

Communications from the International Brecht Society. Vol. 32 June 2003

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COMMUNICATIONS

PR

from the International Brecht Society

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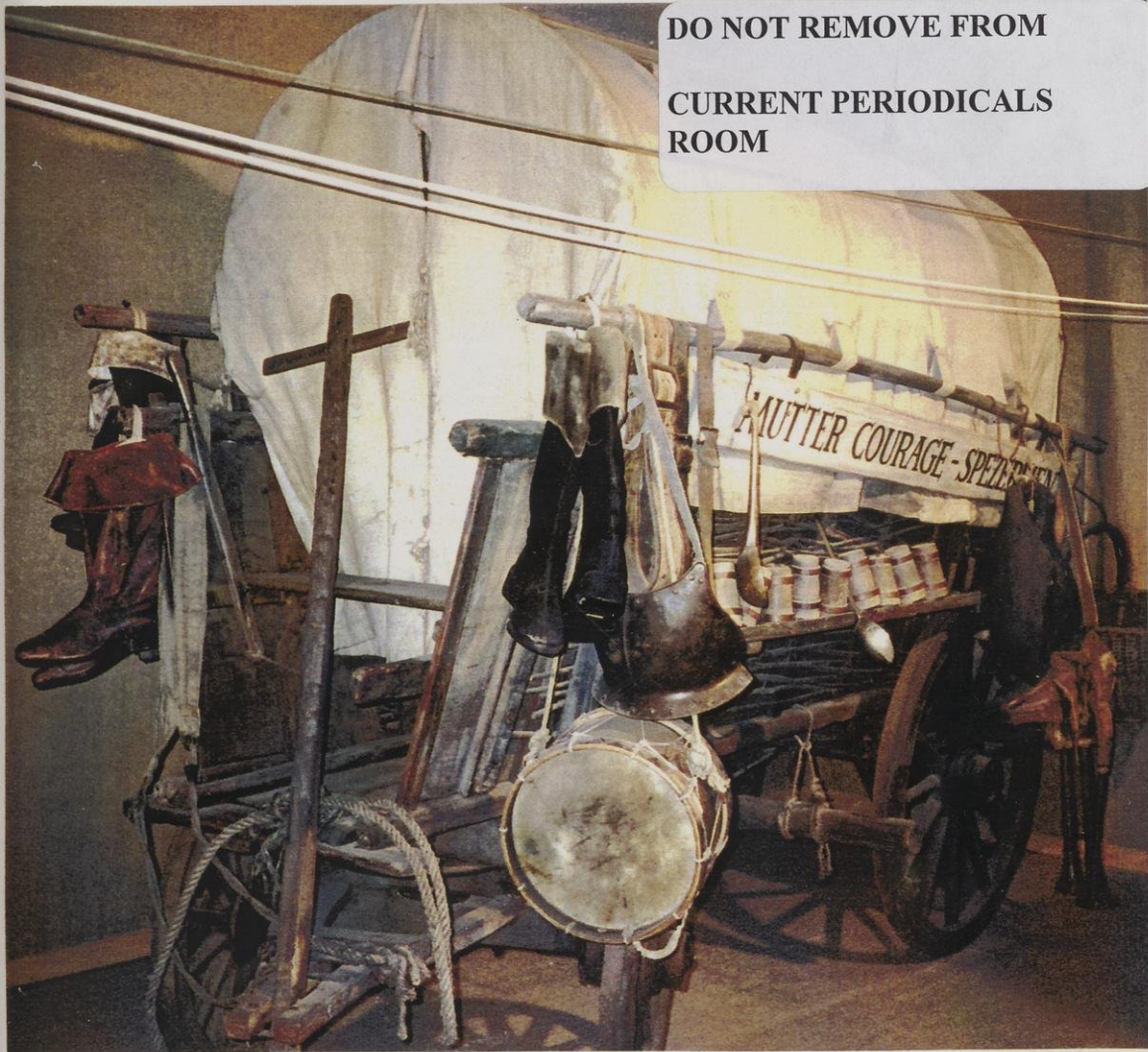


Photo by G. Tabbert-Jones

Brecht-Weigel Museum in Buckow

INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY COMMUNICATIONS

Volume 32

June 2003

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

The Editor wishes to thank Professor Carl Weber, Drama Department, Stanford University, for his continued support.

See the inside back cover for information on subscriptions and membership. Membership in the IBS includes subscriptions to both *Communications* and *The Brecht Yearbook*. The Managing Editor of *The Brecht Yearbook* is Stephan Brockmann, Associate Professor of German, Department of Modern Languages, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

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

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

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Bertolt Brecht, Drawing by John Willett,
Courtesy of Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv

EDITOR'S NOTE

This year *Communications* focuses on the 11th Symposium under the title *Mahagonny.Com* in Berlin. Thanks to careful planning and organization and balmy weather the event was a great success. The conference provided participants with a wide variety of academic as well as artistic presentations that explored new approaches and interpretations of Brecht's "Mahagonny" today: as text, as music, aesthetically, historically and theatrically, and finally as a metaphor for the metropolis/parvenuepolis in a globalized world. Conference participants had multiple sections to choose from and, in view of the variety of topics and speakers, the choices were hard indeed. Selected papers presented at the conference will be published in the *Brecht Yearbook 29*, others will appear in *Communications*, next year. However, the artistic performances are reviewed in this issue. Unfortunately it was not possible to obtain photographs of most productions we saw.

Some articles in this issue are based on papers presented at the (December 27 – 29) 2002 MLA in New York, some evolved from presentations at the (April 24-26, 2003) 56th Kentucky Foreign Language Conference, in Lexington, Kentucky. The other articles published here contribute in new and interesting ways to the ongoing discourse on Brechtian theater.

Now to operational matters. I have been the editor of *Communications* since 1995 and I feel it is time for me to step down. Ballots will be sent out soon and I urge you vote. I would like to thank some of the people who have helped and advised me for the past eight years, Marc Silberman, Vera Stegmann, Helgrid Streidt, Carl Weber and Erdmut Wizisla, and Britta Kallin who has been associate editor for two years. I also would like to thank our current president, Alexander Stephan and past presidents Michael Morley, Siegfried Mews, and secretary/treasurer David Robinson. And I would like to thank Santa Clara University for financial support. Collaboration with experts in the field has been the most important and rewarding aspect of my work as editor. I have enjoyed being an officer of the International Brecht Society and will continue to participate and contribute in any way I can.

Gudrun Tabbert-Jones, Santa Clara University

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The main event for IBS in 2003 was the 11th Symposium of the International Brecht Society which took place from June 26 to 29 at the Akademie der Künste, Humboldt University and various other locations in Berlin, Germany. The topic of the conference was *Mahagonny.com. 75 Years of The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. Our thanks go to the organizing committee which worked hard to put this symposium together. A full report on *Mahagonny.com* can be found below in this issue of *Communications*.

Before the beginning of the conference in Berlin IBS members were invited to an open meeting at the Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus. At this meeting IBS Officers Erdmut Wizisla (Vice president), David Robinson (Secretary/Treasurer), Gudrun Tabbert-Jones (Editor,

Communications) and I gave reports about recent activities of the society. As editor of *The Brecht Yearbook*, Stephen Brockmann described his plans for the current and future editions of the *Yearbook*. Members had the opportunity to discuss these reports and other issues concerning IBS and Brecht research, including the possibility of creating a lifetime IBS membership. Unfortunately, attempts by various IBS members to save the Brecht-Arbeitsstelle at the Universität Karlsruhe seem to have been unsuccessful. It was announced that according to IBS by-laws an election of IBS officers is due this year. Information and ballots for this election will be sent to members by David Robinson.

Since my last report as President of IBS, Erdmut Wizisla, Stephen Brockmann as editor of *The Brecht Yearbook*, and I discussed at several meetings and via e-mail ways to make the yearbook still more attractive. As a result of these discussions it was decided that in the future *The Brecht Yearbook* should contain, in addition to the usually scholarly essays and book reviews, a section with unpublished texts by Brecht and a section containing interviews with Brecht's collaborators or prominent artists, directors, or scholars working on projects related to Brecht's life and works.

