo en el '76. Hice una tercera cosa a partir de estos tres puntos. Nuestra relación con el texto fue básicamente esto. Tradujimos, pero no cambiamos mucho, usamos la misma estructura. Usamos el guión para hacer un Brecht personal, a partir de nuestros defectos, de nuestras cualidades, de nuestras idiosincrasias. Porque este espectáculo está más estructurado sobre un *performance* que sobre personajes. De verdad, los personajes no son muy desarrollados; es más un espectáculo para "showmen" y para "show-women" que para personajes psicológicos. Era exactamente lo que nosotros queríamos en la época. Más tipo revista. La propia visualidad de la obra es muy apoyada en eso: vestuario de "showmen." La propia economía de recursos, también, que ni tenemos escenario, sólo una luna de papel, muy brechtiano el símbolo. No

hay personaje principal, sino que es un espectáculo de protagonistas en el sentido que todo el mundo está en escena el tiempo entero. Pero al mismo tiempo, las individualidades están presentes. Es muy a partir de las personas que hicimos el espectáculo, a partir de las caras de las personas, de las idiosincrasias . . .

Nosotros vemos *Mahagonny* como un trabajo en elaboración . . . siempre en elaboración. La versión que presentamos aquí y en São Paulo es la tercera versión del espectáculo, muy diferente de la primera. Estamos ya dos años con la pieza. Pero, en las elaboraciones hay muchas variables, desde los elementos empíricos de los ensayos, las cosas que ocurren en la improvisación, hasta las cosas previamente estructuradas, rigurosas. Al mismo tiempo, existe un margen para el público del espectáculo, que varía mucho, momentos de improvisación, que varía día a día, país a país. Por ejemplo, aquí sucedió que la escena del baile fue mucho menos que en, por ejemplo, Caracas, dónde fue una verdadera fiesta la escena del baile. Existe este espacio. El espectáculo tiene un lenguaje así riguroso de *rounds*, de marcaciones más o menos diseñadas, pero también tiene una apertura muy grande por el juego. Y este juego es incorporado en las mismas discusiones que la obra provoca. Tiene un sentido: es como extender *Mahagonny* un poco más adelante de la cuarta pared. Es decir, un poco crear una *Mahagonny* dentro de la metáfora—que del modo que *Mahagonny* es creado en las arenas ficticias del desierto, en las arenas móviles del desierto, nosotros creamos una *Mahagonny* en el aquí y ahora, en ese momento. Con pocos elementos, es decir, dentro de la metáfora artística, dentro del juego simbólico, incorporando esta discusión con el público.

Pregunta: Entonces, ¿esta apertura con el público figura como elemento importantísimo en lo que es un “Brecht tropical?”

Rosset: Yo creo que de verdad, en el fondo, estamos siendo super-fieles al espíritu del joven Brecht, porque toda la formación de Brecht, en la década del 20, era así. Para decir la verdad, yo creo que es en Brasil donde se ha montado mejor a Brecht. Montajes como los del Teatro Oficina, de Pão e Circo. Yo sentí aquí, aun en las discusiones, una cosa muy maniqueísta. Es decir, por un lado hay los hispanoamericanos sólo tomando el lado político de Brecht y, por otro lado, los americanos haciéndolo muy de cuaderno. Yo creo que es en Brasil—y no hablo esto por causa de mi espectáculo, porque Brecht ya fue muy montado en Brasil—que se consigue hacer una síntesis de forma dialéctica. Se consigue unir el lado teórico al humor de Brecht, a la sensualidad, que es una cosa que muchas veces no sucede. Lo que se encuentra, muy a menudo, es sólo el lado político, teórico, y no se consigue construir una política escénica así. En Brasil, no tenemos el peso académico, en el mal sentido, de una tradición de cómo hacer Brecht, y así tenemos una ventaja porque esto da una libertad que se aproxima al énfasis, el “pique”

anárquico del joven Brecht en toda su sensualidad. Y es en este sentido que es un Brecht tropical; es decir, un Brecht *made in Brazil*. *Made in Brazil* en el sentido que no es una copia del Brecht Modell-Buch del Berliner Ensemble, y no es una copia de la estética norteamericana de hacer Brecht. Es un Brecht *made in Brazil*, con los defectos y con las cualidades que tenemos, pero es *made in Brazil*. Y creo que es esto lo que se chocó aquí.

III—The Use of Brechtian Techniques in the Process of Creating and Staging a Play, Part II

Moderator: Beatriz Rizk

Participants: Members of La Candelaria (Colombia)

B. Rizk: Fundado en 1966, por varios teatristas entre ellos Santiago García, que ha estado al frente de la dirección del grupo desde sus comienzos, La Candelaria se propuso la creación de un repertorio nacional que fuera reflejando una problemática propia vista desde la perspectiva de la gran mayoría, del pueblo. Objetivo que ha cumplido cabalmente a través de una valiosa como constante trayectoria que los ha puesto en un primer plano de la producción teatral nacional, y les ha brindado el reconocimiento de que gozan hoy en día dentro y fuera del país. Entre los trabajos más representativos de su repertorio, podemos señalar obras como *La Ciudad dorada* (1972) sobre la migración campesina que día a día invade los suburbios de las grandes ciudades latinoamericanas, *Guadalupe años sin cuenta* (1976) que trata del período de la “violencia en Colombia”, que comprende los años de 1948 a 1957 aproximadamente, y *Golpe de suerte* (1980) en la que se contempla el problema del narcotráfico en Colombia.

En cuanto a la presencia de Brecht en el aspecto formativo del grupo, quizás nos es lícito rememorar aquí que Santiago García fue una de los primeros directores, si no el primero, en montar obras del autor/director alemán en el país. En 1963 dirige *Un hombre es un hombre* con el grupo El Buho, al que estaba vinculado en ese momento, y en 1965 monta *Galileo Galilei* en el ámbito de la Universidad Nacional con un elenco de más de 70 actores, creando un espectáculo sin precedentes en el país que todavía se recuerda como uno de los eventos más importantes de la época. Evento que, de paso, contribuyó a colocar a Brecht a la vanguardia del movimiento teatral del Nuevo Teatro que en ese entonces estaba todavía en proceso de gestación. Como era también de esperarse, dado el carácter contestatario de la obra de Brecht y sus aparentes analogías con la realidad circundante, se suscitaron agudas controversias y discusiones en los círculos “intelectuales” oficialistas sobre si se debía o no “novelear” con Brecht. (Algunos llegaron a la conclusión de que era mejor prescindir de él puesto que en Colombia ni “se hablaba alemán ni tampoco se había visto el trabajo del Berliner Ensem-

ble.”) El caso es que Brecht no sólo pasó a ser un nombre absolutamente familiar en el medio teatral colombiano—un crítico de aquella época llegó a señalar que “hablar de teatro político era hablar de Brecht”—, sino un compañero inseparable, punto de referencia obligatorio a través de su teoría y práctica, en la realización, investigación, improvisación y montaje de casi todas las obras que conforman el Nuevo Teatro. También, a raíz de aquel primer *Galilei*, se realizaron talleres en los que se empezaron a analizar los aportes teóricos de Brecht en función a su posible aplicación a una dramaturgia nacional. Esta práctica no ha cesado en el medio colombiano.

Los miembros del grupo La Candelaria van a montar una escena de *Guadalupe años sin cuenta* en la que llevan a la práctica algunos de los elementos formales asociados con el Teatro Epico con el fin de evitar la identificación del espectador con los protagonistas al lograr una efectiva violación de la ilusión teatral, e inducirlo asimismo a un análisis de las contradicciones que están en la base de la estructura de la sociedad que se está representando.

Santiago García: Bueno, entonces para explicarles un poco de que se trata y dónde está ubicada la escena que vamos a representar de *Guadalupe años sin cuenta*, para aquellos que no han visto la obra. Esta obra la hicimos basándonos en testimonios, en reportajes de personas que participaron en hechos que ocurrieron en nuestro país entre 1950 y 1957. Una época que históricamente en Colombia se llama “la época de la violencia” y que le costó al país más de 300,000 muertos. La mayoría de ellos campesinos, niños, mujeres; personas que en realidad no tenían mucho que ver con el conflicto aparente. Esta obra fue la tercera obra de creación colectiva que hizo el grupo.

Fuimos a los Llanos Orientales, la región en donde suceden los acontecimientos, invitados para un Festival y ahí empezamos a conocer que era lo que había sucedido a través de la música. En esta región la música popular es el corrido llanero que se toca con un arpa, un cuatro que es un instrumento pequeño, y unas maracas. Y en esa música se va registrando la memoria del pueblo; ahí va quedando narrado en corridos lo que ha sucedido. Invitados, pues, a un Festival de Cultura y de Corte empezamos a oír muchos corridos que hablaban de esos acontecimientos de 1950 y especialmente de una figura muy importante: Guadalupe Salcedo. El fue el líder de la revuelta liberal que hubo en esa época donde llegó un momento en que había 20,000 hombres en armas y un conflicto muy grave entre el pueblo armado, el gobierno y el ejército, esas tres instituciones. Nos interesó mucho el hecho de que en la música popular de las calles quedara una memoria perdida en los libros y en los periódicos y entonces empezamos a investigar que era lo que había sucedido y a ver si de esto podíamos hacer una obra de teatro. Nos encontramos con un escritor, el investigador Arturo

Alape, que había recogido testimonios en grabadoras de algunos de los líderes de la revuelta especialmente de uno de los jefes que se llamaba "Veneno," un compañero Murillo, compañero de Guadalupe Salcedo.

De todo este relato logramos construir una obra muy brechtiana porque era lo que más nos facilitaba para construirla; o sea, una serie de escenas que daban cuenta de episodios que para nosotros eran importantes de lo sucedido en estos siete años. Escenas que estaban partidas por música, por corridos, donde se comentan lo que pasó y lo que va a pasar. En general, la fábula cuenta la historia de una revuelta popular que inicialmente aparece como una revuelta del Partido Liberal contra el partido Conservador, que era el partido que estaba en el gobierno. Pero que, poco a poco, esta revuelta en una primera instancia de tipo político tradicional de los dos partidos tradicionales, se va transformando en una revuelta popular. Ya no es el Partido Liberal contra el Partido Conservador sino el pueblo contra la clase dominante; o sea, se pierde un aparente sentido político y se entra a otro. Hay un cambio de estructuras en la revuelta y cuando eso sucede ya el Partido Liberal, claro, saca la mano del problema y ven, ya no un enfrentamiento de liberales contra conservadores, sino del pueblo contra instituciones. Ahí, entonces, viene el golpe de estado y el ejército se toma el poder, un general se toma el poder. Los guerrilleros entran a una amnistía porque ya no están peleando contra el Partido Conservador, que era su enemigo, sino contra el ejército y empieza a amnistiarse. Viene un período de desarme de más de 20,000 hombres y después el ejército, ya en el gobierno, empieza lentamente a matar a todos los campesinos que se habían entregado y especialmente al cabecilla principal que es Guadalupe Salcedo. Esa es la historia en general: empieza con una reconstrucción de la muerte de Guadalupe en 1957, después se cuenta a través de cuadros por qué fue traicionado y asesinado ese líder y al final aparece la versión popular de cómo fue muerto Guadalupe Salcedo.

Bien, esto entonces nosotros no lo podíamos contar, es decir esta historia, con los elementos que nos entregaban, con los documentos oficiales; o sea, la historia del Presidente de la República, la historia de Guadalupe Salcedo, de los generales, la historia de las personas que aparecían como los protagonistas de la historia de nuestro país. Así que resolvimos, poco a poco, a través de los reportajes precisamente de estos campesinos, de los verdaderos protagonistas, contar la historia desde el punto de vista popular; es decir, de una crónica del pueblo de lo que pasó pero desde su punto de vista. En la cual historia los protagonistas de esa historia política del país fueran las personas anónimas, las personas comunes y corrientes: los campesinos comunes y corrientes, los soldados comunes y corrientes, los sargentos, cuando mucho los tenientes, y hasta ahí llegamos, y algunas figuras políticas que funcionaban un poco anónimamente ya de los estamentos políticos.

Bien, vamos a hacer una escena que dura unos cinco minutos en la cual un soldado recién reclutado tiene que obedecer órdenes para encarcelar, reprimir, a un campesino que todavía no ha entrado en la revuelta pero que ha sido apresado porque es sencillamente liberal; porque no tiene los papeles que lo acreditaban para las votaciones del país. Un asunto ahí bastante confuso político. Todas estas cosas políticas eran muy difíciles de resolver porque había que hablarlas así como estoy haciendo yo en este momento. Entonces resolvimos mejor hacer estas escenas que con su cotidianeidad, su carácter de tipo intrascendente casi podían dar cuenta de lo trascendente. Vamos a hacer la escena y después vamos a hacer, entre nosotros los actores y los que participamos en el montaje, un análisis de esos elementos brechtianos que introdujimos en la obra. Muchos de ellos intuitivos, otros teóricamente pensados, porque necesitábamos pensar mucho. Sí, para después no caer en manos de los abogados (risas del público). Para que la antropofagia de Brecht después no se nos volviera una defecación sino un vómito (más risas). Entonces vamos a tratar de analizar nosotros mismos lo que hicimos.

Como esta escena de cinco minutos está tratada el resto de la obra, el contexto general. También el hecho de que en sí podamos presentar una escena de cinco minutos y, en cierta medida, tenga una unidad, eso también es un poco lo que vamos a ver. Es decir, que cada uno de los segmentos de la fábula tuviera su personalidad, su unidad, y un poco se pueda ver casi como una pequeñísima obra de teatro que va a formar parte de una unidad mucho más grande que es la obra.

Bien hasta ahí fue la charla. Ahora empieza la producción. El compañero César Badillo hace el papel de un soldado, el soldado Robledo, recién reclutado. Está con un uniforme militar y eso que tiene ahí en la mano es un fusil. Y el compañero Francisco Martínez es un campesino, Jerónimo Zambrano, que acaba de ser apresado por el ejército y va a ser procesado, no se sabe bien por qué. Está ahí arrodillado. Después va a entrar el compañero Alvaro Rodríguez que es el sargento Velandia, jefe aquí del compañero soldado. Y allá tres músicos que después de la escena van a comentar musicalmente ésto que pasó.

Escena de "Guadalupe años sin cuenta"

[Las acotaciones las hemos sacado de la siguiente edición: *Guadalupe años sin cuenta*. Bogotá: Ediciones Alcaravan, 1977]

Jerónimo: ¡Soldado! Oiga soldado, ¿me permite hablarle una palabra? ¿Me escucha? (*El soldado no responde. Apenas se dibuja un pequeño cambio en su rostro*) Oiga soldado, ¿qué me van a hacer? ¿Me lo puede decir? (*El soldado, aún sin responder, con el rabo del ojo mira al prisionero*) Oiga soldado, ¿qué me van a hacer? ¿Qué hacen con los prisioneros?

Robledo: (Confuso) Yo no se. A veces los matan. Los desaparecen.

Jeronimo: ¿Que me van a matar? ¿Por qué? (*Robledo lo mira*) Si yo no he hecho nada. Solo que me trajeron aquí por la política. Por liberal.

Robledo: Pero mi sargento Velandia dice que por chusmero. Eso dice. Que ustedes tienen alborotado el Llano.

Jeronimo: ¿Por chusmeros? Por liberales.

Robledo: (Su rostro se ha normalizado. Desaparece su actitud hierática. Su cuerpo se hace flexible) Por chusmero.

Jeronimo: (Más en confianza) Oiga soldado, usted me parece que no es de aquí. ¿Hace poco que llegó?

Robledo: ¿Como así? ¿Aquí a los Llanos? Pues dos meses.

Jeronimo: ¿Y de dónde es su persona?

Robledo: Pues . . . del Tolima.

Jeronimo: Se me hacía. Yo también. ¿De que vereda?

Robledo: (Sonrie) Del Limón . . . ¿Conoce?

Jeronimo: Claro, a todos. ¿Y su familia?

Robledo: De los Robledo . . . del Limón.

Jeronimo: Liberales, ¿no?

Robledo: (Mira precavido hacia el lugar por donde salió el sargento) Todos. (*Se acerca a Jerónimo*)

Jeronimo: ¿Y qué hace aquí entonces?

Robledo: Ya lo ve . . . pagando servicio.

Jeronimo: Y usted, siendo liberal. ¿Cómo se aguanta que lo maten a uno por liberal?