In addition to the usual panel at the 2002 conference of the Modern Language Association, IBS was present with a special session at the 56th Kentucky Foreign Language Conference which met at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Kentucky, in April 2003. Several papers from this meeting are printed in the current issue of *Communications*. The *Dreigroschenheft* invited IBS to present itself with a brief text which appeared in issue 4/2002.

As outgoing President of IBS I would like to thank all of you with whom I have had the privilege to collaborate. It was a special pleasure to work with Erdmut, Gudrun, David and Stephen.

Alexander Stephan
President, IBS

EDITOR'S REPORT, *BRECHT YEARBOOK*

The *Brecht Yearbook* 28 is called *Friends, Colleagues, Collaborators / Freunde, Kollegen, Mitarbeiter*. It will be shipped to members of the IBS and to libraries in August-September of 2003. This volume includes a previously unpublished work by Bertolt Brecht and Fritz Lang entitled 437, which is a treatment of the film *Hangmen Also Die*. 437 is preceded by an introduction by James Lyon. Also included in this volume is an English-language translation by Marc Silberman of Ekkehard Schall's memoirs, as well as a series of articles revolving around the topic of collaboration in Brecht's work. There is an interview by Vera Stegmann with Eric Bentley, and there are two articles in memory of John Willett. Volume 29 of the *Yearbook* will be devoted to selected articles from the *Mahagonny.com* conference which took place in Berlin in June 2003, as well as to the publication of another treatment by Brecht and Lang entitled

Never Surrender; that volume will be guest-edited by Marc Silberman and Florian Vassen. The next open issue of the *Yearbook* is volume 30, and the deadline for submissions to volume 30 is November 20, 2004. Guidelines for submission to the *Yearbook* are now available at the IBS website.

Stephen Brockmann

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 2002

The IBS suffered a net financial loss in 2002 due to a worrisome fall in institutional membership. The outlook for 2003 is much brighter. The Berlin symposium is bringing significant financial gain, and it has prevented 2003 from shaping up as a very bad year for individual membership. Nonetheless, the trend for individual membership continues to be flat or slightly negative, as it has been since the Brecht centenary. It seems highly likely that the sluggish worldwide economy is forcing both individuals and libraries to cut back. Barring a significant economic upturn, I foresee a very lean 2004.

FINANCIAL REPORT

1 January 2002 – 31 December 2002

ACCOUNT	Beginning Balance	Ending Balance
Dollar Savings	\$ 18,708.11*	\$ 12,137.88*
Dollar Checking	\$ 6,405.05	\$ 6,126.57
Euro Checking	\$ 1,012.69	\$ 1,414.85
Total Dollar Income		\$ 9,745.82
Total Dollar Expenditures		\$ 11,773.28
Euro Expenditures		€ 100.56
Approximate Total Assets on 31 December 2002:		\$ 19,700
Net Dollar Loss in 2002:		\$ 2,027.46
Net Euro Gain in 2002:		€ 442.90

*Includes credit card holding account.

David W. Robinson, Secretary / Treasurer

IN BRIEF

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The following appeared in *Communications* of June 2001:

"This new volume in the Methuen Brecht edition (*Collected Plays 4*) contains the text of a major Brecht play which has not, until now, been available in English, *Roundheads and Pointed Heads*." (vol. 30, 76)

In fact, as most readers of *Communications* will know, this play was published by *Grove Press* of New York in the 1960's, and is still in print with *Grove* today. It was published in English in the 1930's even before it was published in the German original. It appeared, albeit abridged, in the magazine *International Theatre*, Moscow, 1935, at the instigation, of course, of Brecht himself. The version in print today with *Grove Press* was first published in the magazine *International Literature*, Moscow, 1937, also at Brecht's instigation. This text acknowledges a translator: N. Goold-Verschöyle.

Working with Brecht in the Forties, I asked him who this translator was. He only knew he was "an Englishman living in the Soviet Union." Perhaps some reader of *Communications* can identify him further? "Goold" looks to me like transliteration from the Cyrillic of "Gould."

The *Grove Press* volume I am calling attention to is *Jungle of Cities and other Plays*, first printing 1966.

Eric Bentley

IBS NEWS

Ralf Remshardt (Theatre Department, University of Florida, Gainesville) is the IBS liaison to the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE). Over the past 10 years, the IBS has frequently sponsored a session at the ATHE's annual conference, usually held in late July or August. A call for papers for the IBS session at next summer's conference will be posted at the IBS website (click on >Announcements>Call for papers).

On September 21, 2003, there will be an evening event at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin to present two new Brecht publications: the annotated catalogue of Brecht's personal library prepared by the Brecht-Archive (Suhrkamp Verlag) and volume 5 of the Brecht Handbuch (Metzler Verlag), which completes this important reference work. As well, Suhrkamp Verlag will announce the special offer of the complete, 30-volume edition of Brecht's works that will be available for sale at €500.

Discussions are underway for the next, 12th IBS Symposium to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Brecht's death in summer 2006. Jürgen Hillesheim is exploring the feasibility of hosting the symposium in Augsburg, where Brecht was born in 1898, on the topic of "The Young Brecht / Der junge Brecht." Details will be posted on the IBS website.

The IBS, in cooperation with the Brecht Archive, is planning to create a bibliography of Brecht's work in English translation. It is expected that bibliographical searches and data entry will take about one year. The results will be made available in the form of a searchable database accessible through the websites of the IBS or the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv. Helgrid Streidt, bibliographer of the Brecht Archive, will be coordinating the bibliography project under the supervision of Tom Kuhn (Oxford University) and Marc Silberman (University of Wisconsin, Madison). The aim of the bibliography is to be as complete as possible, including as far as possible early as well as unauthorized translations in all English-language cultures.

Marc Silberman

ÜBER DIE ARBEIT DES BERTOLT-BRECHT-ARCHIVS

Erdmut Wizisla

Heute ist das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv Teil der im Herbst 1993 gegründeten Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste, die gemeinsam vom Bundesinnenministerium und von den Ländern Berlin und Brandenburg getragen wird. In den Bereichen Handschriften, Bibliothek, Helene-Weigel-Archiv und Brecht-Weigel-Gedenkstätte arbeiten fünf Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter. Als befruchtend für die Arbeit wirkt sich der Umstand aus, dass das Land Berlin im Dezember 1992 die Originale des Brecht-Nachlasses von den Erben Brechts erworben und sie dem Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv als Dauerleihgabe übergeben hat. Mit dem Nachlass wurden die Bibliothek Brechts und das ausgesprochen ergiebige Fotoarchiv der Erben gekauft. Die Gründung der Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste brachte eine relative Stabilität der Finanzlage, und sie ermöglichte sowohl Ankäufe einiger bedeutender Handschriften als auch die überfällige Aufbesserung der technischen Ausstattung des Archivs (Telefonanlage, Computer, Tonanlage, Kopierer).

Die wesentlichen Aufgaben des Archivs sind unverändert: Das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv und die Brecht-Weigel-Gedenkstätte haben in erster Linie der Öffentlichkeit den Zugang zum Nachlass und zu den Wohnungen von Bertolt Brecht und Helene Weigel zu ermöglichen. Das erfordert die Fähigkeit zur soliden Aufbereitung und Betreuung der Materialien, und es verlangt eine ausgewiesene Kennerschaft. Die weltpolitischen Veränderungen der letzten Jahre haben das Interesse an Brecht nicht lahmgelegt, der Andrang ist unverändert. Es gibt keinen Bruch in der Brecht-Rezeption auf den Bühnen der Welt. Über Brecht und ihn betreffende Themen werden anhaltend Dissertationen geschrieben, ein beträchtlicher Teil davon mit Unterstützung des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs. Inhaltlich sind Akzentverschiebungen zu verzeichnen. Wissenschaftliche oder journalistische Arbeiten, Filme, Ausstellungen etc. widmen sich bislang vernachlässigten Themen. Auf der Basis neuer Zeugnisse werden Brechts Haltung zum Stalinismus ebenso untersucht wie seine Rolle innerhalb der linken historischen Avantgarde oder die Konflikte mit der DDR-Kultur-Bürokratie. Brechts Mitarbeiterinnen, vor allem Margarete

Steffin, finden zunehmende Aufmerksamkeit. Akribisch wenden sich Untersuchungen Problemen der Druckgeschichte oder der Theatertheorie zu. Die Erarbeitung der neuen Brecht-Ausgabe der Verlage Suhrkamp und Aufbau wird aktiv vom Archiv unterstützt. (*Seid ihr immer noch nicht fertig mit dem Ramsch?*, 1996.)

Dem neuen Editionsstand — ungeachtet aller Einwände hat die Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe Brechts Texte umfassend und auf Jahre gültig zugänglich gemacht — entspricht ein veralteter Aufbereitungsstand der Dokumente im Archiv. Die Modernisierung des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs ist überfällig. Sie hat zu erfolgen im Bemühen um den Zusammenhang zwischen Archiv und Edition, der zu erhalten respektive wiederherzustellen ist. Dabei könnte die Beseitigung der Ungleichzeitigkeit interessante Rückwirkungen auf den Stand der Edition haben.

Die Ausgangslage ist problematisch, günstig könnte allenfalls der Umstand wirken, dass die Innovation sich auf sämtliche Bereiche erstrecken und daher als "große Lösung" realisiert werden muss. Der Veraltungsgrad des Brecht-Archivs steht im scharfen Gegensatz zum Prozess der "Kommunikationsrevolution," die alle Gebiete der Verwaltung und Übermittlung von Informationen und Daten erfasst hat. Die Findhilfsmittel und Arbeitskopien des Brecht-Archivs entsprechen dem Stand ihrer Entstehungszeit, d.h. sie sind teilweise mehr als vierzig Jahre alt, so dass auf traditionelle Weise gearbeitet und vor allem recherchiert wird. Mit Ausnahme der Nachlassbibliothek Brechts, eines Teilbestandsverzeichnisses Helene Weigel, der Bestände Foto-Archiv, Filme und Tonträger verfügt das Archiv bislang nicht über elektronische Findhilfsmittel. Die auf Format A5 verkleinerten Fotokopien aus der Gründungszeit genügen kaum noch den Anforderungen der Nutzer.

Die Beseitigung der Defizite könnte in einem mehrstufigen Projekt vorgenommen werden. Ziele des Projekts sind zunächst die elektronische Verzeichnung aller Dokumente des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs und die Bestandssicherung durch Digitalisierung (ggf. Digitalisierung und Verfischung), um die Verbesserung der Serviceleistung des Archivs zu erreichen.

Es sollte mittelfristig eine elektronische Finddatei des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs erarbeitet werden,

in der die Daten der Dokumente des Archivs — und langfristig die Dokumente selbst — in einer Art Baukasten-System zusammengeführt werden können. Teile dieses Systems wären u.a. die neu zu erstellende Datei der Handschriften des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs, die bereits elektronisch erfassten des ihm beigeordneten Helene-Weigel-Archivs (ergänzt um den bisher nur auf Kartei verzeichneten Bestand), der im Planungszustand befindliche elektronische Katalog der Archivbibliothek, die bereits vorhandene Datei der Nachlassbibliothek, ferner die Theaterdokumentation mit Aufführungstatistik, Filme, Fotos, Ton-Dokumente, Zeitungs ausschnittsdokumentation etc. Unabdingbar sind Verweise auf die *Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* der Werke Brechts, um rasches Auffinden und Zuordnen der Daten zu ermöglichen. Das Ausmaß dieser Arbeiten sollte nicht unterschätzt werden; allein im Handschriftenbereich (inkl. Weigel-Archiv) entspricht die Zusammenführung und Revision der vorhandenen Findhilfsmittel einer Neuverzeichnung des gesamten Archivs.

Eine derartige multifunktionale Brecht-Datenbank als Teil einer bereits im Aufbau befindlichen übergreifenden Datenbank der Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste, zu der das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv gehört, hätte vielfältige Arbeitserleichterungen zur Folge, und zwar sowohl für die Benutzer von außerhalb als auch innerhalb des Brecht-und Weigel-Archivs so wie auf Stiftungsebene (mit Verknüpfungsmöglichkeiten zu den Archiven von Elisabeth Hauptmann, Ruth Berlau, Hanns Eisler, Paul Dessau, Benno Besson, Manfred Wekwerth etc.). (Archive als Editionen?, 2000.)

Dreigroschenheft 3/2003, 51-53

THE 2003/2004 SEASON

THE THREEPENNY OPERA *At the Jean Cocteau Repertory*

David Fuller, Director
Book and Lyrics by Bertolt Brecht
Music by Kurt Weill
English adaptation by Blitzstein

Previews start August 29, 2003
Performances September 6 through
November 23, 2003
Wed at 7 pm
Thurs through Sat at 8 pm
Sunday at 3 pm

Phone:
212-677-0060

Email: questions@jeancocteau.org

RICK MITCHELL, *BRECHT IN L.A.*

Brecht in L.A., winner of the 2002 SWTA National New Play contest (US), is already a critically acclaimed play. Centering on Brecht while adapting and critiquing Brechtian dramatic form, the play provides a unique opportunity for the instructor who is teaching Brechtian theatre since — with just on text (which includes endnotes and appendices) — can cover epic theatre, the “Brecht debate,” Brecht’s biography, and contradictions between Brecht’s theatrical practices and his everyday life.

(Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2003)
ISBN: 1-84150-105-0

UPCOMING EVENTS

UPCOMING EVENTS

IBS SESSIONS AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION

(Dec. 27-30, 2003)

The IBS will sponsor two sessions at the Modern Language Association conference in San Diego.

Session 1:

BRECHT'S ESSAYISTIC WRITING

Presider: **Jonathan Skolnick**, University of Oregon

"Brecht's Liberal Enlightenment Humanism?"

Speaker: **Robert Kaufman**, Stanford University

"Mediation as Method: Adorno's Aesthetic Method and Brecht's Essayistic Practice."

Speaker: **Astrid Oesmann**, University of Iowa

"Crafting Incompleteness: 'The Gift of Change in Brecht's Essay 'Über das Anfertigen von Bildnissen'."

Speaker: **Olaf Berwald**, University of Tennessee

Session 2:

VISUAL CULTURE AND BRECHT

Presider: **Stefan Soldoviero**, University of Toronto

"Viewing Responsibility in Brecht's Antigonemodell"

Speaker: **Therese Ahern Augst**, Princeton University

"Brecht by Barthes: The Brechtian Heritage in Theories of Visual Culture"

Speaker: **Tom Kemper**, Crossroads School of Arts and Sciences

"Staging the Mask – Masking the Stage: Brecht's

Craft Called Asia"

Speaker: **Martina Kolb**, Yale University

KURT WEILL CALENDAR 2003-2004

Performances outside of Germany. (A Selection)

January 2003:

Rotterdam: *Songs and Opera Excerpts*, Rotterdam Philharmonic. (HK Gruber, conductor)

Birmingham: *The Threepenny Opera*, Royal National Theatre Education Centre / Midland Arts Centre

Baltimore: *Mahagonny Songspiel*, Peabody Chamber Opera. (Conductor: JoAnn Kulesza; Director: Roger Brunyate)

Erie: *The Threepenny Opera*, Roadhouse Theatre.

February:

Lille: *Die Sieben Todsünden*, Orchestre National de Lille. (Conductor: Jean-Claude Casadesus)

London: *The Threepenny Opera*, Cottesloe Theatre, Royal National Theatre.

Paris: *Die sieben Todsünden*, Orchestre National de Lille.

St. Paul: *Songs*, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. (Conductor: Andreas Delfs; Singer: Ute Lempert)

March

Pittsburg: *The Threepenny Opera*, Pittsburg Opera Center. (Director: Karla Boos)

Tel Aviv: *Die sieben Todsünden*, Symphony no. 2. Israel Chamber Orchestra. (Conductor: Ori Leshman; director: Adi Etzyon-Zak)

Amsterdam: *Die sieben Todsünden*, Radio Kamerorkest. (Conductor: Peter Eötvös)

Salt Lake City: *Songs*, Utah Symphony. (Conductor: Keith Lockhart)

April:

Norfolk: *Songs*, Celebration of Kurt Weill – 75 Years – *Threepenny Opera*. Old Dominion University. (with special guest: Guy Stern)

Chicago: *The Threepenny Opera*. Roosevelt University

May:

Bath: *Mahagonny Songspiel*. Bath Spa University.