Robledo: Lo que pasa es que yo estoy recién entrado.

Jeronimo: Dígame Robledo, si usted es liberal, ¿Por qué no me ayuda? Déjeme escapar esta noche. Ayúdeme hombre. Somos paisanos, me van a matar. Ayúdeme. Déjeme escapar.

Robledo: ¿Cómo se le ocurre, hombre, no ve que despues me joden? (*Mira hacia la puerta*)

Jeronimo: Escapemos los dos entonces a buscar la revolución liberal de los Llanos. Muchos soldados liberales se han pasado a la revolución. Dése cuenta, hasta el capitán Silva lo hizo con cuarenta soldados. (*Pausa*) O déjeme escapar esta noche. Ayúdeme hombre, somos paisanos.

Robledo: Déjeme decirle una cosa. (*Cada vez más cerca al campesino*) Ahora soy soldado. Y como soldado no me puedo meter en política. Eso lo dice mi sargento Velandia. Eso lo dice mi teniente.

Jeronimo: ¡Anímese, hombre! Ayúdeme, déjeme escapar.

Robledo: (*Se arrodilla junto a Jerónimo*) Entienda mi situación.

Jeronimo: Huyamos los dos entonces.

Robledo: A los desertores los fusilan y ahora yo soy soldado. Me gustaría ayudarlo. Pero, qué puedo hacer ¿qué puedo hacer?

Jerónimo: La revolución necesita de esos fusiles que usted carga. Necesita de hombres como usted. Huyamos y busquemos a los hombres de Guadalupe Salcedo. Yo se . . .

(La llegada del sargento Velandia interrumpe la conversación. Robledo vuelve rápidamente a su puesto. El sargento Velandia se detiene y mira al soldado. Luego se dirige hacia Jerónimo).

Sargento Velandia: ¡Le advierto que su padrino no le sirvió para un carajo! Podrá ser dueño de todo el ganado que se le de la gana pero aquí en el ejército la cosa es muy diferente. *(Se acerca lentamente al soldado Robledo. Lo mira inquisidoramente)* ¡Atención, fir . . . , media vuelt . . . media vuel . . . ! Como un relojito, Robledo, como un relojito! Con que me salió cachiporro el soldadito Robledo. Le advierto que no es el primero que me sale con esas ideas. ¡O lo enderezco o se lo lleva el putas! ¡A discreción! ¡Soldado, lléveme ese chusmero al calabozo!

(Robledo se dirige a Jerónimo Zambrano y lo saca mientras empieza a sonar el arpa del corrido de las razones diferentes)

Corrido de las Razones Diferentes: (Ritmo de seis por derecho)

Vamos a contar la historia
de estos dos hombres valientes
que se jugaron la vida
por razones diferentes, ay . . . diferentes.
Joaquín Robledo el soldado
campesino, tolimense,
antes de ser enrolado,
ya tenía bien presente
que si un día era soldado
llegaría a ser teniente, ay . . . teniente.
Ya empieza a tener sorpresas
este muchacho inocente,
ya está en manos del sargento
que le va a lavar la mente.
Y Jerónimo Zambrano
llegó aquí hasta la llanura
venía huyendo del Tolima
de la violencia tan dura.
Logró conseguir trabajo
en el hato de Angosturas, ay . . . de Angosturas.
Cayó por ser liberal
para colmo de amarguras.
Supo que en el Llano o adentro
los hombres en la espesura,

comandados por Guadalupe,
luchaban con gran bravura.

(Fin de la Escena)

García: Entonces aquí durante la música, durante el tiempo que se está tocando la música, acá en el escenario se está cambiando la escenografía para la siguiente escena. De manera que no solamente haya la imagen musical sino que vaya acompañada de la imagen del cambio. Bueno, entonces, vamos nosotros a través de esta escena a decirles algunos de los puntos que consideramos relevantes del aporte que la dramaturgia de Brecht pudo haber influido en esta obra. El punto más fundamental, más importante, es el hecho de que nosotros no quisimos contar esta historia para reproducir lo que había pasado sino que nos propusimos muy conscientemente, claro, reproducir lo que había pasado para eminentemente buscar la problemática de las causas de lo que había pasado y la problemática de las causas del estado de las cosas. Y que eso tuviera evidentemente una relación con el presente que estamos viviendo en este momento en Colombia. Es decir, que la gente no viera esto como una especie de reproducción histórica sino, además de estarla viendo como reproducción histórica, estarla viendo como una reproducción del presente o como una problemática del presente. Y para lograr este propósito obviamente es que nosotros nos apoyamos, ya desde un punto de vista técnico, en trabajar con las contradicciones; las contradicciones de esa situación encarnadas en los personajes. Entonces hay muchas contradicciones aquí en esta escena que nosotros queríamos revelar: contradicciones de los personajes, las contradicciones económicas, sociales y políticas. Muchos elementos de esos que yo quisiera que los compañeros del grupo fueran revelándoles. Los distintos elementos de contradicción que nosotros trabajamos ahí.

Peñuela: [miembro del grupo—tuvo a su cargo cantar el corrido al final de la escena] Siguiendo con el hilo de donde va Santiago. O sea, la propuesta brechtiana, hecha a través de su teoría, de sus obras, de su práctica, y recogida de forma a veces inconsciente a veces consciente por nosotros. La de develar el estado de las cosas, entendiendo en ese orden de ideas a los personajes según además como lo propone Brecht; como el espacio donde confluyen las contradicciones de determinada situación histórica. En ese sentido, entonces, encontramos nosotros en los tres personajes que aparecen, analizamos nosotros, que hay una doble condición de esos personajes. Esa doble condición es la que expresa la contradicción particular y general. Entonces en el caso del soldado Robledo, Joaquín Robledo, él es soldado—aparece inicialmente como soldado—y a través de una serie de gestos que luego tienen que ser, pensamos nosotros, trabajados muy consciente o científicamente. Esa serie de gestos son los que develan

esa doble misión de ese soldado que además de ser soldado, es campesino. Hay, pues, una contradicción ahí en la cual él como personaje se encuentra y muchos personajes de su clase como él en esa época, y en este momento en Colombia y en general, en toda la América Latina. En el caso del campesino, entonces, la contradicción que tiene ahí es la de ser campesino por un lado y por otro lado liberal. Entendiendo lo que es ser liberal en ese momento conflictivo de pelea y de violencia en Colombia pues era un partido policlasista en el cual estaban grandes terratenientes, grandes dirigentes de la burguesía y pueblo como él. Era un partido policlasista y eso era una contradicción que se evidencia ante la situación en la cual el campesino se encuentra, es decir, prisionero. La del sargento, ser militar por un lado y ser apolítico, según dice él en el texto: "el soldado no se debe meter en política". Pero ahí hay una evidente contradicción por un lado. Entonces, analizábamos nosotros, hay un desdoblamiento por medio de los gestos de estos personajes que evidencian su doble condición de ser y su contradicción a través de una situación particular y de una conversación cotidiana, en esos años 50, en una cárcel entre un soldado y un campesino que sirve para mostrar la generalidad de ese conflicto en el cual se encontraba nuestro país sumido en esa época, y que es análoga a la situación en la cual se encuentra nuestro país en este momento.

García: Lo fundamental que nosotros queríamos hacer en la escena era, recurriendo a esos recursos del diálogo muy cotidiano y de personajes ahistóricos—o sea los que no aparecen en los libros de historia como un pobre soldado y un campesino—regar el conflicto general. Ahora, buscamos unos gestos con mucha dificultad dentro de los que el soldado se vaya desbaratando en campesino, después que el sargento lo vaya reconstruyendo como soldado, que sería el gesto general de la escena. Y encontramos que había un gesto que tenía que hacer Badillo, muy importante, que es cuando siendo soldado tiene que reconocer al prisionero como su compañero; o sea, que el soldado de pronto tiene que mirar al campesino y en esa mirada descubrir que es su hermano, del mismo pueblo, de su misma clase y que él tiene que tenerlo prisionero. Ese gesto, entonces, nosotros quisimos volverlo muy significativo, lento. Crear ahí una especie de recurso de efecto de extrañamiento, volviendo muy lento el gesto, que la mirada se vuelva muy significativa en cuanto a que en ese gesto él se refleje, se vea, ya no como soldado sino como el que está ahí también. Pensamos que en ese gesto se podía resumir el gestus de toda la escena; o sea, el gestus del reconocimiento, el reconocimiento del soldado como campesino. Este conflicto es el más vivido dentro de nuestra situación política y social en la que todavía en este momento están luchando en el campo los campesinos contra los soldados que son sus hermanos y que no se reconocen, no se encuentran. Entre los otros elementos que son más o menos obvios dentro

de la dramaturgia brechtiana tenemos el romper la obra con la música; es decir, tener unos segmentos en los cuales la música impida que haya una continuidad dramática que invite inmediatamente al público a la reflexión. Pero, además de eso, que lo meta dentro de un espíritu popular. Que rompa la posibilidad culturalista de la obra con música muy sacada, muy explorada, dentro de la música popular nuestra, que sienta así y que inmediatamente el conflicto se vea de nuevo como un conflicto popular y no como un conflicto cultural. Que invite al placer del teatro de un público que está viendo su propio teatro, sus propios problemas, ahí en la escena.

Badillo: Los elementos con que se buscarían, digamos, el elemento artístico de develar que se utiliza en este caso en la composición del personaje soldado: cómo lentamente el tipo a través de esa mirada, que posiblemente por el nerviosismo no salió bien, se descompone hasta que casi casi como que da a entender, que “como que me voy con él.” Sin embargo, hay un gesto acá del fusil y de la posición que no da a la entrega total del soldado hacia el campesino. Pero que descompone la figura rígida y hierática que tiene un soldado. Entonces eso es como la idea principal, el elemento ése de la mirada. También está el hablado que es muy importante, el dialecto que es el dialecto que se utiliza por allá en una región del Tolima. Entonces eso también es un elemento que ayuda a entender el origen del campesino y del soldado.

García: Que el otro campesino lo reconozca como campesino por ese elemento del lenguaje, del acento regional que tiene el otro. El reconocimiento es recíproco pues el campesino también reconoce al soldado como campesino; o sea, que es un doble juego de reconocimiento. Y cuando entra el sargento reconoce en ese soldado, un soldado que es liberal; o sea, que es revolucionario. Porque en esa época ser liberal, a pesar de ser un partido policlasista, era considerado casi como ser comunista. En 1950, en Colombia, liberal era casi muy parecido a hoy en día ser comunista y por eso entonces se emplea un término muy despectivo de la clase dominante sobre los liberales que era “cachiporro.” “Descubrí que usted es cachiporro pero lo voy a enderezar aunque se lo lleve el putas, lo voy a reconstruir,” le dice el sargento al soldado. Después en la obra, claro, evidentemente lo reconstruye. El campesino también le dice al soldado que el hecho de que él como soldado se vuelva revolucionario no va a ser nada raro porque ya varios soldados, como históricamente sucedió—hasta un capitán—se han pasado a las guerrillas de Guadalupe Salcedo. Es decir eso era muy común. Que un soldado como éste se volviera guerrillero no era una excepción, es decir, podía ser la regla. O sea, era probable que este soldado se volviera guerrillero y se fuera con el otro para las guerrillas de Guadalupe Salcedo.

Rodríguez: Yo creo que hay un dato muy importante como para ayudar a contextualizar un poco la escena y es que este campesino es liberal y

hay otro señor, el padrino, que es liberal pero que es terrateniente, que en un momento apoyó las guerrillas liberales pero después reculó y comenzó ya a defender sus intereses particulares. Ahora hay aquí un problema de clase muy tenaz pues este señor es como la protección que él tiene ante el jefe, que intenta ayudarlo a salir pero está libre y éste por el hecho de ser campesino liberal sí está detenido.

García: Bueno, quisieramos volver a pasar la escena para que se pueda leer ya desde este punto de vista que estamos proponiendo, desde este punto de vista de lectura y ahí sí, entonces, abrir un debate sobre esta escena con todos ustedes. Como dura muy corto tiempo perfectamente se puede volver a pasar. Todos los problemas así de errores que pueda haber en la actuación se pueden disculpar porque las condiciones no son exactamente condiciones teatrales. Lo que está muy bien para nosotros. El hecho de que no haya reflectores, escenografía, y todas esas cosas, en cierta medida nos ayuda en este experimento. [La escena se repite y a continuación se pide la intervención del público con el ánimo de establecer un diálogo abierto.]

Unidentified: En esta escena que acabamos de ver, yo creo que el momento de acción dramática más fuerte es el momento en que se produce el reconocimiento. Yo quisiera que desarrollaran un poco si este reconocimiento lo han tratado en forma aristotélica o lo han tratado en forma brechtiana. Yo creo que sigue una línea aristotélica. El reconocimiento tiene dos finalidades: puede ser en beneficio del personaje o puede ser que se vuelve en contra del personaje. En este caso puede ser que se vuelve en contra del personaje.

García: Bueno, nosotros consideramos lo aristotélico como una estructura dramática en la cual lo fundamental es que las tres unidades propuestas en la tragedia, según Aristóteles la unidad de acción, unidad de tiempo y unidad de espacio, estén muy bien engranadas en la fábula o sea en la concatenación de las acciones. Eso sería, digamos, una estructura aristotélica. En contra de ese tipo de estructura vendría la estructura épica en la cual se rompen esas tres unidades a propósito. Se rompe la unidad de tiempo y entonces ya no se trata de acciones dramáticas que tengan una reducción en ese tiempo para que la representación parezca en su totalidad, como si en ese momento estuviera sucediendo, es decir, se le quita inmediatamente su capacidad histórica, deja de ser una narración, la estructura dramática aristotélica. En cambio, en este caso es ante todo una narración porque se rompe esa unidad tan importante que es la unidad de tiempo. Se rompe la otra unidad que es la unidad de espacio; o sea, la acción está sucediendo en distintos espacios aunque cada unidad, digamos como en este caso, sea en un solo espacio. En esta pequeña escena obviamente hay unidad de espacio. Pero al mismo tiempo se está rompiendo de ese espacio porque la escena que viene es en otro lugar muy diferente y en un lapso más

avanzado en cuanto al tiempo. Y lo mismo sucede con la unidad de acción. Por ejemplo, esta acción, esta situación, está rota por la canción. Y según Aristóteles esto sería un delito para una estructura dramática. En ese sentido es que nosotros no consideramos esta obra como una estructura aristotélica.

Ahora en cuanto al reconocimiento que, según Aristóteles, en la tragedia es un elemento muy importante porque es el que desencadena el instante más importante de la intriga—o sea, el reconocimiento de Edipo, de su madre, como su amante—es el momento de dramatismo que desencadena la tragedia. En este caso ese elemento de reconocimiento está rebajado a seres muy comunes y corrientes. O sea, el hecho de que un campesino como soldado se reconozca en otro campesino no es un instante dramático trágico, como en el caso de Edipo. No va a desencadenar una tragedia porque es de unos personajes muy cotidianos que no cabrían ahí. El reconocimiento de Electra a Orestes es un reconocimiento que en ese momento de la estructura sí desencadena una tremenda tragedia. Aquí no, es un momento de una cotidianeidad que no tiene esos mismos términos. Es decir, es precisamente rebajar esos términos al nivel popular, volver los elementos clásicos que estuvieron siempre al servicio de los reyes, de personajes muy importantes, volverlos y ponerlos al servicio de personajes de esta nueva clase que está apareciendo que es la clase trabajadora que invade la escena. En ese sentido es que, digamos, nosotros haríamos el reconocimiento. Pero, claro, la escena individualmente, obviamente que tiene las tres unidades: la unidad de tiempo, la unidad de acción y la unidad de espacio. Pero el conjunto no, que es lo que importa o sea la fábula, la totalidad.

Unidentified: En cuanto a la música que se usa para romper la unidad, realmente la rompe?

García: Sí, en ese momento sí. Hicimos la obra así conservando la independencia de lo que era la acción escénica con su situación específica y con una especie de unidad que tiene su planteamiento, su conflicto central y su desarrollo y su final como una unidad en sí en cuanto a escena teatral: su independencia. Y la música viene, una vez que se cierra ese ciclo de esa situación, la música viene a explicar lo que pasó pero con una independencia inclusive escénicamente. Desde el punto de vista proxémico la música está en otra parte y va a explicar lo que pasó. No está mezclada a la acción dramática. Tiene su independencia y tiene también una independencia como función. Es una función explicativa, una función llamémosla didáctica pero al mismo tiempo que tiene esa función un poco desgraciada de tener que explicar, al mismo tiempo incluye dentro de la obra el espíritu popular. Tiene el sentido de incrustar la obra dentro de una lectura popular que es lo que le da, digamos, el sabor popular al relato.