Southend-On-Sea: *The Threepenny Opera*. South East Essex College. New Empire Theater.

New York: *Songs*, Winners of the 2003 Lotte Lenya Competition for Singers, Bruno Walter Auditorium, Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts.

Luzern: *Die sieben Todsünden*, Theater Luzern. (Conductor: Wolfgang Müller)

Los Angeles: *The Threepenny Opera*, California State University. State Playhouse.

June:

San Francisco: *The Seven Deadly Sins*. The San Francisco Symphony. (Conductor: Michael Tilson Thomas; vocalist: Ute Lemper)

Williamstown: *The Threepenny Opera*. Williamstown Theatre Festival.

Cincinnati: *Die sieben Todsünden*. Cincinnati Opera. (Director: Nicholas Muni)

July:

Point Richmond: *The Threepenny Opera*, Masquers Playhouse.

August:

Niagara-On-The-Lake: *Happy End*, Shaw Festival. (Conductor: Dr. Paul Sportelli; director: Tadeusz Bradecki)

August:

Gainesville: *The Threepenny Opera*, Acrosstown Repertory Theatre.

January 2004:

Philadelphia: *Die sieben Todsünden*, Philadelphia Orchestra. Kimmel Center. (Conductor: Carlos Kalmar; singer: Ute Lemper)

June 2004:

Milwaukee: *The Seven Deadly Sins*. Milwaukee Symphony. (Conductor: Andreas Delfs)

For more information: <http://www.kwf.org>

CONFERENCE REPORTS

"BRECHT PLUS MINUS FILM" THE ANNUAL "BRECHT-TAGE" IN BERLIN

FEB. 16-23, 2003

James K. Lyon

Central to the 2003 "Brecht- Tage" at the Literaturform in Berlin was the observation -- reflected in the intentionally ambivalent title -- that while Brecht's theoretical writings and practical work on film never had the same impact on film-making that his plays and dramatic theory did on the theater, the interest in his film work persists, and the influence of his dramas and theoretical writings continues to surface in avant garde films made as recently as 2002. This year's "Brecht-Tage," organized by Erdmut Wizisla, director of the Brecht Archive, and the writer Thomas Martin, addressed this paradox with historical and theoretical presentations.

The organizers arranged that on each day of the conference the Filmkunsthaus Babylon would show various films associated with the topic "Brecht and Film." These included Volker Schlöndorff's *Baal* film; avant garde films loosely connected with Brechtian themes or theory, e.g. Fassbinder's *Mutter Küsters Fahrt zum Himmel*; Watkins' *La Commune*; Godard's *Vivre sa Vie*, and Bockmayer und Bührmann's *Jane bleibt Jane*; an American film that once impressed Brecht, viz. *Little Caesar*, Staudte's film version of *Die Dreigroschenoper*; and several political films in the Brechtian tradition by Eschenbach/Voigt (*Der Zögling*), Episches Theater. Eine Skizze (*Hofmeister*) by Voigt, and by Harun Farocki (*Nicht löschesbares Feuer; Bilder der Welt; Gefängnisbilder; Auge/Maschine*). Farocki also gave an illustrated film lecture one evening on "Political Film After Brecht" in which he theorized about the subversive nature of his own "film essays" as a continuation of the tradition of political film derived from Brecht and Godard.

But two films also shown in the Filmkunsthaus Babylon held center stage in all but one of the evening lectures -- Philippe Vincent's

film *La Chute de L'egoïste Fatzer* (2002) based on Heiner Müller's stage version of Brecht's *Fatzer* fragment; and *Hangmen also Die*, the film on which Brecht worked with Fritz Lang in 1942.

When the semiotician and film critic Georg Seeßlen, who was scheduled to hold an introductory lecture the first evening, cancelled at the last minute because of illness, Erdmut Wizisla introduced the week's announced topic by focusing on the *Fatzer* film, which was being premiered in Germany as part of the conference. He then called on the director Philippe Vincent and the composer Daniel Brothier to introduce the film that the audience would be seeing the next day. Vincent did this with commentary on a few clips from the film.

Grounded in and applying Brecht's "Lehrstücktheorie," the final product arose by filming performances of his players in three French cities where members of the audience had agreed after entering the theater to participate in certain scenes as extras, and to interact with the players. Central problems of representation were constantly re-cast and re-thought in fluid acting and filming situations according to the different audiences where the performances were presented. Vincent also admitted that during rehearsals he sometimes rewrote or re-staged certain scenes or roles according to the wishes of the actors playing the parts.

On the evening after the film was shown, Wolfgang Engler, Lothar Schwab, and Vincent, with Thomas Martin as the moderator, presented a panel discussion about it. Vincent admitted that with his filmic representation of a play about the "utopia of the revolution" he hoped to activate viewers, not so much with the text itself as with the manner of portrayal. All agreed about the intensity of playing in the film, but some members of the audience objected that it had been too loud, too imposing on their senses. Others questioned whether the combination of realism with a utopian vision didn't bring it perilously close to outworn Romanticism. Vincent reported that the reaction of his current audience reflected the ambivalent reception the film had received in France. Some loved it, others hated it. Nevertheless, he hoped that with his new mode of representing revolutionary material, viewers would view problems like sacrificing one's self for the revolution or killing in

the name of the revolution in a different light. Vincent called his film a "social experiment." In it live theater performances are edited and transformed into a film, creating in his words the "Theatralisierung eines Films," or "Theater im Kino."

On the following evening, James K. Lyon and Irene Bonnaud gave lectures on Brecht's disputed role in writing the film *Hangmen also Die*. Based on the lost texts of early versions of the original film story that Bonnaud had discovered in 1997, Lyon, who had obtained copies of the texts that Bonnaud saw but could not copy in 1997, reported that a 37-page German story with the title "437" that Brecht had written with Lang contained all the essential plot elements and much of the dialogue found in the original film. A 95-page English translation of a more extensive version of the story, which bore the title "Never Surrender," and which was created soon after the shorter version was completed, contained ca. 90% of the plot found in the final English screenplay (for which John Wexley received credit) and up to 50% of the dialogue. From these Lyon concluded that the film stories and the screenplay clearly deserve to be considered works by Brecht, not Wexley. He emphasized that Brecht's dissatisfaction with the final film version was a result of what Lang did to the script during the filming process as he attempted to turn it into his own kind of film. In short, all stages of the work up to and including the shooting script were essentially the work of Brecht, while the final version on the screen was a signature Lang film, but with considerable Brechtian content.

Bonnaud summarized findings of her 2001 doctoral dissertation in which she had established unequivocally and in detail why this film clearly must be considered a work by Brecht. She reported on an earlier case in which John Wexley had gone to arbitration (and won) for a film whose content he had stolen from another author. She cited evidence from the Screen Writers' arbitration hearing that gave credit for the film to Wexley, though the judges later came to believe that Wexley had misled them, and that Brecht deserved credit for the screenplay. Most significantly she analyzed and gave concrete examples of various scenes and language in the play that clearly came from Brecht. In brief, she concluded that *Hangmen also Die* must

be accepted as part of the Brechtian canon.

Lectures and discussions from the conference, as well as numerous still photos from the films mentioned above are scheduled to appear as a book in time for the Frankfurter Buchmesse.