Unidentified: Diría usted que es un elemento brechtiano la utilización de esa música?

Santiago García: Yo creo que sí.

Unidentified: Entonces lleva un paralelismo con el coro griego y no creo que eso sea un invento de Brecht. Creo que lo único que ha hecho es reelaborar un elemento de nuevo: el coro trágico o sea que creo que Brecht realmente lo único que ha hecho es reelaborar una serie de elementos del teatro clásico que utilizado por la burguesía se perdió, no?

García: Nosotros no tenemos ninguna pretensión de estar inventando nada y claro al tomar cosas de Brecht vemos muy bien que no inventa nada sino que retoma elementos del teatro Shakespereano e inclusive del teatro Noh japonés, del teatro chino y los pone a funcionar en otro sentido. En el sentido de un teatro que sea capaz de mostrarle al público, de una manera artística, las causas del estado de las cosas y que el público entre a participar muy fuertemente dentro de este espectáculo, ¿no? De un espectáculo de este tipo. Entonces, claro, aunque la música está funcionando como la música de un coro griego—el mismo oficio que podría tener el coro griego como comentador—al mismo tiempo esa música impide una cosa muy importante, impide que el suspenso, que la intriga, se vuelva el motor fundamental de la acción. O sea al final de ese cuadro el público no se va a preguntar: “Bueno, ¿y qué le irá a pasar a ese soldado? ¿Se irá a entregar al teniente o no se irá a entregar al teniente? ¿Qué le irá a pasar a ese pobre campesino, lo irán a matar o no lo irán a matar?” Todas esas preguntas que en un teatro de intrigas sí serían las que harían que la dinámica de la obra siguiera para adelante. Ya son otras preguntas las que se hace el público al ver esto. Se le da la vuelta a la intriga. La intriga ya no es la obvia de una estructura dramática, sino la intriga es sobre el mecanismo que los hombres han inventado para regirse, para tener relaciones los unos a los otros. La intriga es el develar lo profundo de ese mecanismo social y político.

Unidentified: Ustedes han presentado esta obra en los Llanos Orientales, es decir, ante un público que conocía la historia: ¿Cómo funciona el texto a diferencia de como puede funcionar hoy?

García: Pues en Colombia cuando presentamos esta obra, en esta escena siempre el público se ríe mucho. Aquí ya vista así tan objetivamente esta participación del público tiene que romperse, claro, porque está descontextualizada del resto de la obra y del contexto social y político del país. Pero esta es una escena eminentemente cómica, satírica, en la que cada respuesta del soldado produce inmediatamente risa en el público, siempre, en más de mil funciones. Y en donde más respuesta de ese elemento humorístico, un poco negro el humor pero humor, encontramos es precisamente en funciones que hicimos después, cuando tuvimos hecha toda la obra, en funciones que hicimos allá en los Llanos Orientales. La obra la llevamos a Villavicencio, que es la capital de la región, a Granada, que es una ciudad donde hay muchos ex-combatientes de esa época, y hace poco,

hace dos meses, tuvimos una experiencia realmente conmovedora, y fue que fuimos invitados a un pueblito, que queda en el centro de esa vasta región de Colombia, que se llama Primavera. Pueblo recientemente fundado, fundado hace 14 años. Nos invitó el juez del pueblo. El consiguió un avión para llevarnos allá porque allá se llega o en un avión especial que aterriza ahí en un potrero o en bus—el viaje dura 14 horas desde la capital del Llano hasta ahí. Y en ese pueblito de 15,000 habitantes, lo interesante era que la mayoría de los habitantes eran viejos, eran ex-guerrilleros de esa época. Y siendo un pueblo pequeñito tuvimos que dar la obra tres veces, tanta era la gente que iba. La dimos en un escuela un poco ahí al aire libre. En cada función habían como 500 espectadores y en su mayoría eran gente que había sido partícipe de esos acontecimientos.

Afortunadamente nos acompañó en esa expedición un equipo de periodistas, de la televisión, que hicieron muchas entrevistas a personas que vieron la obra y ahí quedó un testimonio muy conmovedor porque eran las personas que habían vivido esto y que después de 30 años veían eso que para ellos habían sido acontecimientos de su vida personal, una gesta un poco olvidada. Ellos habían fundado este pueblo para huir como último refugio en el último rincón del mundo y después de 30 años de seguir huyendo les llegaba historizada, teatralizada, su realidad. Las impresiones que daban, las respuestas que daban a las preguntas de los reporteros, eran realmente muy interesantes. Las más interesantes fueron las de un ciego que, claro, no vio la obra pero la sintió. Había perdido la vista. Había sido uno de los comandantes de Guadalupe Salcedo, luchó con él. Y decía que aunque él no había visto la obra, que él había sentido la obra como una gran cantidad de alfileres que se clavaban en su cuerpo y que le recordaban momentos muy tremendos que había vivido pero también momentos muy alegres y que era lo que más lo había entusiasmado. O sea, el hecho de que no solamente había revivido en él la tragedia de hace 30 años sino momentos de gran felicidad y que todas esas sensaciones, su manera de describirla, era como alfileres que se le clavaban en todo el cuerpo. Y viejitas que habían estado allá. La novia que había tenido Guadalupe Salcedo que en esa época tenía 14 años y que, poco a poco, a medida que fuimos haciendo las entrevistas pues apareció. Como uno de los personajes que es una niñita de 14 años que intuitivamente nosotros habíamos sacado en la obra porque ninguno de los personajes que hicimos eran personajes históricos: ni Zambrano, ni el soldado éste, ni el sargento; todos son inventados. Pero, sin embargo, ahí está el misterio de estas cosas; ellos se reconocían ahí en la escena como los personajes. Por ejemplo, esta niña de 14 años que había sido amante de Guadalupe Salcedo y que después nos estuvo tocando unas canciones que cantaba él porque decía que era un magnífico cantante que tocaba muy bien la bandola.

Para nosotros, hace dos meses, esa visita, después de 9 años de haber estado dando esta obra quizás ha sido uno de los momentos más emocionantes de relación con el público. Momentos en que uno encuentra la validez de estar haciendo este arte, la profundidad con que se debe encarar. Inclusive hace poco hablábamos de esa visita de tres o cuatro días a ese pueblito, que se llamaba Primavera, para nosotros era casi una experiencia vital más profunda que la visita aquí a Nueva York.

Patricia Ariza (miembro del grupo): Hay una cosa, que es un poco anecdótica pero yo creo que es importante como fenómeno sociológico, digámoslo así, también que pasó en ese lugar. Porque de todas maneras el teatro es una convención, sea convención de espectáculo del teatro. Entonces para los campesinos guerrilleros de ese lugar, ellos no tienen el sentido del espectáculo; o sea, allí se celebran por ejemplo, unas fiestas anuales en las que no hay ningún escenario. La gente toca la música llanera en cualquier parte, en cualquier esquina, y se reúnen alrededor 40 o 50 personas. Pero no hay esa jerarquización del espectáculo. Entonces cuando nosotros presentamos allá esa obra, cuando terminó, pues nosotros nos quedamos detrás de las cortinas y la gente no aplaudió. Entonces a nosotros nos produjo una sensación muy incómoda, pensamos que nos les había gustado, y entonces no nos atrevíamos a salir. Estábamos como escondidos porque era una cosa muy impresionante pero no se iban. Se empezó a hacer un silencio eterno. Y ellos no se iban. Y entonces nosotros salimos. Claro ellos nos seguían mirando y se seguían reconociendo en nosotros como si nosotros siguiéramos siendo los personajes. Se estableció otro código diferente al que nosotros conocemos y al que utilizamos en la relación que tenemos con el público en el lugar donde nos presentamos, que es fundamentalmente la capital o las ciudades más importantes del país.

Aquí, por el contrario, se creo una relación de otro tipo que es uno de los elementos para el grupo a investigar, porque de todas maneras ahí había una empatía. Pero, al mismo tiempo, no era empatía, era una cosa muy compleja la relación que se produjo con ese tipo de público. Incluso como que nosotros nos acercábamos a los espectadores y los espectadores se retiraban de nosotros, o sea, no podían ver ya la persona, no al personaje, sino a la persona. Entonces se producía una relación como muy extraña y sólo se empezó a romper cuando empezamos a hablar con ellos, con los periodistas que empezaron a hacer ese diálogo. Y al final no se iban. Y nosotros terminamos de empacar y seguimos ahí durante muchísimo rato, más de una hora, hora y media. Y nadie se iba. Y se quedaban ahí como si quisieran volver a aprehender esa parte de vida que les pertenecía a ellos. Hasta que nos fuimos nosotros.

Otra relación que tuvimos, otra vez, en la época del gobierno ante-

rior, de Turbay, en la región de los Llanos fue que entró el ejército al espectáculo y se presentó ahí un conflicto . . .

García: No nos querían dejar dar la obra y entonces se presentó el ejército y se puso frente al teatro. Nos habían invitado unos estudiantes en Villavicencio pero al fin llegó el alcalde e iba a haber una revuelta popular ahí y al fin dejaron dar la obra. Entonces entró todo el público y los militares se pusieron todos así alrededor del público.

Ariza: Y entonces empezó a transcurrir la obra. Todos los militares eran más o menos como el soldado de la obra, muy jóvenes porque eran reclutas, tenían 18 o 17 años, casi unos niños. Y entonces empezaron muy compuestos, muy en posición militar y, poco a poco, empezaron a descomponerse: se empezaron a quitar el sombrero, se sentaron el suelo y empezaron a reirse. Cuando en la mitad de la obra entró el sargento y pegó un grito, los hizo salir a todos. La obra invirtió el orden de los que estaban rodeando al público. Nosotros lamentamos mucho que los hubieran sacado. Lamentamos mucho que hubieran entrado pero, después, lamentamos mucho que los hubieran sacado.

IV—Brecht and the Actor in Latin America

Moderator: Judith Weiss

Participants: Arturo Fleitas, Cesar Campodonico and Jose Vasquez (*El Galpón, Uruguay*)

J. Weiss: Out of deference to those here who do not speak Spanish, I should introduce this in English first. Three members of the group El Galpón have agreed to this roundtable discussion on Brechtian technique in acting as the Galpón has developed it in their experience in Uruguay and in Mexico. Arturo Fleitas is the director of El Galpón and also an actor in the group. The head of El Galpón, of course, is Atahualpa del Cioppo, its founder, who is currently in Argentina preparing the return from exile of El Galpón to Uruguay next month. Arturo and César have been with the group since it was founded in 1949.

A. FLEITAS: Esta especie de locura que son los festivales latinoamericanos son, creo yo, un reflejo de lo que es Latinoamérica y su teatro. Yo pienso personalmente que es un teatro—sobre todo el que coincidimos en denominar Nuevo Teatro—que ya nació siendo brechtiano. Son teatros de muy profunda condición nacional, y sin embargo es un teatro que está llegando a la universalidad precisamente por esta característica tan marcadamente nacional. Decía yo que es un teatro que nació con tendencias brechtianas, porque, como dice nuestro maestro Atahualpa del Cioppo, a nosotros que se nos llama el teatro brechtiano de Latinoamérica nos ha

ocurrido que estábamos haciendo Brecht sin saberlo. Sucede que montábamos obras con características brechtianas y nuestra manera de actuar se aproximaba a la manera del actor épico, de modo que cuando nos encontramos con la teoría de Bertolt Brecht, allá por los años 58–59, que recién llegó al Uruguay así, con cierta fuerza, nos sentimos muy bien, muy felices, y nos sentimos muy inteligentes. Nos sentíamos así, tan inteligentes, que en otras partes de Latinoamérica estaban haciendo un teatro más avanzado que nosotros y ni siquiera nos dábamos cuenta. Y así nos pegamos la gran sorpresa de descubrir alguna vez que en Colombia se estaban haciendo cosas magníficas, en Venezuela, y en otros países.

Esto habla mucho del aislamiento en que nos han tenido por muchos años, un aislamiento que en una parte de Latinoamérica, sobre todo al Cono Sur, lo ha llevado al teatro a mirar mucho a Europa. El exilio, en medio de la tragedia que ha significado, sin embargo ha tenido esta virtud: nos ha latinoamericanizado a un nivel muy dramático. Y así fuimos descubriendo que en toda Latinoamérica se hacía también Brecht sin saberlo.

En una crítica que creo que salió en el *New York Times*, se dice algo así como que el montaje, la actuación de *Mahagonny* son lo contrario de lo que Brecht hubiera querido hacer. Nosotros en El Galpón, sin embargo, pensamos que si Brecht viviera vería con mucha felicidad este espectáculo. Yo creo que el viejito Brecht bailarían y subiría al escenario a bailar con las bellezas brasileñas que están ahí, porque (*Cacá Rosset, director de Ornitorrinco, hace un gesto desde el público*), ah, Cacá me ofrece el cheque—A la salida (*risas*), nada, realmente, sería mejor que ejemplificar con algo lo que es la actuación brechtiana, porque nada hay más extrañante, es decir, raro, inaudito, que meterse a una sala teatral a ver una obra con la seriedad con que se ve el teatro siempre, y encontrarse con una muchacha excesivamente maquillada, semidesnuda, sirviendo *cachaça*. Nada hay más extraño que eso en el teatro. Desde ese primer momento en que uno entra, ya se sitúa en una situación—valga la redundancia—extraña. Entra en un mundo de sorpresas. Se le adelanta con este hecho inaudito de la muchacha sirviendo *cachaça*.

La virtud de este espectáculo, creemos nosotros, es que esta sorpresa se va repitiendo como una constante, continuamente, en cada momento del espectáculo, y ésta es precisamente una de las características del teatro de Brecht y de la actuación de tipo épico: producir sorpresa. Para eso, naturalmente, es obligatorio que el director y los actores mismos sean capaces de sorprenderse desde el primer momento en que leen la obra y de sorprenderse en cada función. No sé lo que les pasará a los compañeros brasileños, pero nosotros creemos que les pasa eso.

Hay una cuestión muy importante que tenemos que hablar sobre la actuación brechtiana, y que tiene mucho que ver con el teatro de creación

colectiva de Colombia. Es el hecho de que el actor no se situó de antemano ya en el personaje y en la crítica del personaje, sino que el actor de este tipo investigue y vaya construyendo el personaje por pedacitos. Estos pedacitos son contruidos de acuerdo a los productos de la investigación que el equipo hace. Para el actor tradicional, esto es muy desubicante, lo hace perder pie, porque el actor tradicional trata siempre de conseguir los máximos resultados en el plazo más breve posible, y se resta a sí mismo la posibilidad de descubrir las facetas contradictorias del personaje. Y, lo que es más dramático, le quita al público el placer de ir descubriendo el personaje faceta por faceta.

Resulta, por tanto de esto, que no se construyen personajes; uno viene a representar una idea preconcebida, restándole vida a ese personaje, y presentándolo ya totalmente terminado. El actor de tipo épico tiene que entrar al personaje con muchas dudas. Yo diría que lo principal es precisamente llegar al personaje a través de las dudas. Y cuando tiene certezas muy fuertes, tiene la obligación de producirse dudas. Esa es la única manera de descubrir nuevas facetas. Por ejemplo, para seguir con los personajes de *Mahagonny*: el personaje que hace la muchacha, Dada, puede ser así, pero puede ser también todo lo contrario, y puede ser además de mil maneras. Esas posibles mil maneras tienen que ser investigadas por el actor y el director, y el producto ser una síntesis de las contradicciones de esas mil maneras de representar el personaje. Eso es lo que le da mucha riqueza porque, aunque parezca contradictorio, si el actor se aproxima al personaje con muchas dudas, llega sin embargo al momento de la representación ya con esas dudas solucionadas y entra al escenario con mucha seguridad y mucho "relax", condición indispensable también para un actor brechtiano. Dice Brecht que un actor tiene que representar su personaje con la misma actitud displicente, blanda, tranquila, con que un conductor experimentado maneja su coche. Nada hay más contrario a un actor de tipo épico que el actor tenso y nervioso. Para eso es necesario, naturalmente, trabajar mucho en los ensayos, y sobre todo convencernos, los actores, de que los ensayos están hechos para estar mal, para equivocarse, porque si no nos equivocamos en los ensayos, seguramente nos vamos a equivocar en la representación.

Bueno, sirvan estas cosas como introducción, porque llegó ahora el introductor oficial, César Campodónico, que ha dirigido algunas obras de Brecht y ha actuado en varias, y tiene el mérito y la gran carga de ser uno de los fundadores del Galpón. Nos extrañamos de que todavía no haya renunciado.

C. *Campodónico*: Yo corro el riesgo de convertirme en el historiador de El Galpón. En el año 1956, yo estaba en Italia, becado, y un compañero del Galpón me escribió una carta en que me dijo: "Tú que estás en Europa, a ver

si encuentras alguna obra de un tal Brecht, que dicen que escribe muy bien. Yo tenía la idea que el teatro alemán era una cosa muy pesada, así que me olvidé casi de nombre. Pero en cambio sí tenía mucho respeto por el Piccolo Teatro di Milano.

En esos días supe que el Piccolo Teatro estrenaba la *Opera de dos centavos* y que al estreno iba Brecht. Lamentablemente, era joven y no tenía dinero. El estreno era en Milan y yo vivía en Roma, así que nunca conocí a Brecht. Al poco tiempo, el Piccolo llegó a Roma con la *Opera* y yo quedé fascinado con aquel espectáculo, por la forma como lo hacían y por la forma como se exponía de una manera entretenida la ideología que también se estaba gestando en esos años de una manera más clara en El Galpón.

Entonces me fui con el libreto a Montevideo, y en el '57 montamos la *Opera de dos centavos*. Recuerdo que en aquella oportunidad era muy difícil llegar a conclusiones sobre el tema brechtiano. Esta es otra historia más del colonialismo cultural que padecemos. Durante los años que Brecht estuvo en América, sí nos enteramos de quién era Cary Grant, o Loretta Young, pero no sabíamos que Brecht estaba en Hollywood. Tuvo que ser estrenado por el TNP la versión de *Madre Coraje* dirigida por Jean Vilar, para que esto fuera un trampolín a Occidente.

Cuando montamos la *Opera*, nosotros nos empezamos a preocupar por los temas brechtianos. Nos llegaban informaciones del efecto de distanciamiento, cómo sería, cómo utilizar la luz, qué papel realmente jugaban las canciones, el todo y las partes, todo esto lo íbamos haciendo a tientas, hasta que finalmente montamos el espectáculo. Lo que más me quedó de toda aquella experiencia fue lo que dijo un crítico: "ese espectáculo tan precioso, ¿conmoverá a la burguesía"?

Cuando, años más tarde, vi la puesta del Berliner Ensemble, basada en la puesta de los años treinta de Brecht, vi un espectáculo sórdido, que tenía más que ver con lo que el autor había querido, pero era más aburrido. Ya cuando, dos años más tarde, hicimos *El círculo de tiza caucasiano*, empezamos a ajustar mucho más los elementos de la teoría brechtiana, aplicados al espectáculo. Recuerdo que en esa ocasión alguien dijo: "Es increíble cómo un autor encuentra tan bien lo que un grupo quiere decir".

Ya íbamos por mejor camino. Creo que muchas de las dudas que padecimos en esos años—si nuestra manera de representar tenía que ser fría o no, si había que dejar a Stanislavski de lado; si la Helene Weigel, cuando le traían el hijo muerto, hacía un gesto de rictus—todo eso ya lo habíamos, de alguna forma, empezado a asimilar. Empezamos a entender que Brecht y Stanislavski no eran contradictorios, sino que Brecht, fundamentalmente, traía a la escena el teatro político, la ideología como gran tema, y una serie de técnicas que servían para una nueva relación en el espectáculo, entre el actor y el público.

Empezamos a transitar estos caminos en otras puestas en escena. Yo podría contar aquí algo más sobre las nueve puestas en escena que tiene El Galpón, a estas alturas, de Brecht, pero creo que, fundamentalmente, se trata ahora de dónde estamos con respecto a Brecht. Yo digo que El Galpón se parece un poco a esos cuadros de fútbol, que después de jugar un tiempo se dice que juegan de memoria. En todas nuestras puestas hay ya un sentido brechtiano; en *Puro Cuento*, por ejemplo, para tomar un caso que ustedes ya han visto, y varios collages que hemos hecho: la forma de actuar, el total y las partes, la luz, el uso de la música, aplicados a textos tan diferentes. Y quiero tomar finalmente algo de lo que decía Santiago [García] ayer.

Decía la compañera que estaba aquí ayer, moderando, que Santiago había lanzado una pelota caliente y que no la habíamos agarrado. Y creo que hay que agarrarla. Es decir, en América Latina nosotros debemos tener nuestra forma propia de expresión. Ya hemos visto los fracasos. Hemos visto los fracasos de los *modelbuch* y creo que nosotros tenemos un continente con historia, y tenemos que empezar a mostrar nuestros propios problemas. Creo que en ese sentido el teatro colombiano ha tomado lo mejor del espíritu de Brecht, cuando empieza a construir obras a partir de la realidad colombiana, y llega a estudiar y exponer los problemas de su país.

Creo que esa tarea tenemos que intentarla en Latinoamérica con las peculiaridades de cada país. En ese sentido, cuando Santiago por ejemplo planteaba ayer la utilización de la improvisación, creo que es un método válido, aunque sea stanislavskiano, para unirlo a la teoría brechtiana. Esta manera abierta de comprender a Brecht es la mejor manera de serle fiel, porque al construir obras basadas en nuestras peculiaridades, representadas por nuestras peculiaridades también, pero avanzando con una técnica que ya ha sido probada como buena, nosotros podemos aportar mucho al teatro latinoamericano.

En El Galpón nosotros hemos hecho algunas experiencias, en este respecto, por ejemplo, una obra que se llamó *La reja*. Nos enteramos que un grupo de mujeres que habían estado presas en una época, al principio de la dictadura, habían sido dejadas en libertad. Entonces, las invitamos a hablar con nosotros. Ellas contaron sus experiencias. Un grupo de actrices empezó a improvisar alrededor de lo que habían declarado ellas, y un autor iba recogiendo aquellas improvisaciones. Construimos así una obra sobre un tema que había ocurrido en realidad en nuestro país. La obra incluso está mencionada en el decreto de disolución de El Galpón, es decir que fue eficaz.

Creo que este tipo de experiencia que nosotros realizamos lo podríamos extender incluso a otras formas que tiene el repertorio del teatro. No solamente es válido para la creación de una dramaturgia nacional, sino que también es válido para otra línea de trabajo que tiene nuestro teatro,

por ejemplo la reactualización de los clásicos; o sea, no ver a los clásicos como pieza de museo sino tratar de tomar la esencia de lo que plantearon en su época y traerlo para que un espectador contemporáneo se identifique.

En ese sentido, hemos montado Molière, y Aristófanes (que plantea, por ejemplo, la distribución de la riqueza). La obra de Aristófanes, escrita hace casi 2.500 años, plantea un tema que todavía está por resolverse. De ahí, y con un criterio brechtiano, es que nosotros la traemos a un escenario contemporáneo.

Santiago García: Quisiera que nos hablaran de la experiencia de la obra reciente, *Artigas*.

C. Campodonico: Ah, sí. Nosotros escribimos una obra llamada *Artigas, general del pueblo*. Artigas es el héroe de la independencia del Uruguay, aunque él no quería la independencia del Uruguay, sino que quería una América unida, a la manera de Bolívar. Cuando en 1980 el pueblo votó por "no" contra la dictadura, nosotros hicimos este espectáculo polisémico, cuando había algunos generales del pueblo que estaban en la cárcel en ese momento. La creación fue bien difícil, porque no tenemos dramaturgo oficial en el grupo. Entonces recurrimos a documentos, hicimos improvisaciones, nos ayudó un autor lateralmente con algunas escenas, y en tiempo récord para ese tipo de trabajo, en pocos meses, montamos esa obra. Teníamos una fecha precisa para el estreno, que era el cumpleaños de uno de esos generales del pueblo que está preso.

Actualmente tiene cinco versiones, y creemos que está mejor, pero es probable que todavía sobre esa base primera, que queda siempre muy matizada, tengamos que seguir cambiándonos la cabeza, dudando, como decía Arturo, para tratar de crear una figura teatralmente aun más válida (porque ideológicamente creemos que funciona bien). Creo que la versión que conocieron por América—en Costa Rica, en Colombia—que fue la tercera, todavía padecía de una carga de los documentos escritos, de cierto endurecimiento de la figura del personaje. Pero este espectáculo es muy importante en el trabajo de la solidaridad de El Galpón en el exterior. Lo hemos comprobado cuando hemos ido ahora a Buenos Aires. Es un trabajo realizado también con las técnicas brechtianas.

J. Vasquez: Tal vez sería interesante contarles de cuando estuvimos ahora en Buenos Aires con este espectáculo, que es un espectáculo donde hay muy pocos personajes, y lo que se muestra son conductas colectivas, cuando lo enfrentamos con la realidad del público uruguayo que nos fue a ver. Es un espectáculo en que, como depende mucho del movimiento, de una cuestión técnica, hay poco tiempo para emocionarse. Cuando se enfrentó con el público uruguayo, fue tan difícil terminarlo el día que lo empezamos a hacer, que parecía que estábamos haciendo una pieza de Arthur Miller, porque apenas empezó el espectáculo el día de su estreno—y la

primera escena es una escena de represión por el imperio español de la gente que luchaba por su independencia, y la primera palabra que se oye es de una mujer del pueblo que dice "Abajo la tiranía!" Cuando la actriz dijo eso, aquella enorme sala con capacidad para 1.500 personas, que estaba repleta, empezó a gritar y a tirar banderas. Y a partir de ese momento nos costaba mucho a los intérpretes poder controlarnos. Más de uno de nosotros nos cubrimos dando la espalda porque nos poníamos a llorar, y después de esa función un compañero me decía si aquello tenía que ver o no tenía que ver con Brecht, lo que había pasado esa noche.

Probablemente no tuviera mucho que ver desde el punto de vista de lo que es el laboratorio. Pero esto era lo único que quería decir respecto a Brecht: que yo nunca hice una obra de Brecht. A mí como espectador lo que me provocó en mi formación, en mi juventud, es que fue un hombre que me enseñó a pensar con independencia, y que después, con el progreso de los años, entendí cuando empecé mi primer año de arte dramático en El Galpón. Es decir, entré a la escuela y en aquel momento yo quería actuar y parecerme a Marlon Brando, porque lo admiraba mucho (y lo admiro mucho), pero Atahualpa nos dijo en el recibimiento, a los alumnos, que nosotros llegábamos a un lugar a aprender teatro y que el talento en América Latina ya había dejado de ser un privilegio para convertirse en una responsabilidad. Yo nunca trabajé en una obra de Brecht, como lo han hecho mis otros compañeros aquí, pero igual que, por ejemplo, nuestros compañeros del Brasil, en un festival como éste nos animan las mismas preocupaciones: de que lo que decimos y lo que queremos decir no sea traicionado en la forma en que lo exponemos.

V—Brecht and the Theater of the Americas Panel of Critics

Coordinator: Claudia Kaiser-Lenoir

Moderator: Judith Weiss

Participants: John Fuegi, Joel Schechter, Erika Munk, Santiago García, Cesar Campodónico

J. Weiss: This is our assortment of North American and Latin American critics. To my right are Cesar Campodónico from *El Galpón* (Uruguay) and Santiago García from *La Candelaria* (Colombia). To my left, John Fuegi, editor of the *Brecht Yearbook*, Erika Munk, theater editor of *The Village Voice*, and Joel Schechter, editor of *Theater*, the Journal of the Yale School of Drama.

The first question I have for them concerns Professor Fuegi's discussion this morning on Brecht in North America, and I think he might be willing to give a brief historical summary and then comment on one of the

main questions we have been dealing with, which is the apparent lack of a presence of Brecht inside the academic world in North America as opposed to Latin America, where he seems to be such a vital force.

J. Fuegi: This morning we saw some very interesting film footage of various Soviet Avant-Garde directors*—the ones we speak of as formalist directors—Tairov, Meyerhold.** The Soviet directors in the mid-thirties became the victims of Stalin's opposition in the arts and so we have largely forgotten these people, but it's important to remember that in the late twenties to mid-thirties American actors and directors traveled frequently to the Soviet Union and were familiar with these directors we saw this morning. When Brecht first came to America in 1935 he thought he came to direct a production of Gorky's play *The Mother* in his adaptation. He assumed before he came that Americans were very ignorant of Avant-Garde European theater and he declared to the American scene designer Mordecai Gorelik: "I am the Einstein of the new stage form."

When he went into the theater, he assumed everyone was completely ignorant and that he had the final word to say on *The Mother*. In fact, the American actors and directors were not ignorant; they were at least as well informed as Brecht was about the Russian drama. So what happened with this production was that they eventually threw him out of the theater and they were glad he was gone, and when Brecht was out he said: "Well, that was a terrible production anyway. I didn't really want to be associated with it." I would use this as an example, so that when Brecht left in 1935 to go back to Scandinavia to continue his exile, he and the Americans parted the worst possible friends because he thought they were quite ignorant and they thought Brecht had been unfairly rude. So when a year later he discovered that the people he was closely associated with in the Soviet Union were all being killed, he realized that he wouldn't be able to spend his exile years there or he was to follow the same fate. So he reluctantly decided he had to return to America. But this was the place he had left having insulted most of the people in New York. Once he came to America, historically he had cut himself off from a large part of the Left, and therefore he spent most of his time trying to get productions done on Broadway with Broadway producers. I think this is enough historical background as to why there should be such a controversy that swirls around Brecht in North America.

J. Weiss: As Professor Fuegi mentioned this morning, Brecht then proceeded to alienate Kurt Weill and got into dispute with him, which prevented his plays from getting into Broadway. When *Galileo Galilei* finally

*Shown by Mel Gordon, *The Drama Review* Associate Editor

**Brecht had seen all but one of the films shown, and was familiar with the work of most of the directors.

did, it only ran for three weeks. Then the witch hunt of the '40's took place in the U.S. and Brecht left under a cloud. I would like to ask Joel Schechter to comment on the most recent historical developments. He will talk on the Regional Theater in the U.S. and the weight of Brecht's influence at that level.

J. Schechter: I think that Brecht, on trying to have a play produced on Broadway at that time, was doing something I would hope he would not do today. Since then the American theater has changed somewhat. We now have theater Off Broadway as well as in other locations across the country. Of course, we had some of that during Brecht's time too, but I think the theater has been de-centralized more, and the productions of Brecht have been done across the country since then. I would say that Brecht is done much more effectively and with newer forms of staging in Latin America. In the U.S. today there is very little political theater that is new and exciting, and I think that's an important distinction. I speak as a person who works at one of our resident Regional Theaters at Yale University (The Yale Rep.) where several Brecht plays have been staged, and my impression based on that experience, and seeing what other similar theaters are doing, is that Brecht is staged as an author of museum pieces or as a "classic." One reason for that is that Brecht can be sold as a commodity; the "classics" are sold to subscribers as a package. I think part of this attraction is that he is a classic who is dead and safe insofar as he is part of the past. I regret this situation very much because I think he could be brought back to life.

J. Weiss: Erika Munk will fill us in on what she sees as Brecht's influence on political theater today in America.

E. Munk: I thought I would be given a much shorter subject: Brecht in New York. But I would say off hand that in political as well as non-political theater, Brecht's influence is almost nonexistent in terms of any serious attempts to form an ensemble which can create political theater with both very critical aesthetics and clearly strong politics in any grand scale. I think that a very minor reason for this is economic, and a major reason is that we don't have a very strong political Left. And without such a movement it is impossible to grow a creative and major theater. What we do have are productions of Brecht which vary from the most extremely cynically slick, scientific productions: for example the Metropolitan Opera's *Mahogany*. I sat behind Jackie Onassis and she loved it (laughter). Then there are the more gentle ways of stripping the politics: Andrei Servan's really pretty *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Earlier, there were more serious productions that could have led to something, but the problem was that they required collective ensemble theater groups, Avant-Garde collectives which are Left-wing and experimental. I have had disagreements with Richard Schechner over the years, but his *Mother Courage*, which went completely against the classic approach was a suc-

cess because it was very *crude* in a lot of ways. It violently attacked our minds and emotions. The acting was sometimes very good, and the *mis-en-scene* was completely taken away from ordinary Brecht. (Someone suggests that she describe this production for members of the audience not familiar with it.) There are three things that stay in my memory. One is the constant sound of a cash register. Second, he did it in a garage with a very large door that opened on to the street, and when Courage and Cook are singing their real hardship battle hymn before they split up, they move outside and we are turned around to listen to them. The third thing that stayed with me I think I wouldn't like anymore: when the naked body of Katrin is lowered down into a grave which is an enormous pit.