Brigham Young University

**56TH KENTUCKY FOREIGN LANGUAGE
CONFERENCE
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY,
LEXINGTON
(April 24-26, 2003)**

The International Brecht Society organized a special panel devoted to:

BERTOLT BRECHT

Organized by **Alexander Stephan**, Ohio State U
and **Linda Worley**, U of Kentucky

Chaired by: **Todd Herzog**, U of Cincinnati

"Between Aura and Alienation: Al Pacino and *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*"

Speaker: **Norman Roessler**, Temple U

"Drama Within Drama: Brecht's Use of Trial Scenes"

Speaker: **Guy Stern**, Wayne State U

"Vom Werbetexter zum Werbekritiker: Über eine biographische Selbstkorrektur Bertolt Brechts"

Speaker: **Urs Meyer**, U of Fribourg/ U of Washington

"Tauben Figuren aus dem Jenseits: Variation eines Themas bei Brecht und Dürrenmatt"

Speaker: **Helmut Pfanner**, Vanderbilt U

BRECHTIANS DESCEND ON BERLIN IN SEARCH OF NETZESTADT MAHAGONNY

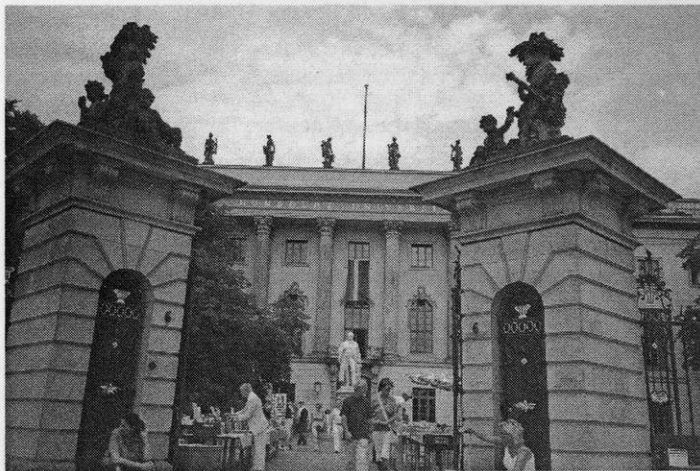
David Robinson

Mahagonny.com, the Eleventh Symposium of the International Brecht Society, convened in Berlin (East and West) on 26-29 June 2003, mixing academic papers, dramatic performances, politics, and tourism on Brecht's home turf. The event drew well over 100 participants from various precincts of academia and from the theater world: Germanists, literary comparatists, literary theorists, stage historians, musicologists, sociologists, freelance theater critics, stage directors, and miscellaneous public intellectuals representing (so to speak) the GDR. While participants from the United States, Great Britain, and Germany comprised the greater portion of the conference, the IBS fully lived up to its "International" billing with participants from Ireland, Germany, Russia, Brazil, France, South Korea, Singapore, Norway, Austria, Israel, South Africa, Greece, India, and Australia. For four intensely busy (and hot) days, the conferees shuttled from the Brecht-Haus in the Chauseestrasse to the

Like most academic conferences, *Mahagonny.com* was largely a meeting of specialists concerned with the intricacies of their research and teaching, but unlike most, its insularity was tempered by the outward-looking, socially critical, socially transformative aspirations of Brecht and his successors. In its coverage of symposium, the *Berliner Zeitung* misconstrued the gathering as a struggle with the GDR's cultural-political legacy, attended incidentally by American and British academic leftists. The reality was more complex, and more ordinary (though the reporter could be forgiven for seeing only small portions of a sprawling event, and focusing on the parochially familiar). Sessions dealt with a broad range of academic and theatrical concerns: the problems, motivations, and meanings of producing Brecht today; the historical specificity of *Mahagonny* as a product of Weimar Germany; the philosophical and political implications of *Mahagonny* as a model of the contemporary *Netzstadt* of consumer capitalism; the compositional history of Kurt Weill's music, and the place of the *Mahagonny* score in it; the reception and production histories of *Mahagonny*; the halting assimilation of *Mahagonny* on the American stage; comparisons of *Mahagonny*

with the work of Brecht's contemporaries; and many, many more. The framing events of the conference — the opening and closing keynote addresses — best provide insight into the conference organizers' ambitions and into the continuing motivation of Brecht scholarship in general. Significantly, both speakers came from well outside of Brecht studies. The opening keynote address by media theorist Norbert Bolz of the Technische-Universität Berlin, "Die Marke Mahagonny," pursued a semiotic analysis of how money acts as the main contemporary determinant of the "human" (a bleak train of

thought surprising to nobody in this audience, but interesting for not having been derived from a study of epic theater). The closing keynote, urban planner Peter Marcuse of Columbia University,



Akademie der Künste in the Tiergarten and then to the Humboldt-Universität while attempting to define the contemporary significance of Brecht's problematic opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*.

spoke on "The City of the Future: Mahagonny / New York." Marcuse, the son of Frankfurt School philosopher Herbert Marcuse (introduced, for the record, by Jan Robert Bloch, son of Ernst Bloch), argued that the negative utopia of Mahagonny could be readily reconceptualized as a basis for a positive utopia. The imperatives of Mahagonny — "gorge yourself with food, enjoy a whore, get dead drunk" — are nothing other than degraded versions of the need for material welfare, human companionship, and pleasure that would be fulfilled in an ideal society. Together, the two keynoters directed the conferees' attention back to the social, global concerns that had originally motivated Brecht, and which still motivate scholars, directors, and actors to struggle with him.

Surrounding the academic program was, appropriately, a packed schedule of theatrical performances of particular interest to Brechtians, something possible in Berlin as nowhere else. On the eve of the conference, many conferees saw the controversial new "Deutsches Theater" production of *Mutter Courage*, giving rise in the days following to vigorous debate about director Peter Zadek's casting decisions. On Thursday, at the Akademie der Künste, long-time IBS member Vilma de Melo directed the theater group GRUPA (travelling with her from Brazil) in *Unser kleines Mahagonny*, an amusingly frenetic adaptation of the opera as postmodern Latin American game-show spectacle. On Friday, most of the conferees were present in the Max-Beckmann-Saal for a more traditional *Mahagonny*, produced for the occasion of the IBS conference by the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler (director Alexander Busche) in cooperation with the Deutsches Filmorchester Babelsberg and with additional student actors from the Freie Universität. The IBS contingent was exhilarated by the polished musical performances of both the orchestra and the principal singers. In the following days, though, discussion turned on what the *Berliner Zeitung* correctly identified as an avoidance of "epic" elements in the opera's staging. Was this a reduction of *Verfremdung* to "the culinary"? The question was raised not just by the reviewer, but in discussions during the academic program as well, and indeed by Brecht himself in justifying his employment of the bourgeois genre of opera: "Mag 'Mahagonny' so kulinarisch sein wie

immer eben so kulinarisch wie es sich für eine Oper schickt, so hat es doch schon eine gesellschaftsändernde Funktion; es steht eben das Kulinarische zur Diskussion, es greift die Gesellschaft an, die solche Opern benötigt; sozusagen sitzt es noch prächtig auf dem alten Ast, aber es sägt ihn wenigstens schon (zerstreut oder aus schlechtem Gewissen) ein wenig an...." And what of the twenty-first century Brechtians sitting on that branch? The question remained unresolved. Finally, on Sunday, an entire afternoon and evening were given over to theater. The foyer theater of the Berliner Ensemble was packed with conferees attending Manfred Karge's dramatic montage of Brecht fragments titled *Verschollener Ruhm der Riesenstadt New York* (received politely by a heavily American audience made uneasy, perhaps, by the sight of Germans dressed as Indians). In the late afternoon, at the GRIPS Theater, Jack Zipes of the University of Minnesota presented *The Giant: A Learning Play* about the Use and Abuse of Power, performed by the Children's Theater Company of Minneapolis, and based on a tale by Edwin Hörnle with music by Hanns Eisler. In the evening, the conferees returned to the Berliner Ensemble for a stunning performance of Brecht's *Die Mutter*, directed by Klaus Peymann. Carmen-Maja Antoni in the lead stood up splendidly to the challenge of a role pioneered by Helene Weigel.