J. Fuegi: The people were offered supermarket coupons so they could pay, the way a supermarket would say "oranges, 6 for 35 cents this week." There were specials that were being offered on Mother Courage's things for that day and you could get in cheap and also were offered a meal as part of the production.

E. Munk: On the other hand, while the play managed to get rid of our pre-conceptions it still took its politics and made them almost entirely only anti-consumerism.

There was one other interesting production: Nto Zake Shange's *Mother Courage* which I don't think really worked but at least she put it in an American setting. She made an issue out of racism. Everyone hated it. But mostly it seems to me an almost impossible enterprise because both politically and psychologically the kind of critical distance that Brecht wanted is alien to the traditions which developed here, and too bad for us. If a new company wanted to be Brechtian, they would have to think through from the very beginning what they mean by that. They would even have to pick their Brecht. Depending on their circumstances, they may want a cynical one, for example, or the Brecht purely Agit-Prop, or if they were doing Brecht for an audience of very committed Left-wingers probably the best one to do would be *The Measures Taken*.

J. Weiss: What I would like to do is to transfer the discussion to the Southern Hemisphere—that is, South of Mexico—and see how Brecht as a playwright has been put on, interpreted, presented to Latin American audiences, and what kind of impact it has had there.

S. García: Yo consideraría, según lo que han hablado los compañeros, dos aspectos en Brecht. Uno, el aspecto del dramaturgo; o sea la actitud que los teatristas en Latino América hemos tomado hacia las obras de Bertolt Brecht. Y el otro sería la actitud nuestra hacia las ideas de Brecht: su teoría. Yo creo que estos dos aspectos han sido muy dinámicos, muy importantes en la asimilación que hemos hecho de Brecht en América Latina. A pesar de haber montado algunas de sus obras yo quisiera más bien referirme al

segundo aspecto: la influencia de las ideas de Brecht en nuestro teatro. Campodónico podría hablar del otro aspecto para que tengamos las cosas como en creación colectiva.

En primer lugar yo diría que para nosotros el teatro no representa un lujo sino una necesidad, lo mismo que para nuestro público popular. Quisiera que fuera un lujo puesto que es un arte para gozarlo. Algunas personas se han quedado instaladas con un pensamiento muy del pasado, creyendo que todavía el arte del teatro hoy en día puede ser un lujo en América Latina, y lo practican así pero son muy pocos. Y hay otros que están muy "lujosamente" instalados en el futuro y piensan que el teatro hoy puede ser un lujo; pero también son pocos.

Para los que pensamos que es una necesidad, las ideas de Brecht han coincidido con nuestra práctica. Oyendo lo que decían los compañeros Uruguayos (de *El Galpón*) más temprano, hay muchos momentos de nuestra práctica teatral en que el dilema de la identificación del actor con el personaje, o de su distanciamiento, se vuelve un problema para el actor y hay que voltearse de espaldas al público (como decía Campodónico) para poder llorar debido a la emoción incontrolable que nos produce el enfrentamiento con un nuevo público. Es el momento en que el vacío de una necesidad histórica se llena. Muchas veces, en lugares donde no existe ningún recurso técnico, se cumplen muchos postulados formales de Brecht, inexorablemente. La gente fuma porque es un lugar popular. No hay reflectores; entra la luz del día por la ventana. La escena es muchas veces cruzada por perros—precioso efecto de distanciamiento—y el punto de vista nuestro, de los actores, con relación al público se vuelve una motivación estética que no se encuentra en el teatro tradicional. Por ejemplo, en un lugar muy apartado de los Llanos de Colombia fuimos a presentar una obra llamada *Los Comunes*; una obra histórica. El lugar para presentarla era algo más pequeño que esta sala; a las tres de la tarde. Dentro de la sala había solo 450 o 500 personas, muchos sentados en el piso, otros trepados en andamios, escaleras y ventanas. En la parte de atrás los hombres con sombrero y en la de adelante los niños sentados en el piso. Para los que estábamos en la escena, esta imagen de ese público era de una altísima calidad estética; era bello. Era incitante en nosotros a producir también en la escena bellas imágenes. Todo lo contrario de una sala cuando el actor al mirar al público se encuentra con un horrible cajón oscuro, sin humo de cigarrillo y con todo lo que ya conocemos. Estos elementos de nuestra realidad han hecho desarrollar un teatro dinámico, popular e instalado en una irregularidad técnica ha producido una estética muy vecina a la estética Brechtiana. El conocerlo nos ha ayudado muchas veces a no imitarla. Esas serían todas las ideas mías que va a complementar el compañero Campodónico.

C. *Campodónico*: Con respecto a puestas en escena que se hayan realizado en América Latina—naturalmente no las he visto a todas, sólo algunas y con variado éxito—creo que con respecto a lo que hablabamos hoy del éxito de Brecht en América Latina, porqué no se hace Brecht en Estados Unidos, los cuentos que nos han hecho los Norteamericanos me hacen pensar que Brecht era un autor irreverente y que debemos ser fieles a esa irreverencia Brechtiana. Pero también no olvidemos que Brecht es al teatro lo que Marx era a la política. Y que todavía esos elementos siguen siendo vigentes. Con la mayor libertad, con la mayor alegría, divirtiendo al público como quería Brecht, conviene que las ideas de sus obras sean expuestas de la manera más clara posible no derivándonos de rumbo y cayendo en falsos esteticismos.

En ese sentido nosotros hemos visto muy hermosas puestas en escena pero que uno sentía que tenían poco que ver con una esencia del pensamiento Brechtiano. Creo que Brecht entonces admite una lectura muy amplia pero a partir de una precisión de lo que estamos haciendo—de la obra que hacemos—y de la circunstancia histórica en que el propio Brecht la ha escrito. Y es más: ayer Santiago (García) decía que con respecto a las puestas de Brecht se ha experimentado mucho y que sin embargo debemos ser muy claros, especialmente en esta circunstancia histórica en que nos ha tocado vivir.

A mí no me sorprende que en este momento en Estados Unidos las puestas en escena de Brecht no sean rigurosamente ideológicas. Creo que incluso debe haber muchos teatros que están en Estados Unidos y que quizás tengan que tener tres “off” y que seguramente experimentan dentro de zonas correctas. Esto que digo quiero que sea interpretado de manera muy amplia porque quiero insistir en la irreverencia con que nosotros podemos tratar al Viejo, de la forma como él lo hizo con Shakespeare y los otros.

Creo que muchas veces la forma Brechtiana puede distraer de los contenidos que hay en sus obras, cuando en realidad la forma debe ser la correcta expresión del contenido y depender de él.

J. *Fuegi*: The one question I had was about the discussion of the translation of *Verfremdungseffekt* and I would like to say something about that. I think the word *distancing* or *alienation* doesn't capture the sense of what Brecht was seeking. In the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* in the late eighteenth century, Coleridge and Wordsworth said: “We want to make the strange familiar, and the familiar strange.” I think that's what Brecht is trying to do, and the problem with the word *alienation* is his only one. Because if we are alienated from a phenomenon, we want to become familiar with it. I would say “V” effect, the way you say *Weltanschauung* or other German words that have been taken over because they can't be translated.

E. Munk: I just wanted to say something about a previous point, and that is that Marx said he was not a Marxist, and that since Brecht was just as ill-tempered, he probably would have said he was not a Brechtian. I think the idea of any kind of purism is irrelevant, and maybe we should talk about the idea of alienation not just limited to staging and acting effects but turn it toward reality, change and Utopia. The reason I was so pessimistic about the American Brecht is that the oppositional elements in this society have not themselves worked it out: what our reality is, what way to change it, and what Utopia to keep in mind.

The other thing is that Brecht, by his very nature, is against *cliché*. I was having a little fantasy about what a Feminist Brecht would be like, or a Radical Environmentalist Brecht; but it's very easy to figure out what a Peace Movement Brecht would be like.

J. Schechter: I think there is a tendency in America to aestheticize Brecht and to separate Marxism and Socialism from Brecht plays. In a sense, we may say there is an inhibiting factor in the production of Brecht plays, which is McCarthyism or even a Reaganism, in that since we can't talk about Socialism or Marxism in our society at large, our theater will not show this discussion.

C. Rosset (Teatro do Ornitorrinco, Brazil): A double question to the North American critics. There is a certain pessimism regarding Brecht in the U.S. For example, our friend here said that in Latin America a better Brecht is made. Our friend here says that here we give a more academic importance to Brecht, etc., etc. What I wanted to ask was: historically, when Brecht lived here in the U.S., in a general way most of his works were failures; for example his *Galileo* with Charles Laughton or his attempts in Hollywood, even though there were German friends of Brecht like Peter Lorre, so what I would like to ask is if structurally, in his essence, Brecht doesn't work here. The French Neoclassics—Corneille, Racine—never worked in Brazil and never will. It has to do with the essence, with humor. It doesn't work. They are always a failure because it has nothing to do with us. So my question is, could it be that Brecht doesn't work well here?

E. Munk: The mind whirls at the idea of Brecht being like Corneille or the U.S. being like Brazil, but I think that maybe it's possible in the American way of thinking about experience, especially thinking about it on stage. It is just inimical. But I also think that there is some essence of Brecht, not simply Marxism, which has to do with the idea of change and how we perceive it which is very useful. I also think he was a great writer and he translates "mediumly" into English. But if I felt that there was no way to either do Brecht himself or to create a theater which is somewhat analogous to what he created, then I will give up on the American theater

totally. His humor would be a big part of it; unfortunately that has a lot to do with the translation. In other words, everything that goes against sentimentality is what's so desperately needed here, as well as the politics.

J. Schechter: I think Brecht was successfully staged by some of the theater collective groups in the fifties and sixties, such as the Living Theater.

C. Rosset: The second part of my question. Why in Anglo-European and American criticism—I am thinking about Martin Esslin or John Willett—there is that paranoia with the question of politics: Brecht and the Communists, the Communists and Brecht; that separation between the aesthetic and the political context.

J. Fuegi: I would put Martin Esslin in a totally different category than John Willett. Martin Esslin was starting out trying to do a psychological portrait. John Willett was trying to *describe* what the work was. Two very different people.

E. Munk: Also, you are forgetting that the first and primary Anglo-American critic was Eric Bentley who doesn't make this separation at all.

J. Fuegi: I'd like to add one other thing about Eric Bentley. He was a critic who interacted very actively with Brecht. When Brecht was here, Eric felt Brecht was not clear about what he was talking about and he said to him: "You have to write things more clearly. Your theory must be clearer." He said: "Your theories obscure far more than they help," and as a result that's when Brecht wrote the *Short Organum* to try to answer the legitimate question that Eric Bentley had brought out. That's a terrific achievement of Eric Bentley.

C. Rosset: I think I generalized the question too much and you didn't really answer what I was after. I feel that there are a few Brechtian points the American critics have not really grasped. One is the political one which they have not developed very well because they are a little uncomfortable with it. The same way that there are a few points in Brecht, hard to digest for the Leftist critics. What I was wondering about was that paranoia of critics who deal with this issue, and even (with) the fact that he had to leave this country because of the House of Un-American Activities.

J. Schechter: I think you are correct to see some paranoia here because the critics don't deal directly with Brecht's politics, and perhaps more significantly, the American theaters don't deal with that issue when they stage those plays.

E. Munk: I don't think it's so much paranoia. I don't think anyone is going to go to jail for being a Marxist critic in the U.S., but there aren't any Marxist critics.

P. Vásquez (El Galpón, Uruguay): El problema es que estamos

cayendo en una conversación familiar sobre Brecht. Creo que lo más importante es lo que plantea el compañero Santiago García, quien dice que a lo mejor en este país, o en Chile o en Brazil, nunca se puede hacer bien una obra de Brecht. Pero de lo que se trata es de rescatar la óptica que este hombre presta al teatro. Yo recuerdo haber visto una versión de *Puntilla* hecha en Chile por Pedro de la Barra donde la obra duraba una hora, ocurría en Chile la acción, la música no era de Kurt Weill y los apellidos eran chilenos. En ese mismo momento se estaba dando en Chile la versión original del Berliner Ensemble y todo el mundo se aburría. Creo que lo importante es la actitud para enfrentarse a la creación. Yo me enteré que los compañeros de Nueva México hicieron una versión de *Panorama Desde el Puente*, donde no eran inmigrantes italianos sino mexicanos quienes venían a vivir a Nueva México, y esa es una actitud Brechtiana. A lo mejor yo nunca pueda hacer bien *Galileo Galilei*, pero a lo que yo debo ser fiel es a esa consecuencia, a esa amplitud y a esa independencia de criterio para enfrentarme con el teatro.

Unidentified: Following what he was saying about Brecht and his influence in the U.S. again, there are two trends or maybe three in terms of commercial theater: Broadway, the Regional Theater that has been playing from the 1920's, and the Brechtian theory that this Regional Theater is using. But then, the commercial views don't focus nor are interested in the Regional Theater. I can name the New York Street Caravan, the Theater for the New City that are theater groups today, or the theaters in the '60's, the Agit-Props at the Universities, Guerilla Theaters that were using Brechtian techniques. Then, from what we hear from the North Americans that spoke is that that type of theater is not being done and it has never been done.

E. Munk: I don't think that's what I said. As representative of a commercial newspaper and commercial reviewing, I must say that the New York Street Caravan or the Theater for the New City, all these theaters have been constantly reviewed. What I feel about most of their work (is that)—unlike some of the theaters of the '60's—when they use Brechtian techniques it is often a matter of reducing them to rhetoric for an audience that then is affirmed in its beliefs, and has no new questions to ask of society. So these groups, many of whom I like, won't fill the basic Brechtian oppositional.

S. García: Yo quería completar un poco lo que dije más temprano en el sentido de que el elemento que considero más importante en el pensamiento Brechtiano es el de la capacidad que puede tener el teatro de transformar la realidad. Esto casi le daría su nivel estético más complejo porque se trata de que en el acto de la representación se transforme—no inmediatamente sino mediatamente—el medio social en el cual se produce el acto artístico. Eso, creo, es lo más complejo y difícil. Es lo que requiere

más técnicas artísticas, más elevadas tales como el “efecto del extrañamiento” que es una técnica artística al servicio del teatro para que, como arte, ayude a transformar la realidad.

Como en nuestros países en Latino América esta transformación de la realidad es una necesidad social, este arte del teatro nosotros lo formamos así entendiendo bien que no se trata de una cruzada de tipo religioso, ni siquiera político, sino de una cruzada de tipo estético dentro de la cual la política es importante. Y la ideología también lo es; fundamentalmente el pensamiento Marxista.

Marina Pianca (A.T.I.N.T.): Había dos cosas que quería contestar. Voy a empezar con lo que acabas de decir, Santiago. Pienso que para tener la conciencia de la necesidad de transformar la realidad hay que tener la posibilidad de aprehender la realidad como una totalidad. Una de las cosas que pasa aquí en los Estados Unidos es que hay una gran tendencia—justamente por una falta de práctica de análisis que es producto de una realidad inherentemente parcializada—que hace que los grupos de teatro respondan a una parte de la realidad. Por ejemplo: durante la guerra de Vietnam, aparece toda la serie de teatros que responden a esa causa, pero que es un pequeño esquema y no visto como el producto de algo mayor. Y ahora vemos que prolifera otro tipo de teatro, el teatro ambiental, anti-nuclear, pero que de ninguna manera logran ver *la causa* de eso. O sea, hay una protesta activista de alguna manera, pero no una inserción analítica.

Yo pienso—y ahora voy a la segunda parte—que la inserción analítica y el compromiso que produce—la toma de conciencia frente a ese análisis—hace que se asuma ese compromiso. Entonces eso va como respuesta a lo que se decía de que en Estados Unidos, dado a que estaban Reagan o McCarthy no existía un teatro Brechtiano. No hay sociedades más represivas que las latinoamericanas, así que no creo que podamos verlo desde el punto de vista de la paranoia o del temor, sino desde el punto de vista de una parcialización de la realidad porque aun los grupos politizados se dirigen a los *issues* y no a una visión totalizadora.

Unidentified: I think it's very important, particularly in this discussion, to continue with the point that the man over here made. There is in this country a very large progressive movement. It's organized in a Community and Grass-roots level nationally.

After the political movements of the '60's began to break up, there were many Cultural Worker Groups in all media who worked in many communities around the country continuing some of the works that went on in the sixties. Those groups are often very weak. People sometimes look at the work and say “it isn't strong, not with art.” That weakness is recognized by those groups. They have made choices in many places, among Latinos,

among women, among rural groups, in mountainous areas, in Great Plains areas (where) it was necessary to find out how to make a kind of cultural work that would express all those communities; that could give definition to them, and that would be some strength some day against the hegemonical power. These groups are not part of the institutionalized Regional Theater movement.

Beginning in the mid-seventies there was an organization formed to begin to network these groups so that they could show their work to each other, could communicate the meaning of the different communities one to another, and could begin to find ways to develop new theories. In this country entire communities disappear because they have no names left. The hierarchy and the institutionalized art reject continuously the significance of this cultural work. If there is Brecht in this country, it is found there.

E. Munk: What he says is true, and it's a matter of perspective. When I think of an anti-hegemonical culture, I could think of a Socialist Party culture in this country around the teens which was massive, or the Communist Party culture of the thirties, or the Counterculture of the sixties in its different manifestations. It seems to me that there is at this point nothing comparable, although it may be growing. Whether you can create an oppositional culture as big as the early ones depends on whether various small movements can create a larger Socialist movement.

Beatriz Rizk (A.T.I.N.T.): En Estados Unidos durante las últimas décadas ha habido un resurgimiento del teatro étnico, del teatro de minorías. Por muchas razones que no vamos a analizar en este momento—una de ellas es por lo que llaman “el desencanto” después de la guerra de Vietnam—ha surgido un cierto apoyo a las diferentes culturas étnicas de las minorías. Estos grupos, que muchas veces han salido de comunidades—pero que no necesariamente tienen que ser grupos comunales—son grupos dentro de las comunidades hispánicas de Estados Unidos. Estoy hablando de los Chicanos, por ejemplo. Son grupos que desde un principio han buscado una orientación política, así como una estética. Son grupos que se han acercado a Brecht, y muchas veces esto ha sucedido a través de Latino América. Entonces yo creo que se puede hablar en muchos sentidos de un teatro Brechtiano en Estados Unidos no limitado a Nueva York—que se considera su capital—ni al teatro regional, sino que quizás ir a buscarlo en el teatro Chicano y en el teatro negro, en el teatro oriental, asiático, y que se aproxima mucho a la idea que Brecht tenía de comprender y poder aprehender una realidad para representarla y poder transformarla, y que es parte del teatro Norteamericano.

J. Weiss: I would like to thank the panel and to extend an invitation to

anyone interested in informally continuing the discussion which I think has not really solved any of the problems, just as Brecht would have expected.

Notes

1. It is impossible to translate the pun in the title: "años sin cuenta" means years without telling, years that cannot be known, and it also means the fifties.
2. The play opened in 1975, and it is still being performed.
3. The "corrido llañero," the lowlander Mexican ballad.
4. Rosset has used the version of *Mahagonny Songspiel* edited by David Drew, Universal, 1969.
5. cf. Willett, ed., *Brecht on Theater* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 272-73.

Nancy C. Michael. "The Affinities of Adaptation: The Artistic Relationship between Brecht's *Coriolan* and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*."

In 1951, Brecht turned toward *Coriolanus* to appropriate Shakespeare's play in his own fashion. Attracted by the freedom and challenge of the Shakespearean stage, he used Dorothea Tieck's translation of the play to demystify the model and turn it into a dialectic which he thought right for the times. He abandoned Shakespeare's distanced and neutral authorial point of view for the sake of a political statement. With the help of the original, the translation and the new version, Nancy Michael examines how Brecht deflates Shakespeare's extreme language, discards the master's *Coriolanus* as a gruesome non-pareil, and attributes a controlled idiom and a rational outlook to the citizens thereby stressing their sense of inner worth.

The play itself remained unfinished and was eventually edited by Elisabeth Hauptmann.

Nancy C. Michael. "Die Verwandtschaften der Adaption: Das künstlerische Verhältnis zwischen Brechts 'Coriolan' und Shakespeares 'Coriolanus'".

Im Jahre 1951 wandte sich Brecht Shakespeares "Coriolanus" zu, um es auf seine eigene Weise zu adaptieren. Angezogen von der Freiheit und der Herausforderung der Shakespeare-Bühne, entmystifizierte er—auf der Grundlage der Übersetzung von Dorothea Tieck—die Vorlage und verarbeitete sie zu einem zeitgerechten dialektischen Werk. Die dem Original eigene distanzierte und neutrale Haltung Shakespeares gab Brecht zugunsten einer politischen Darstellung auf. Anhand von Original, Übersetzung und Neufassung untersucht Nancy Michael, wie Brecht die überhöhte Sprache Shakespeares vermindert, Shakespeares *Coriolanus* als schaurigen, unerreichten Meister ablegt und den Bürgern durch ein rationales Gebaren und kontrollierte Sprache den Sinn für innere Werte zuspricht.

Das Stück selbst blieb unvollendet und wurde später von Elisabeth Hauptmann ediert.

Nancy C. Michael. "Les affinités de l'adaptation: la relation artistique entre le *Coriolan* de Brecht et le *Coriolanus* de Shakespeare".

En 1951, Brecht s'intéressa à *Coriolanus* pour adapter la pièce de Shakespeare à sa manière. Attiré par la liberté et le défi que propose le théâtre shakespearien, il utilisa la traduction de Dorothea Tieck pour démystifier son modèle et le modifier dans un sens dialectique qu'il croyait approprié à l'époque. Il abandonna la position neutre et distancée de Shakespeare en faveur d'un message politique. En s'appuyant sur le texte original, sa traduction et la nouvelle version, Nancy Michael examine comment Brecht "aplatit" le langage extrême de Shakespeare, écarte le *Coriolanus* du maître comme une horrible exception et attribue une parole mesurée et une perspective logique aux citoyens, soulignant ce faisant le sens qu'ils ont de leur valeur personnelle.

La pièce elle-même est restée inachevée et fut finalement éditée par Elisabeth Hauptmann.

Nancy C. Michael. "Las afinidades en las adaptaciones: la relación artística entre el *Coriolan* de Brecht y el *Coriolanus* de Shakespeare".

En 1951 Brecht se interesó en la obra *Coriolanus* de Shakespeare y decidió apropiarse de dicha obra a su manera. Atraído por la libertad y el desafío de la teatralidad de Shakespeare, empleó la traducción de la obra de Dorothea Tieck para desmistificar el modelo y transformarlo en una dialéctica que le pareció correcta para la época. Él abandonó la actitud distante y neutra de Shakespeare para crear un manifiesto político. Con la ayuda de la obra original, de la traducción y de la nueva versión, Nancy Michael examina como Brecht desinfla el uso del lenguaje de Shakespeare, descarta el *Coriolanus* de Shakespeare como una persona cruel sin igual y atribuye a los ciudadanos un lenguaje controlado y una visión racional, enfatizando su amor propio. La obra permaneció incompleta y finalmente fue editada por Elisabeth Hauptmann.

The Affinities of Adaptation: The Artistic Relationship between Brecht's *Coriolan* and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*

Nancy C. Michael

Adaptation has sometimes the force of a moral question in the literary criticism devoted to Bertolt Brecht, the most notorious appropriator of other men's art in the twentieth century. It is well known that Brecht was a voracious reader and a prolific writer. That he used much of what he read in his writing should therefore surprise no one. What is sometimes questioned, however, is the generous degree to which Brecht helped himself, often without careful acknowledgment, to the plays, poetry, and stories of other writers. In the course of his literary career, from the 1920s to his death in 1956, Brecht borrowed—often heavily—from the work, to name a few, of John Gay, Kipling, Rimbaud, J. M. Synge, Grimmshausen, Bernard Shaw, Schiller, George Farquhar, Verlaine, Büchner, Christopher Marlowe, and, above all, William Shakespeare, himself the most notorious “borrower” of the Elizabethan stage.

When a critic speaks of sources, he speaks from neutral ground located at a respectful distance from the work and its creator, but when he calls the work an adaptation, he moves closer, to take a look at the workmanship of artistry, and sometimes to pass judgment on what he sees. Thus, with Celtic humor W. E. Yuill calls Brecht an artful vandal in his study of Brecht as adapter,¹ and Helen M. Whall calls him a “magpie,” echoing what Robert Greene said of Shakespeare in his own time.² Without a doubt, both playwrights created new shapes from older models, unself-consciously in Shakespeare's case, remorselessly in that of Brecht. As professional men of the theatre, Shakespeare and Brecht were kindred spirits in their stage savvy, and some think in the genius of their artistry as well. Perhaps the economy born of practicality and their genius for reshaping led each of them to adapt more often than originate.³

It is appropriate, then, and not surprising, considering Shakespeare's enduring reputation in Germany, for Brecht to choose to tell Shakespeare's retold fables after his own fashion. Indeed, Brecht used material from Shakespeare's plays in his own art for over thirty years. Richard Bechley lists as adaptations from Shakespeare Brecht's version of *Hamlet* for Berlin radio; *Übungsstücke für Schauspieler*, some based on *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*; his parody taken from *Measure for Measure*, *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*; and his play against Hitler, *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*, which owes much to *Richard III*.⁴

Why Brecht chose to adapt Shakespeare is often the question. Helge Hultberg, for one, is surely wrong to think that "Für Brecht ist Shakespeare der Anfang der Dekadenz des europäischen Dramas . . ." and to speak of Brecht's "Haß gegen Shakespeare."⁵ If Shakespeare's Elizabethan stage is not the beginning of Brecht's anti-Aristotelian theatre, then it is surely the model. The attraction of Shakespeare for Bertolt Brecht was positive and grounded in the theatre, not negative and political in origin.

Political affinity (or disaffinity) between Shakespeare and Brecht is incapable of proof finally, for Shakespeare's politics remain as enigmatic as his religion, if he had one. Their demonstrable affinities are habits of mind (both men read and made repeated use of the Bible, the popular classics, popular literature, and history, Roman and modern) and theatrical interests (both wrote for and worked with professional acting companies). As adapters of what they needed, Shakespeare and Brecht modernized, popularized, and transformed their sources into new art. What actively drew Brecht to Shakespeare were the realities of Shakespeare's theatre, particularly the Globe, with its enclosure holding over 1000 men and women, its large bare stage open to the audience of three sides, and its audience, mainly standing and often rowdy, most of whom had paid one penny to attend. The freedom and challenge of Shakespeare's stage were to Brecht's taste, as were many of the plays made for that stage. Brecht took what he admired of Shakespeare and paid tribute to it in the reshaping.

Brecht's most thorough and painstaking Shakespearean adaptation, *Coriolan*, a redaction of *The Tragedy of Coriolanus* (c. 1605–1610⁶) came late in Brecht's career, as did *Coriolanus* in Shakespeare's. Perhaps as a consequence, both plays are dry and distanced. Brecht wrote *Coriolan* for his *Berliner Ensemble*, beginning the work around 1951, according to Rodney T. K. Symington.⁷ When Brecht died in 1956, the unfinished *Coriolan* fell to the *Ensemble*, who first produced it for the world-wide Shakespeare festival in 1964. The earliest production, however, was in Frankfurt in 1962.⁸

W. E. Yuill declares *Coriolan* "not an endearing work. It is austere, lucid and rational."⁹ But the significance of *Coriolan* has nothing to do with its charm, for as Yuill himself points out, "*Coriolan* is the nearest thing we

have to a copy-book example for Brecht's theories on adaptation. How we rate the play may well depend on our political convictions: it is hard to judge it by aesthetic criteria," because *Coriolan* is unfinished.¹⁰ I prefer to examine Brecht's methods of adaptation and not judge the result either politically or aesthetically. As Brecht's most concentrated Shakespeare adaptation, *Coriolan* seems an appropriate subject for analysis. Even though Brecht wrote hundreds of pages of dramatic theory, I will analyze his practice instead. That *Coriolan* is unfinished presents no problem in examining his method of adaptation; rather, it serves as an example of the protean nature of Brecht's art.

Because politics were essential to Brecht's art, Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* was an obvious choice for adaptation. Yuill says, "It is not difficult to understand the choice of this particular play at this stage in Brecht's career. It is possibly Shakespeare's most overtly political play. It deals with political power and the ethos of political leadership."¹¹ Arrigo V. Subiotto thinks that Brecht chose *Coriolanus* to show the "danger to society of an individual's abuse of power" and "to demonstrate the healthy energies latent in the lower classes that can be harnessed to nullify such threats and create a desirable society."¹² Whatever the case, Brecht found in *Coriolanus* one of Shakespeare's two most polemical plays (*Troilus and Cressida* being the other) with the two sides, plebeian and patrician, as radically opposed as Brecht could have come across anywhere in drama.

Shakespeare's starving plebeians with their riotous demands for grain opposed in mutual hatred to arch-warrior and patrician Caius Marcius (later Coriolanus) is pointed in the extreme. Shakespeare took neither blameworthy side.¹³ Brecht altered what he found in Shakespeare to deflate Coriolanus and to make the plebeians (*Bürger* in Brecht) rational in mind and collective in spirit. In short, Brecht made Shakespeare's polemical *Coriolanus* over into a balanced dialectic; but for Brecht, of course, neither objectivity nor a reserved point of view was a part of that balance. *Coriolan* is not doctrine without pleasure, however. Brecht had, as Subiotto says, two purposes as a dramatic adapter: to make a current entertainment and to promote a sense of history as part of aesthetic enjoyment.¹⁴ Thus, without denying the validity of examining the politics of *Coriolan*, Subiotto points to an equally rich area of examination, Brecht's political arena, the theatre.

Coriolanus and *Coriolan* reflect their makers' attraction to history and their makers' attempts to modernize and stage history for an audience. Heminge and Condell, the editors of the First Folio (1623), separated Shakespeare's plays into three sorts: comedies, tragedies, and histories. The Table of Contents lists ten of Shakespeare's English history plays under "Histories."¹⁵ Other of Shakespeare's plays grouped among the tragedies and comedies are also history plays: *King Lear* and *Cymbeline* concern ancient

Britain, and *Macbeth* treats Scottish history. Shakespeare's source in chief for each of these plays was Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587). Shakespeare also wrote Roman histories; namely, *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1587), *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), and *Coriolanus* (c. 1608). The four Roman plays concern the three best-known eras in Roman history: *Coriolanus* treats early republican days, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* belong to the decisive years when Rome moved finally and violently from republic to empire, and *Titus Andronicus* is set in the last days of the empire when "the Goths" were gaining control of Rome. Shakespeare's major source for his Roman plays was Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579 trans.), a form of biography arranged in paired "lives," one Roman, the other Greek. Thus Plutarch matches Coriolanus with his Greek counterpart, the Athenian traitor Alcibiades.

Like Shakespeare, Brecht was more drawn to the history of Rome than to that of Greece,¹⁶ "for in his mind," says biographer Frederic Ewen, "was already born the intention of 'de-mystifying' traditional heroes and heroism, and of rehabilitating forgotten and often 'unheroic' figures."¹⁷ *Coriolan* and the radio play *Das Verhör des Lukullus* (1939) demonstrate Brecht's interest in Roman history, and it is known that Brecht contemplated a debunking play of Julius Caesar, having written but not finished "a chronicle-novel," *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar*, while in exile in Denmark.¹⁸ In recreating famous Romans, Shakespeare and Brecht made their men human, but in different ways. Shakespeare touches his historical colossi (Titus Andronicus, Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, and Caius Marcius Coriolanus) with the strengths and weaknesses of the heart. Brecht renders his "heroes" (Lucullus, Julius Caesar, and Coriolan) narrow, self-interested, and unworthy of the rest of rational humanity.