Principal organizers of the symposium were Marc Silberman of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Florian Vaßen of the Universität Hannover. *Mahagonny.com* was underwritten with generous contributions and logistical support from the Institut für neuere deutsche Literatur der Humboldt-Universität, Berlin; the Seminar für deutsche Literatur und Sprache, Universität Hannover; the German Department, University of Wisconsin, Madison; the Alice-Salomon-Fachhochschule, Berlin; the Akademie der Künste, Berlin; the Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv, Berlin; the Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus, Berlin; the Berliner Ensemble; the GRIPS Theater, Berlin; Freunde der deutschen Kinemathek/Arsenal-Kino, Berlin; the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), Berlin; the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), Bonn; the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung, Berlin; the Stiftung Preußische

Seehandlung, Berlin; the Max Kade Foundation, New York; the Kurt Weill Foundation, New York; Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/Main; Proquest Information and Learning Ltd., London; the Gesellschaft für Theaterpädagogik, Hannover; the Ständige Konferenz Spiel und Theater an deutschen Hochschulen, Berlin; and the Ernst-Bloch-Assoziation, Nürnberg.

Georgia Southern University

VON BOLZ BIS BLOCH, VON BERLIN BIS BUCKOW

Impressionen von *Mahagonny. com* -11.

Symposium der IBS

Thomas Jung

Ende Juli 2003. Soeben war die Welle der Gedenkveranstaltungen anlässlich des 50. Jahrestages des 'Volksaufstandes', wie es neudeutsch in Ost und West unisono heißt, abgeebbt. Auch B.B. hatte seinerzeit Position beziehen müssen und war folglich in diesem Kontext von den Medienmachern mal wieder (nicht immer korrekt) zitiert worden. In diesem späten Juli also fand ich mich in Brechts Sommerhaus am Schermützelsee wieder. 'Die ganze Existenz verfremdet', diese Worte wollten mir nicht aus dem Kopf gehen. Sie wurden konterkariert von den wirklichen Bildern, die sich zu den allbekannten Verszeilen aus den *Buckower Elegien* gesellten - jenen Gedichten, die unmittelbar in Reaktion auf den 17. Juni 1953 entstanden waren. Rudern auf einem strahlend blau-grünen See (welch Wunsch!) und Gespräche in jenem Blumengarten (welch Realität!) unter einer Silberpappel, jener ortsbekannten Schönheit, einst zur alten Vettel verkommen... So liefen wir Nachgeborene im Schatten von Gesträuch und hohen Bäumen, standen in der Eisernen Villa vor dem großen Eß- und Arbeits-Tisch, der bis heute von zehn eigenwilligen Stühlen umgeben ist, waren gebannt

vom Geist, der in diesem Hause zu wohnen schien. Im Bootshaus nebenan der berühmte Wagen der Mutter Courage, der von H. W. hunderte Male über Europas Bühnen gezogen worden war. Aura eines Ortes. Buckow — dieser Ort war für B.B. in den Fünfigern oft genug Fluchtpunkt. Fünf Jahrzehnte später war er Abschlußpunkt eines Symposiums, das sich mit einem anderen Werk Brechts befaßte, das aber gleichfalls ein Jubiläum zum Anlaß hatte: die Entstehung des Singspiels *Mahagonny* jährte sich zum fünfundsiebzigsten Mal.

Die dem Ausflug nach Buckow vorangegangenen vier Tage saßen die weit mehr als einhundert Tagungsteilnehmer inmitten des Molochs Großstadt. Berlin war *Mahagonny*. Richtiger: Berlin 'ist' *Mahagonny* — weniger Elends- und Katastrophensstadt (wenn man mal die aktuellen Haushaltsorgen des Berliner Senats aus dem Blick läßt) als vielmehr Parvenüpolis und postindustrielle 'Netzestadt'. Das dezentrale Konferenzprogramm (zwischen AdK, Brecht-Forum und Humboldt-Universität pendelnd) mit seinen Plenarvorträgen und Podiumsdiskussionen, seinen großen (Deutsches Theater und Berliner Ensemble) wie kleinen Theater- und Filmaufführungen sowie seinen achtundzwanzig Parallelsitzungen (das waren über achtzig Vorträge!) bot reichlich Abwechslung und manchen Höhepunkt, sowohl akademischer als auch kultureller Natur.

Zwangsläufig standen dabei immer die Plenarvorträge im Zentrum der Aufmerksamkeit. Wenngleich es am späten Nachmittag des ersten Tages im Brecht-Forum bereits eine spannende Diskussion mit W. Hecht, T. Hornigk, D. Mann und E. Wiszislä zum Umgang mit dem Brechtschen Erbe gegeben hatte, schien die Eröffnungsveranstaltung am Abend desselben Tages einen der ersten Höhepunkte zu markieren. Norbert Bolz, Medienwissenschaftler und Autor des *Konsumistischen Manifests*, versuchte sich in großer rhetorischer Geste an einer Interpretation von Brechts Drama *Mahagonny* aus medienwissenschaftlich-soziologischer Sicht. Das Resultat war streitbar und hätte durchaus mit dem Publikum diskutiert werden können.

Nachdem es auch in den folgenden beiden Tagen große angelegte und durchaus erwähnenswerte Podiums- und Plenarveranstaltungen gegeben hatte (Werner Hintze u.a bzw. Sigrid Weigel), war die

sonntägliche Plenarveranstaltung ein würdiger Abschluß. Zum ersten Mal standen sich hier, im Plenarsaal der Humboldt-Universität, die Söhne zweier Deutscher gegenüber, die wie einst B.B. aus diesem deutschen Lande vertrieben worden waren und deren Schriften das Denken ganzer Generationen von Nachgeborenen — nicht nur unter den anwesenden Brecht-Forschern — mitgeprägt hatten. So wurde der Stadtplaner Peter Marcuse vom Soziologen Jan-Robert Bloch eingeführt. Nach dem Vortrag, der gleichsam wie eine Zusammenfassung und ein Rückschluß zu dem von Bolz (in anderen Worten) Gesagten wirkte, hatte es zwei spannende, von unterschiedlicher Erfahrung des Exil geprägte Lebensgeschichten zwischen New York und Potsdam zu erzählen gegeben, die weit über das Thema *Mahagonny* hinausgingen. Wenngleich auch das im Kontext von Brecht durchaus aktuell gewesen wäre, so blieb hierfür (wie immer bei solch 'groß' angelegten Konferenzen) zu wenig Zeit. Nichtsdestotrotz ein wichtiges Ereignis, das niemand der Anwesenden missen wollte.

Auf die Theaterinszenierungen einzugehen, ist hier sicher nicht der Platz — wenngleich jede der Aufführungen auf ihre Weise erwähnenswert wäre. (Man lese die einschlägigen Rezensionen oder bemühe sich selbst ins Theater!)

Allerdings: Während die Veranstaltungen in der Akademie der Künste und im Brecht-Forum bestens besucht waren, verlor sich das nicht immer zahlreiche Publikum in den gelegentlich etwas gewaltig wirkenden Räumen der Humboldt-Universität leider ein wenig, blieb es doch — zumindest was die Vorträge der Parallelsitzungen betraf — im wesentlichen auf die gemeldeten Tagungsteilnehmer beschränkt. Wie wirksam am Ende die Öffentlichkeitsarbeit der Organisation im Umfeld der HUB war, bliebe zu erkunden. Jedoch ist die Konkurrenz von Veranstaltungen in einer Metropole wie Berlin wohl zu 'groß' — zumal zu einem sommerlichen Zeitpunkt, da die Studierenden vor Ort (auch eine denkbare Zielgruppe solcher



Veranstaltungen) längst mit Ferien, Sonne oder Geldverdienen beschäftigt sind.

Nach dem viertägigen Konferenztrubel in der (post) modernen 'Netzstadt' an der Spree, dem zuweilen bedrohlich-verführerischen wie ruhelos-ermüdenden Zentrum neuer deutscher Macht, war dann der oben erwähnte Ausflug in die in sich selbst ruhende Märkische Schweiz eine Grenzüberschreitung (in gar mancher Beziehung, die hier nicht ausführlich diskutiert werden kann). Insofern war Buckow letztendlich ein guter Abschlußpunkt, war Erlebnis für sich selbst. Und dies sollte — so will ich meinen — nicht die letzte Brecht-Konferenz gewesen sein, die in Buckow endete. Vielleicht könnte sie hier auch einmal beginnen.