In debunking famous Roman generals, Brecht also makes abhorrent their occupation—war. In Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* Brecht found material ready to hand: a proud Roman patrician who knows no occupation but war. Yuill assumes that "In adapting the play to reflect the political foundation of the social system he favored, Brecht reckoned he was doing no more than Shakespeare had done in his day with the Roman sources."¹⁹ I do not agree, for there is no authorial point of view in *Coriolanus*, as Brecht in all likelihood knew. Unlike Brecht in *Coriolan*, Shakespeare took no sides in *Coriolanus*. Perhaps what Brecht saw in *Coriolanus* was not a political point of view but Shakespeare's hopeless sorrow over the politics of mankind, a sorrow which led him to write, all but twice, history as tragedy.²⁰ Where Shakespeare's view of history is tragic, Brecht's vision is comoeidic. For after all, as Sartre says in *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, Communism, like Christianity, posits a future,²¹ which, literally speaking, is comedy. Both

playwrights concerned themselves in their art with the history of mankind. But the difference for Brecht between himself and Shakespeare was not Shakespeare's "decadent" politics, as Hultberg argues,²² but the hopeless dilemma of Shakespeare, rising from his benighted but unavoidable place in history—1564–1616. Thus, Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* was to Shakespeare an unresolvable debate between irreconcilable opposites ending inevitably in schism and murder.

With his progressive vision of the future, Brecht, unlike Shakespeare, could move with the economy of parable to a calm, deliberately anticlimactic conclusion. As Bernard Dort says of the end of *Coriolanus*: ". . . il est réintégré à une dialectique de la société dont il représente non la négation mais un stade transitoire."²³ Brecht rewrote Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, not by working against it, but by writing a current, and from Brecht's point of view, a more optimistic play. *Coriolan* is not a tragedy, for tragedies present history at worse falsely, as Brecht thought Schiller treated it in *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*, or darkly at best, as Brecht probably understood Shakespeare's detached point of view in *Coriolanus*.

Brecht made his changes in *Coriolanus*, then, with both economy and confidence. Of Brecht's optimistic economies, Yuill says that "In adapting his play to his tendentious purpose Brecht scaled it down. His text is considerably shorter than Shakespeare's. He eliminates a good deal of the rhetorical upholstery—or, as a hostile critic would no doubt put it, he knocks the stuffing out of Shakespeare. The result is an austere work."²⁴ Subiotto quantifies the changes: Brecht cut almost every scene by curtailing speeches, used only half of Shakespeare's play, and added seventeen percent new material.²⁵ Two other sorts of changes should also be mentioned. Brecht's death in 1956 left *Coriolan* unfinished. He never wrote the battle scene (1.4–10 in *Coriolanus*) or altered his play in rehearsal. Elizabeth Hauptmann, who edited the Suhrkamp collected edition of Brecht's works, says that Brecht intended to write a battle scene at the end of Act I when the play came to production and inserts Dorothea Tieck's translation of Act I, Scenes iv–x, of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*.²⁶

Neither Shakespeare nor Brecht adapted his play from its original version. Shakespeare read Plutarch in Sir Thomas North's English translation (1579), and Brecht, who was not proficient in English, read *Coriolanus* in Dorothea Tieck's nineteenth-century translation.²⁷ Neither translation could be called literal. How much difference—linguistic, poetic, political—such filtered reading makes (no doubt considerable) is another topic. But in any case, the original language of a source seems to have concerned Shakespeare not at all and Brecht very little. For all their love of words, neither man knew languages, not in the way of Milton or Hofmannsthal. Each took what he found where he found it and rendered from it the truth, in the

way of art rather than reproduction, much as King James's committee and Martin Luther translated the Bible. Shakespeare's and Brecht's creative processes were not scholarly. They were more imaginative; that is to say, they were freer.

In adapting their plays, Shakespeare and Brecht used translations, modernizing the speech and transforming substance after their own stamp. Here, for instance, is North's description of Coriolanus' greeting to his arch-enemy, Tullus Aufidius, after Coriolanus, banished from Rome, has arrived unknown in Antium: "I am Caius Martius, who hath done to thy self particularly, and to all the Volsces generally, great hurte and mischief, which I cannot denie for my surname of Coriolanus that I beare."²⁸ The passage in Shakespeare reads:

My name is Caius Marcius, who hath done
To thee particularly, and to all the Volsces,
Great hurt and mischief; thereto witness may
My surname, Coriolanus. (4.5.68–71)

Tieck translates:

Mein Nam' ist Caius Marcius, der dich selbst
Vorerst und alle deine Landsgenossen
Sehr schwer verletzt' und elend machte; des zeuge
Mein dritter Name Coriolan. (4.5)²⁹

Here is Brecht's work:

Aufidius:

Ich kenn dich nicht. Der Name!

Coriolan:

Ist Cajus Marcius. Welcher Name dir
Besonders, doch auch allen Volskern immer
Verdruß und Schaden zugefügt hat, was
Mein dritter Name auch bezeugt: Coriolan. (4.2, p. 340)

In the craftsmanship of master translators North and Tieck and poets Shakespeare and Brecht, the language holds its measured precision but changes its texture.

Diction and accent help define stage characters as much as do costume, gesture, and action. Consequently, Brecht has Coriolan speak not only in a more modern idiom but also in a less vaunted, or "noble," style than either Shakespeare's Coriolanus or Tieck's Coriolan, as the passages

above demonstrate. Even as Brecht deflates Shakespeare's partician and Tieck's *Adler* into a mere militarist, so he elevates the citizens into men of heart and reason. Early in *Coriolan* the audience hears the following exchange between two Roman citizens. The seeds of the citizens' successful defiance of Coriolan, who comes near the end of the play to destroy Rome, is buried in their words:

Der Mann mit dem Kind: . . . Uns Plebejer nennt man die armen Bürger, aber die Patrizier nennt man die Guten. Was diese Guten zu viel fressen, könnte uns vorm Hungertod bewahren. Schon wenn sie uns auch nur das Überflüssige gäben, wären wir gerettet. Aber selbst das sind wir ihnen nicht wert. Es schmeckt ihnen besser, wenn sie uns hungern sehen. [*zum Kind*] Terzjus, sag, daß du in einer solchen Stadt nicht Bürger sein willst.

[*Kind schüttelt den Kopf*]

Erster Bürger: Dann hau ab, und schnell, du feiger Hund, aber das Kind laß du; wir werden für Terzjus ein besseres Rom erkämpfen. (pp. 231–32)

Shakespeare's First Citizen is desperate in his plight:

We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good. What authority surfeits on would relieve us. If they would yield us but the superfluity while it were wholesome, we might guess they relieved us humanely; but they think we are too dear: the leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an inventory to particularize their abundance; our sufferance is a gain to them. Let us revenge this with our pikes ere we become rakes; for the gods know I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge. (1.1.14–24)

There is fellowless isolation in Shakespeare's citizen's words, and there is no citizen with a bright boy in his arms.

Brecht gives his citizens a more controlled idiom and a more rational outlook to reflect their sense of inner worth. Likewise, he discards Shakespeare's imagery suggesting Coriolanus as a gruesome non-pareil ("lonely dragon," "osprey," "engine of war," "thing of blood"). Here is Volunnia's description of her martial son as she imagines him in the act of fighting the Volscians singlehanded:

Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus;
 "Come on, you cowards! you were got in fear,
 Though you were born in Rome." His bloody brow
 With his mailed hand then wiping, forth he goes,
 Like to a harvest man that's tasked to mow
 Or all or lose his hire. (1.3.31–38)

Brecht reduces Coriolan from war machine to specialist in war. But neither Shakespeare's Coriolanus nor Brecht's Coriolan has a place in society, Coriolanus because he will not condescend, Coriolan because he will not adapt.

The language that rises in hopeless anguish toward tragic confrontation and destruction in Shakespeare's Coriolanus and plebeians, Brecht either removes or modifies. The adjustment moves toward comoedic harmony. Thus the ending of *Coriolan* seems an anticlimax. When word is brought to the *Konsul*, *Senatoren*, and *Tribunen* that Coriolan has been slain in Antium, the tribune Brutus curtly dismisses the senator Menenius' plea for a memorial, and "Der Senat setzt seine Beratungen fort" (p. 381). This is far from the frenzy of Coriolanus' murder by Aufidius' assassins—"Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him" (5.6.132)—or Aufidius' revolting volte-face that ends Shakespeare's play:

My rage is gone,
And I am struck with sorrow. Take him up;
Help, three o' th' chiefest soldiers; I'll be one.
Beat thou the drum, that it speak mournfully:
Trail your steel pikes. Though in this city he
Hath widowed and unchilded many a one,
Which to this hour bewail the injury,
Yet he shall have a noble memory. (5.6.147-53)

Brecht curbs, rationalizes, or eliminates the extreme and excessive language which defines *Coriolanus* as a tragedy as much as Coriolanus' violent on-stage death fulfills in blood the tragic promise of that language.

Shakespeare and Brecht have little affinity in the pitch of their language. Shakespeare's rich imagery and profusion of metaphor (Yuill's "rhetorical upholstery") suggests passions at large in an errant world of tragic willfulness. Brecht's calm and prosaic Rome moves in a justified direction. Yet Shakespeare never glamorizes Coriolanus in his solipsism. He lets others whom the audience cannot approve (Volumnia, Menenius, Aufidius) extol Coriolanus. The audience understands their self-serving words well enough.

Shakespeare's tragedies and tragic characters have indeed been glamorized in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by stage interpretations, such as John Forbes-Robertson's Coriolanus (played in a sterling silver helmet), by operas, such as Verdi's *Otello* and *Macbeth*, and by narrative art, such as Füsseli's oils. The glamor is not Shakespeare; it is adulteration. This Brecht knew as a reader, as a man of the theater, and as much a puritan. The language of Shakespeare is rich, not gawdy; his stage was bare, not

sceneried; his audience largely paid a penny and stood; the lighting at the Globe was daylight, not limelight; the acting was ensemble, not method; and Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists often freely collaborated in their work.

Coriolan represents Brecht's attempt to match his visionary history with his neo-Elizabethan repertory company, the *Berliner Ensemble*, in a play written after World War II. The post-war world of rubble, broken pipes, and hungry *Bürger* is not Shakespeare's world. Sartre's *The Flies* (1943) seems not so many light years removed from Aeschylus' *Oresteia* or Anouilh's *Antigone* (1946) from Sophocles by comparison. But for Brecht alone the theatre of his Shakespearean model held as much interest as the plot and characters, and for good reason. Brecht turned to Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* in 1951 because for him the time of dismissing the generals was come and the company to show the way assembled.

Notes

1. *The Art of Vandalism: Bertolt Brecht and the English Drama* (London: Bedford College, 1977), pp. 16–19.
2. "The Case is Altered: Brecht's Use of Shakespeare," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 51, no. 2 (1981–1982), 127.
3. Of Shakespeare's thirty-eight plays, for instance, only two, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, have what can be called original plots. In the case of Brecht, perhaps only *Leben des Galilei* and *Der Gute Mensch von Sezuan* have original plots.
4. "Adaptation as a Feature of Brecht's Dramatic Technique," *German Life and Letters*, 15, no. 1 (1961–1962), 274–75.
5. "Bert Brecht und Shakespeare," *Orbis Litterarum*, 14 (1959), 89, 91.
6. John Dover Wilson, ed., *Coriolanus*, New Cambridge edition (1960; rpt. Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1972), p. ix. All subsequent references to Shakespeare's play are taken from this edition.
7. *Brecht und Shakespeare* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1971), p. 178. Frederic Ewen says in his biography, *Bertolt Brecht: His Life, His Art and His Times* (New York: Citadel, 1967), that Brecht began work on *Coriolan* in 1952 but that his attraction to Shakespeare's tragedy began as early as the 1920s when he saw Erich Engel's production in Berlin (p. 472). Symington discusses Engel's Lessing-Theater production (a flop), which Brecht saw 27 February 1925 (pp. 177–78).
8. Arrigo V. Subiotto, *Bertolt Brecht's Adaptations for the Berliner Ensemble* (London: MHRA, 1975), p. 146.
9. Yuill, p. 18.
10. Yuill, p. 18.
11. Yuill, p. 16. Surely no one in Shakespeare studies would disagree. For the classic study of politics in *Coriolanus*, see M. W. MacCallum's *Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background* (1910; rpt. London: Russell and Russell, 1967).
12. Subiotto, p. 182.
13. Nor did he take either the Trojan or the Greek side in *Troilus and Cressida*.
14. Subiotto, p. 150.
15. They are the three Henry VI plays, *Richard III*, *King John*, *Richard II*, the two Henry IV plays, *Henry V*, and *Henry VIII*.
16. Only Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* is based on Greek history. The main source again is Plutarch.

17. Ewen, p. 111.
18. Ewen, pp. 111, 473–74.
19. Yuill, p. 16.
20. The exceptions are tragicomedies *Cymbeline* and *Henry VIII*. (*Henry V*, which ends joyfully in Henry's marriage to Katherine of France, has an Epilogue who sadly explains that Henry's death at 35 will bring a nine-months' infant to the throne and England to civil war.)
21. (c. 1946; rpt. Paris: Nagel, 1970).
22. See especially pp. 89–92.
23. "Brecht devant Shakespeare," *Revue d'histoire du théâtre*, 17 (1964), 83.
24. Yuill, p. 17.
25. Subiotto, p. 150.
26. "Coriolan," *Stücke XI* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1959), p. 149. All subsequent references to the text are taken from this edition.
27. Symington says that before Brecht began adapting *Coriolan*, he read "die Bühnenfassung des Deutschen Theaters aus dem Jahr 1937" and Tieck's translation (p. 178).
28. See Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 5 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1966), p. 526.
29. *Coriolan*, ed. Bernhard Kytzler. Text der Tragödie in der Übersetzung von Dorothea Tieck. (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1965), p. 70.

Book Reviews

Katherine Bliss Eaton, *The Theater of Meyerhold and Brecht*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985. 142 pages (illustrated).

Eaton's study, parts of which appeared in the *Brecht-Jahrbuch* (1979), seeks to establish the far-ranging influence of Meyerhold's theatrical style on Western avant-garde theater in general and on Brecht in particular. The fundamental question Eaton addresses is why Brecht's dramatic theory and style which in every important detail so clearly echo Meyerhold's work is popularly viewed as Brecht's original contribution to theatrical practice. Eaton feels that the similarities in theatrical practices between Meyerhold and Brecht are more significant than similarities traced by other scholars linking Brecht's theater to the medieval theater, Shakespeare, or Restoration drama. To establish the realm of Meyerhold's influence on Brecht's theatrical practices and his theory of *Verfremdung*, Eaton carefully documents the interchange of ideas between Russia and Germany in the 1920s. She also describes the range of Meyerhold's theatrical style from his pre-1917 symbolist staging of *The Fairground Booth*, *Masquerade*, and *Don Juan* to the post-revolutionary constructivist stagings of among others, *Mystery Bouffe*, *Death of Tarelkin*, and *The Magnanimous Cuckold*, and the stagings of the late 1920s and early 1930s of *Inspector General*, *The Forest*, *The Bedbug*, and *The Bathhouse*. Meyerhold's theatricalization of the theater through the use of lighting effects, removal of stage curtain, the montage like cutting up of dramatic texts, and his training of actors are compared to similarities of theatrical practices often attributed to Brecht, particularly in the stagings of plays Eaton has selected to describe, such as *The Life of Edward II*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The Mother*, *A Man's A Man*, and *Herr Puntila and His Servant Matti*.

Eaton's study proves to be invaluable in her careful tracing of the close ties between Germany and Russia in the 1920s. Eaton presents general studies and reviews appearing in the German press on the Soviet theater, reviews that would have been accessible to Brecht, and as Eaton points out, some, in particular an article on the Blue Blouse theater, were found among Brecht's papers with relevant parts carefully underlined. Visits to Berlin by the Blue Blouse group, Tairov's Kamerny Theatre, Vakhtangov's theater, and later Meyerhold's ensemble exemplified the relatively

free passage of dramatic art from Russia to the West. Individual travel was also relatively unrestricted, and Asja Lacis, Bernhard Reich, Anatoly Lunacharsky, Sergei Tretiakov, and Sergei Eisenstein transmitted the latest creative innovations in the Soviet theater and arts. Simultaneously, German artists and intellectuals such as Brecht himself, Piscator, Carola Neher, Toller, Becher, and Walter Benjamin had the opportunity to visit the Soviet Union and experience the tenor of art and life for themselves. In these interchanges between the Russian and German avant-garde, certainly Meyerhold's theatrical practices would have been frequent subjects for discussion. Among those who would have been most influential in calling Brecht's attention to the theater of Meyerhold was Asja Lacis who collaborated with Brecht in his staging of *Edward II*.

In her description of cultural interchanges, Eaton presents an interesting scenario of a possible meeting between Brecht and Meyerhold during Brecht's visit to Moscow in the spring of 1935. Both Meyerhold and Brecht attended the performance of the Chinese actor Mei Lan-Fang, and since both wrote extensively about Mei Lan-Fang's acting style, we know that this performance made a lasting impression on them, and in Brecht's case contributed to the development of his epic theory. Eaton postulates that a meeting might have occurred since Tretiakov, a close friend and colleague of Meyerhold's, was Brecht's host during this visit. However, this meeting unfortunately belongs to the realm of conjecture since no references to such an event, either by Meyerhold or Brecht, have been found.

With regard to Brecht's use of the *V-effekt*, Eaton quite appropriately points out that although Brecht may not have met any Russian Formalists while in Moscow, their ideas on deautomized perception influenced the general development and direction of the arts in Russia. According to the Formalists, in the process of defamiliarization, artful obstacles are interposed between the perceiving subject and perceived object to break the perceiver's automatic and habitual associations. Stage constructions, the use of film projections, the cutting up of dramatic texts into short segments similar to those used by Eisenstein in his films, the use of placards, posters, circus-like effects, the attention to gestic acting, the elimination of the psychological motivation of characters, the use of bright lights, and interrupted action had all been part of the theatrical practice in the incredibly dynamic period in the Soviet Union at the time of the Revolution. As avatars in the revolution of the theater, Russian directors worked closely with critics, writers, composers, and artists to produce an aesthetics which would take into account a new way of looking at the world, both aesthetically and socially. Like the circle surrounding Brecht, the Russian Formalists and members of the avant-garde socialized together, worked together, and often lived together. Theory and practice were closely interrelated. Nor was the work that was done in the Soviet Union confined to its borders. As Eaton so carefully establishes, free intellectual interchange was fostered by poetry readings given in Berlin by Mayakovsky in 1925, 1928, and 1929, by Meyerhold's production of Tretiakov's *Roar China*, by Tretiakov's extended visits to Berlin, by Asja Lacis' frequent visits to Russia and her reports on the theatrical scene there, and by the German translation of Tairov's *Notes of a Director*.

In tracing the cultural and individual reciprocal exchange of ideas between Russian and German artists, at times Eaton attempts to establish too linear a line of influence from Meyerhold to Brecht. In the discussion of influences on Brecht's dramatic theory to ascribe influence as unilaterally Meyerhold-Brecht, she does not take into account frequent reciprocity in influence. For example, as Eaton mentions, Meyerhold was greatly influenced by Georg Fuchs. At the same time the Ger-

man theater was also subject to that influence. Nor can the innovations introduced by Appia, Jessner, Reinhardt, the Expressionists, and Piscator be discounted as potential influences on both Meyerhold and Brecht. Consequently, many of the ideas that appear to come to Brecht via Meyerhold were also at work at the same time in the German theater. These ideas also found their way to Russia. Evidence of this would have been by way of the German staging of Büchner's *Woyzeck*, Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and Wedekind's *Spring Awakening*. Despite the static qualities of the Expressionists staging, innovations in both lighting and stage design cannot be discounted as potential influences on both Meyerhold and Brecht, nor can Strindberg's influence by way of *Open Letters to the Intimate Theater* be ignored as playing a role in changing attitudes towards the theater both in Germany and Russia. Brecht's fascination with the work of Karl Valentin, the great Munich comic and cabaret artist, as well as his fascination with boxing as a spectacle, parallel Meyerhold's interest in the commedia dell'arte, Charlie Chaplin, and the circus. In a sense then, both Meyerhold and Brecht were subject to similar influences that determined their theatrical style. Since Meyerhold precedes Brecht, it is natural to include him as a strong influence on Brecht. However, it must be remembered that both Meyerhold and Brecht were ultimately subject to the same theatrical "intertextuality."

Eaton's unilateral approach to influence also pertains to Brecht's use of the *Verfremdungseffekt* as having been entirely determined by his contacts with the Russian theater. Despite the fact that Brecht himself did not use the term "ostranenie," or his version of it in the *V-effekt*, until after his visit to the Soviet Union in 1935, the attitude of "making strange," of breaking conventional perceptions of the world, hung in the air in the Berlin of the 1920s as well as in the Soviet art scene. This attitude can be detected in the highly unnaturalistic plays of the German Expressionists, as well as in the political concerns of Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller, the political cartoons of Georg Grosz, in Reinhardt's theater for a mass audience, and in Piscator's staging of *the Good Soldier Schweik* in his agit prop theater. Obviously since there was so much interaction of the Berlin intellectual scene with that of the Soviet Union, and since there was simultaneously a social ferment in the works in Berlin as well, it would be foolish to treat Brecht as an isolated prophet of the theater. However, to treat the subject of influence in a one sided manner does not do justice to the idea of reciprocal influence or the notion that several influences may intersect and neutralize one another.

Eaton tries too hard to establish a direct line of influence from Meyerhold to Brecht in other ways. For example, she imposes on Tretiakov, Meyerhold's ideas, and since it is well known that Brecht and Tretiakov met frequently, Brecht would have been thus subject to Meyerhold's influence. Surely Tretiakov had his own ideas on the function of the theater. This attitude is evident in such passages as this: "What Tretiakov had in mind were what he considered to be Meyerhold's most important theatrical ideas," or in another "Evidence of a Meyerhold-Tretiakov-Brecht connection can be seen in Brecht's play *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* with its rosy picture of Soviet life." (p. 24). Here one should rightfully separate what are Tretiakov's ideas on the function of the theater and what are Meyerhold's. While some of their ideas overlapped, Tretiakov was more interested in an agitprop theater, while Meyerhold was more interested in the theatricalization of the theater.

Nor do I agree with Eaton that Brecht's use of ideological terminology was necessarily borrowed from Meyerhold-Tretiakov, as implied by Eaton's observation that Tretiakov hoped to stage his *I Want a Baby* as a "dialectic drama (a catchword

which, from the 1930s, would become prominent in Brecht's writing)" (p. 27). Brecht discussed Marxism not only with Tretiakov but also with his "teachers" Sternberg and Karl Korsch, as well as with Walter Benjamin. Particularly from Korsch, Brecht acquired much of his understanding of the Hegelian and Marxist dialectic, and it is from this period of association with Korsch that stem Brecht's three highly original works, *Measures Taken*, *The Mother*, and his film *Kuhle Wampe*, as well as his *Me-ti* aphorisms.

While Eaton's comparison of the theatrical practices of Meyerhold and Brecht is indeed legitimate, however, I have some problems with Eaton's intent in writing the study "to help restore Meyerhold to his deserved place in the history of art, and through a study of the two directors, to provide a basic guide to the theory and practice of Meyerhold." (p. 5) Clearly, in view of the many studies on Meyerhold, there is little need to establish Meyerhold's greatness as a theatrical innovator. From the very exposure of Westerners to Soviet theater, Meyerhold's theatrical style was acknowledged by Huntley Carter, Cecil De Mille, and others. More recent studies are represented by *The Drama Review's* Soviet theater issue T 57, the *TDR* all-Meyerhold issue T-63, Edward Braun's translation of a selection of Meyerhold's writing on the theater as well as his study on Meyerhold's theater (1969, 1979), James Symons' study *The Theater of the Grotesque* (1971), Marjorie Hoover's *Meyerhold: The Art of Conscious Theater* (1974), the translation of Rudnitsky's *Meyerhold the Director* (1980), and the recent studies on theatrical constructivism by Alma Law. On the basis of these studies, it seems that there is little need to argue that Meyerhold is not acknowledged as indeed one of the greatest directors of the 20th century theater, second not even to Brecht.

In attempting to establish Meyerhold's significance as an influence on Brecht, Eaton frequently undervalues Brecht's individual contributions to the theater. Such passages as "Differences in their dramatic theories are insignificant. In the matter of practice, the differences lie in the area of experimental range; there is hardly any device used by Brecht or his acknowledged mentor Piscator which had not been tried first by Meyerhold." (p. 120) blur significant differences between Meyerhold's and Brecht's theatrical style. While it is true that Brecht indeed made use of the many theatrical conventions first presented in the Soviet theater and in Meyerhold's in particular, the focus, pacing and ultimately intent in using the conventions differed substantially. For example in their use of music, one finds a significant difference. Yes, Meyerhold did place the orchestra on stage, thereby displaying it, but the orchestra's function did not differ from its function when placed in the pit. Meyerhold's use of Glazunov's or Shostakovich's music was by way of incidental commentary. Brecht, on the other hand, used his "songs" as a means of breaking up action but also as a means of pushing the plot forward. Perhaps because he was a dramatist, and here I object to Eaton's designation of Meyerhold as a dramatist, Brecht's use of the circular treadmill was also closely related to the dramatic action, as for example in *Mother Courage* when Courage at first goes in step with the treadmill virtually running forward towards disaster, only to find herself in the end alone pulling her wagon against the treadmill, virtually at a standstill.

The intent of my discussion of Eaton's study is to stress that the study of the influence of one individual upon another is complex in nature, and it doesn't necessarily enhance Meyerhold's stature to ascribe influence as solely residing in the apparent forerunner. Much of the weight of influence should also be placed on reception. In other words, reception is possible only when a fertile environment exists making reception possible. Consequently the climate of that reception should also be exam-

ined with care to take into account simultaneous reciprocal influences, and the re-working of influences to suit individual style.

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Bernd Mahl, *Brechts und Monks "Urfaust"—Inszenierung mit dem Berliner Ensemble 1952/53* (Stuttgart und Zürich: Belser Verlag), Studien zur Goethe-Zeit und Goethe Wirkung. Schriftenreihe der Goethe-Gesellschaft Stuttgart, 1. pp. 208.

Given the extraordinary importance in Brecht's life and work of his actual staging of texts, it is amazing to note the molehill of Brecht scholarship on Brecht's stage praxis as compared to the mountain of work that has been done on the texts of the plays and on Brecht's various, and often contradictory, theatrical statements on the drama. In this new study by Bernd Mahl of Bertolt Brecht's and Egon Monk's 1952/53 *Urfaust* production with the Berliner Ensemble, the emphasis is overwhelmingly on praxis, on what actually happened when the work was prepared for staging first in a tryout, if you will, in Potsdam, and was then revised for a studio production in Berlin.

As the whole subject of this radical and highly controversial *Urfaust* and its treatment of "deutsche Misere" and the whole question of what stance to take vis-à-vis the great German bourgeois classics, has been almost completely ignored in Brecht scholarship (including the scholarship of the German Democratic Republic as Mahl acerbically points out), a thorough analysis of the subject is certainly long overdue.

Until quite recently the received wisdom about the Monk/Brecht *Urfaust* was that, though the written text of the work had been carefully preserved and one could there see clearly the changes that had been made in Goethe's original written text, there were virtually no pictures of either the Potsdam or the Berlin stage productions that had survived. After some detective work, Mahl was able to find literally thousands of still photographs that have permitted him to reconstruct basically every jot and tittle of the stage production itself. Indeed, not only did there turn out to be hundreds upon hundreds of superb black and white still photographs available, but Mahl was also able to get his hands on the 8 mm movie version of the production that the then seventeen year old Hans Jürgen Syberberg made of the production in early 1953. The selection of photographs offered by Mahl in his handsomely produced book give us a remarkable sense of how Monk and Brecht captured in dress, and set, and movement the poisonous but lively world of the seducer Faust. His diabolical helper, Mephistopheles, and Gretchen, after her seduction, abandoned to madness and death.

As Mahl gives us not only the historic and photographic record of the rehearsals and of the Potsdam and Berlin productions themselves, but also gives us both the annotated text of the Brecht/Monk *Urfaust* and carefully notes the rearrangements of scenes that were made as well as the deletions and interpolations that give the new text its distinctive character, we can clearly see why this bold and suppos-

edly "irreverent" production caused such a furor in 1952/53 and why it was taken off after only a few performances.

Not only did the production stir up a considerable fuss in Potsdam, but then, even before its Berlin premiere, the stagehands working on the production lodged their formal objections with Brecht! Brecht and Monk went ahead despite this and ran into a veritable buzz saw of criticism as soon as the work was shown to the public. In a kind of time warp of criticism, in April and May 1953, all of the vocabulary that had dominated the critical discourse in the USSR in the mid-1930s where Brecht had been accused of various reprehensible departures from Socialist Realist theory and practice, now returned again in the pages of the leading literary journals and by Walter Ulbricht himself in a May 27, 1953 speech entitled "Die Aufgaben der Intelligenz beim Aufbau des Sozialismus in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik," where he made ominous reference to "formalists, constructivists, and whatever else they call themselves," creating "caricatures" and "formalistically raping" a German classic in the current production of the *Urfaust*. Though Brecht was not mentioned by name, the message of how unwelcome his work was on Goethe's *Faust* could hardly have been made much plainer.

Following Stalin's death and Khrushchev's revelations at the XXth Party Congress in the spring of 1956, for a brief period before Brecht's death in mid-August 1956, it became possible to openly reexamine the aesthetics and other aspects of the Stalin era. Brecht died before this reexamination had had a chance to make very much progress. But for scholars today to try to understand what Brecht was trying to achieve during a period when the aesthetic policies of Zhdanov/Stalin were the dominant ones, when Brecht was trying to open up Marxist aesthetics to include other models than those proposed by Zhdanov, Stalin, and Georg Lukacs, a reexamination of the *Urfaust* production is a very fruitful exercise indeed. Bernd Mahl deserves our thanks for the detective work that has made these raw materials available so that they can now be openly examined with a view to using these materials to develop more progressive aesthetic models than were dreamed of in Stalin, Zhdanov, Ulbricht, and Lukacs' rather "nineteenth century" models.

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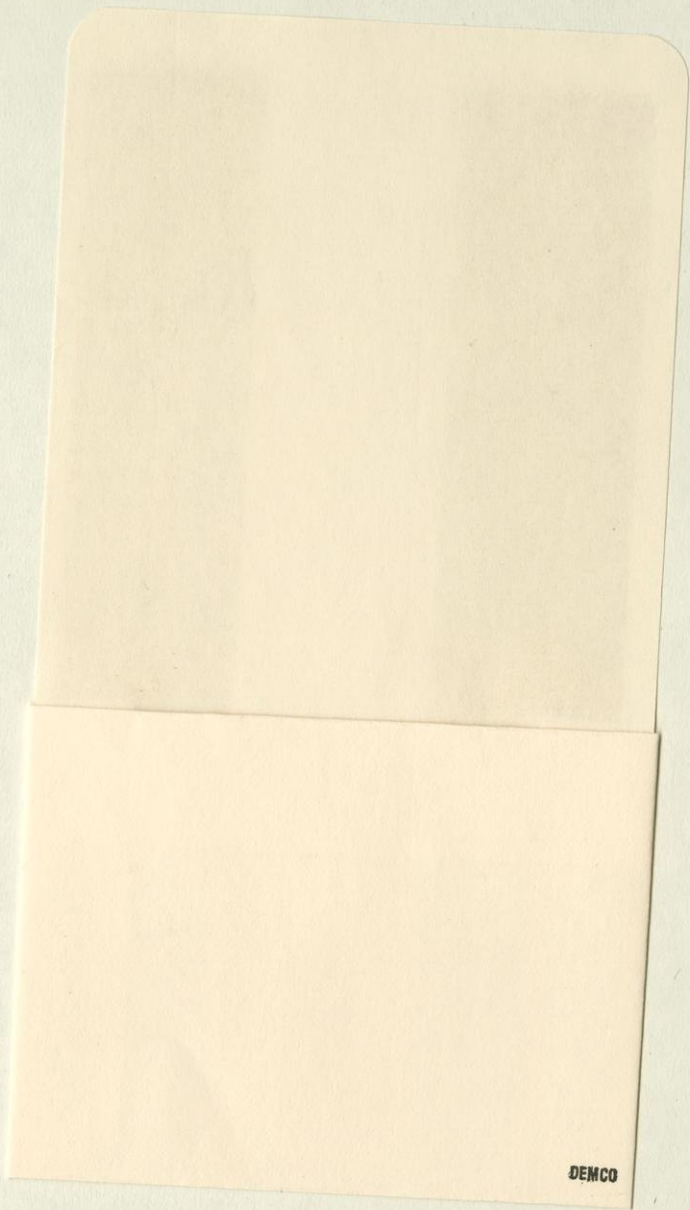
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