Potsdam. Germany

**MAHAGONNY.COM / SYMPOSIUM
PERFORMANCES**
(June 25 – June 30)

Wednesday, June 25
19:30 – 22:15: Deutsches Theater

MUTTER COURAGE UND IHRE KINDER

Regie: Peter Zadek

Peter Zadek stages *Mother Courage and her Children* at the Deutsches Theater Berlin. Germany's best-known theater director for the first time takes on a play by Brecht, for the first time as well a modern German classic. Zadek claims he is interested in it as a "grand epic play in the tradition of Shakespeare" and that he knows of no better play than this one "about normal people in times of war. It is the play for our times."

Thursday, June 26
18:30 – 19:30: Platz vor der Akademie der Künste

UNSER KLEINES MAHAGONNY

Theatergruppe GRUPA, Brasilien

The GRUPA initiates with its play *Our Little Mahagonny* a dialogue with Brecht's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. A poet, a prostitute and grotesque figures from Mahagonny draw the audience into a scenic space – they experience the power of money, they sense the networked mass media and the pressure of success in the "Netzstadt" Pervenupolis.

Friday, June 27
20:00 – 22:30: Max-Beckmann-Saal

**AUFSTIEG UND FALL DER STADT
MAHAGONNY**

Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler
Regie: Alexander Busche
Orchester: Deutsches Filmorchester Babelsberg

A ruthless staging – depressingly topical. Young, up-and-coming artists from the Music Academy

"Hanns Eisler" presented a splendid rendering that carried away the audience.

Saturday, June 28
19:00 – 22:00: Arsenal Kino im Filmhaus am Potsdamer Platz

**AUFSTIEG UND FALL DER STADT
MAHAGONNY**

Tape by GDR Television of the 1977 Comic Opera production under the direction of Joachim Herz (1977), introduced by Joachim Herz.

Sunday, June 29
14:00 – 16:00: Berliner Ensemble: Foyer, Berliner Ensemble

**VERSCHOLLENER RUHM DER
RIESENSTADT NEW YORK**

Regie: Manfred Karge
Texts from Bertolt Brecht: *Werke*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main

16:30 – 18:30: Grips Theater, Hansaplatz

THE GIANT

Children's Theater Company, Minneapolis, USA

A Learning Play about the use and abuse of power, adapted by Jack Zipes from a tale by Edwin Hürnle, with music by Hanns Eisler and Kurt Weill.

19:30 – 22:15: Berliner Ensemble

DIE MUTTER

Regie: Claus Peymann

Brecht's *Mother* is connected to the history of the Berliner Ensemble as no other play: since its world premiere in 1932 with Helene Weigel, in which Brecht himself was involved, the "modern classic" has been seen here in numerous productions through the decades. Eisler's music and the rousing story of a woman who possesses the wit and intelligence, the

down-to-earth wisdom and courage to ask exactly the right questions when faced with unemployment, wage cuts, political agitation, and the "realities of life" are still topical and explosive. A theatrical play, an utopia, a dream of a better world. Perhaps today more important than ever.

Monday, June 30
19:30 – 22:30: Berliner Ensemble
(Preview Performance)

DIE HEILIGE JOHANNA DER SCHLACHTHÖFE

Regie: Claus Peymann

The play officially opens in September 2003.

KURZE MITTEILUNGEN

IM DICKICHT DER STAEDTE: Die Berliner Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz lotet im September den Gefühlsraum zwischen Lust, Habgier und moralischem Abgrund aus. Im Dickicht der Städte verheddern sich der malaiische Geschäftsmann Shlink (Hans-Michael Rehberg) und sein Gegenspieler, der Angestellte Garga (Robert Beyer). Die Premiere des gleichnamigen Stückes von Bertolt Brecht findet am 10. September 2003 statt. Ökonomische Zwänge, Neid und Hunger bestimmen den Alltag im Chicago der 20er Jahre. Weil er durch Shlinks Verschulden seine Stelle verloren hat, will Garga dessen Holzgeschäft ruinieren. Doch Shlink zieht Gargas Familie in den Streit hinein, die Rache wird zur Gewaltspirale. Der Kampf zweier Männer als Sinnbild für das Ringen mit den Schattenseiten der modernen Gesellschaft: Skrupellosigkeit, Anonymität und Isolation im Dickicht der Städte. Der Regisseur — Gregor Jarzyna — ist Leiter des Warschauer Theaters Rozmaitości. An der Schaubühne inszeniert er das Stück aus dem expressionistischen Frühwerk Brechts.

BAAL: Für den ZDF-Theaterkanal und Arte dreht das ZDF derzeit in Berlin eine Filmfassung von Brechts *Baal*. Das Drehbuch ist eine Bearbeitung von Uwe Janson aus den drei Fassungen, natürlich mit Strichen. Janson führt Regie. Nachwuchsfernsehstar Matthias Schweighöfer, 22 Jahre alt, spielt Baal, und die Musik dazu spielt ein Punkband aus Köln. Arte zeigt den Film voraussichtlich am 4. Dezember. Das ZDF plant ebenfalls eine Ausstrahlung.

DREIGROSCHENOPER: Johanna Schall plant die *Dreigroschenoper* von Bertolt Brecht und Kurt Weill am Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin einzustudieren. Das Motto lautet: "Alles nur eine Frage, in welchem Verhältnis man zur Regierung steht." Premiere im Januar 2004.

DER GUTE MENSCH VON SEZUAN: Das Schauspielhaus Zürich plant eine neue Inszenierung von *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* von Bertolt Brecht. Regie Meret Matter. Premiere am 31.01.2004.



PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

PETER ZADEK INSZENIERT *MUTTER COURAGE*

Reinhard Wengierek

Einmal, und dann sehr spät an diesem sich hinziehenden Abend blieb uns unversehens einen unvergesslichen Theatermoment lang das Herz stehen: Als die geschändete, durch Soldatengewalt für immer entstellte und doch so sehr nach Glück und Liebe sich sehnende Kattrin nicht mehr an sich halten kann, rasend laut wird und ihren unsäglichen Schmerz, ihre ganze große Qual mit einer Kriegstrommel in die Welt schreit. Diese eine Szene mit der großartigen Judith Strößenreuter, die wird bleiben von Peter Zadeks Inszenierung *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*.

Ausgerechnet im Deutschen Theater Berlin, wo Anfang Januar 1949 die Epoche machende Deutschland-Premiere dieses zentralen Stücks von Bertolt Brecht stattfand, und Helene Weigel in der Titelrolle sich und das Brecht-Theater in den Weltraum spielte, ausgerechnet hier produzierte Zadek, der Altstar (77) unter Europas Regisseuren, seine erste große Brecht-Arbeit.

Eigentlich wollte Zadek mit Angela Winkler *Medea* machen. Doch "irgendwann" bei den Vorbereitungen rückte ihm die Welpolitik allzu dicht auf den Pelz. Und weil es nach seiner Meinung nur ein großes Stück über den Krieg in deutscher Sprache gibt, nämlich *Mutter Courage*, und weil er sich hingerissen an das Londoner *Courage*-Gastspiel des Berliner Ensembles vor einem Halbjahrhundert erinnerte, hat er fix und fertig umdisponiert.

Sowohl Erinnerungen als auch Gegenwärtiges können höchst verführerisch sein. Vielleicht wäre Zadek besser bei der *Medea* geblieben. Vielleicht hätte Angela Winkler sich nicht überreden lassen sollen. Auch kann man nicht eins-zwei-hopp auf Brecht umschalten, erst recht nicht auf ein so

heikles Werk wie *Mutter Courage*. Und schon gar nicht ohne schlüssige Inszenierungsidee im Kopf.

Die Geschichte der Marketenderin Anna Fierling, die sich den (Dreißigjährigen) Krieg aufgrund florierenden Handels nicht madig machen lässt, obgleich sie dabei ihre drei Kinder verliert, funktioniert nämlich heutzutage nicht automatisch als Antikriegs-, Lehr- und Warnstück: Der Krieg als Fortführung der Geschäftstüchtigkeit mit anderen Mitteln, als Vernichter menschlicher Tugend, der Krieg als eine Sache, "für deren Abschaffung kein Opfer zu groß sein darf" (Brecht), solche Einsichten sind längst Allgemeingut; selbst wenn sie nicht befolgt werden. Auch ist der Job der Marketenderin einigermaßen historisch entrückt.

Was an diesem Stück wohl für alle Zeiten unter die Haut geht, sind seine gesammelten Weisheiten, die menschlich-allzumenschliches Verhalten beschreiben und bloßstellen. Das Stück liest sich heute vor allem als trefflicher Bilderbogen über die Not und die Sucht der kleinen Leute, vom großen Kuchen möglichst viel, möglichst große Happen abzukriegen. Eine Lesart, die nichts Unpolitisches hat, um Missverständnissen vorzubeugen.

"Bilderbogen" und "trefflich" sind die beiden Stichworte: Der Formalist, der Brecht von hohen Graden war, sorgte sich untentweg ums Treffliche seiner Szenenfolgen, um eine Strenge der Form als Voraussetzung für einen stringenten Ausdruck, damit das Bilderbuchhafte nicht verschwimme.

Zadek sagt, wenn er so inszeniere, wie Brecht sich das gedacht hat, werde es vom Publikum sofort abgeheftet. Okay. Aber dann muss man es auf eigene, schlüssige Art tun. Und eben das vermissten wir. Zadek wollte die hochstilisierten Sätze, die dogmatischen Behauptungen "heutig" sprechen lassen, aber wiederum nicht als "naturalistisches Geplapper." Dabei ließ er die Schauspieler an der ganz, ganz langen Leine, damit ganz viel von ihnen "überkäme." Diese lose baumelnde Leine jedoch war viel zu lang. Es kam nichts Wesentliches rüber, nicht Naturalistisches, aber auch nichts Heutiges – dafür umso mehr ziemlich lahmes Chargieren auf heller leerer Rundbühne dekoriert mit neuzeitlichem Müll.

Ausgerechnet Angela Winkler in der Titelrolle war – hübsch folkloristisch kostümiert –

erschreckend konturlos, fahrig und niemals eine "Hexe des Schlachtfeldes," höchstens eine kauzige Mädel der Etappe. Auch die tragische Verdunkelung ihrer Rolle im Fortschritt des Kriegsgrauens, die Verluste ihrer Kinder – blieb ungespielt. Und mit kieksender Stimme kommt man den Songs von Paul Dessau niemals bei.

Probleme auch mit den anderen Gaststars: Susanne Lothar als Hure Yvette wird für eine albern groteske Showeinlage missbraucht; Vadim Glowena ist als Feldkoch ein unkenntlicher Wurzen während Friedrich-Karl Praetorius als Feldprediger Sentenzen-Entertainment liefert. Dafür darf Jutta Wachowiak, angestammter Star des Hauses, vom Proszenium herab die Szenentitel lesen und zum Finale, in der Kleinstrolche als Bäuerin in Lebensnot, beweisen, dass allein sie die optimale Aspirantin für die Fierling gewesen wäre.

Wieder einmal offenbart sich drastisch ein Dilemma: Der enorme Kosten schluckende, unüberlegte Einkauf diverser Stargast-Versammlungen, um ein Event zu statuieren – und damit auf die Nase zu fallen. Und obendrein das hauseigene Ensemble zu beschädigen. Kein gutes Ende einer ohnehin flauen Saison an diesem Theater.

Die Welt, 8. Juni 2003

GRUPA-BRASILIIEN: UNSER KLEINES MAHAGONNY

Gudrun Tabbert-Jones

Auf dem Platz vor der Akademie der Künste eröffnete GRUPA mit ihrem Theaterstück *Unser kleines Mahagonny* ihren Dialog mit Brechts *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Die brasilianische Theatergruppe zeigte, wie man Brecht "gebrauchen" kann, um die "barbarischen" Zustände in ihrem Heimatland Brasilien so darzustellen, dass das Publikum Kritik üben und über mögliche Änderungen nachdenken kann.

Dieses brasilianische Mahagonny ist eine moderne Variante des Brechtschen Modells. Welches sind die Übel, denen Menschen in der

brasilianischen Metropolis zum Opfer fallen? Erwähnt werden Drogenmafia, Korruption, Kinderprostitution. Ein Hauptübel seien jedoch die Medien. So werden bestimmte kommerzielle TV-Networks, und die Unterhaltungsindustrie, die zum Beispiel "durch immer stärker erotisierte Inhalte in der Werbung" unter anderem zu Jugend- und Kinderprostitution beitragen, für die herrschenden "barbarischen" Zustände verantwortlich gemacht. Hier sind es auch die Medien, deren ausgestrahlten Verführungen Paulo da Lasca (das brasilianische Gegenstück zu Paul Ackermann) erliegt:

"Wenn unser Paulo da Lasca, die durch die Massenmedien vermittelte Lust kauft, dann geht er daran ein, in derselben Weise wie Paul Ackermann." (Programm)

Das mit viel Temperament vorgeführte Spiel der jugendlichen Theatergruppe bewies, wie lebendig und wirksam Brecht auch in einem anderen Kulturkreis sein kann.

BRECHT / WEILLS MAHAGONNY IM MAX-BECKMANN-SAAL

Claus-Michael Schlesinger

Am Wochenende (26./6. - 29./6.) beschäftigte sich ein Kongress der International Brecht Society mit den aktuellen Bezügen der Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Gleichsam als Anschauungsmaterial hatte eine Neuinszenierung dieses Werks am Donnerstag, den 27. Juni im Max Beckmann-Beckmann-Saal Premiere. Regie führte Alexander Busche von der Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler, es spielte das Filmorchester Babelsberg unter der Leitung von Jörg Iwer.

Verprochen wurde eine zeitgemäße Inszenierung, zu sehen war ein braves Stück, das vor allem die dramatische Seite des Werkes betont. Auf epische Elemente wartet man vergebens. Die Inszenierung wirkt modern, wenn sie Requisiten durch Gestik ersetzt. Zum Essen reicht dem Vielfraß ein leerer Teller, der Tisch dient als Bar,

als Mauer und als Empore fürs Gericht. Ausgemustert wurden auch die Spruchbänder und Plakate, es gibt keine Monitore, keine Projektionen oder sonstige technische Spielereien. So ist das Nahen des Taifuns nur an der steigenden Angst der Figuren auf der Bühne erkennbar.

Auch die Parolen wurden verbannt. Alles, was an Verfremdung erinnern könnte, wird erfolgreich vermieden, die Geschichte wird mitreißend erzählt, die Spannungskurve zieht sich ohne großen Bruch dahin. Dabei wird selbst die Trennung von Jenny (Silke Dubilier) und Jim (Alec Otto) so stark dramatisiert, dass alle Ironie, die in der Szene steckt, süßlich zerläuft.

Allein die Liebe zählt, hat man den Eindruck. *Mahagonny* als Soap-Opera, in der im Übrigen vorzüglich gesungen wird, das könnte provozierend sein, wäre diese Verfremdung als Absicht kenntlich. Das gelingt aber nicht, wie auch am Umgang der Regie mit den bunten Papierschnipseln, die das Geld bedeuten, deutlich wird. Das Schnipselgeld erfüllt seinen Zweck, da wird bezahlt und abkassiert, letztendlich wirkt das harmlos. Die kapitalismus-kritische Funktion des ökonomischen Transfers wird im illusionistischen Theater versteckt.

Dabei suchte Brecht eine Hinwendung zu gesellschaftlichen Realitäten. An diesen wollte er die Formen der Bilder orientieren. Es ging nicht um ästhetische Erkenntnis, sondern um eine auch intellektuelle Provokation, die die Empfindung bis zur Erkenntnis treiben sollte. Der politische Anspruch, der darin steckt, tritt bei dieser Inszenierung in den Hintergrund. Nur auf dem Deckblatt des Programms wird mit einem Bild von Berlin ein sichtbarer Bezug zum derzeitig herrschenden Spardiskurs hergestellt.

So hinterlässt der Abend zunächst den Eindruck beschaulicher Klassikerpflege. Aber gerade durch die Abwesenheit gesellschaftlicher Realität erkennt man den Hinweis auf eine zunehmende Verseifung dieser Realitäten.

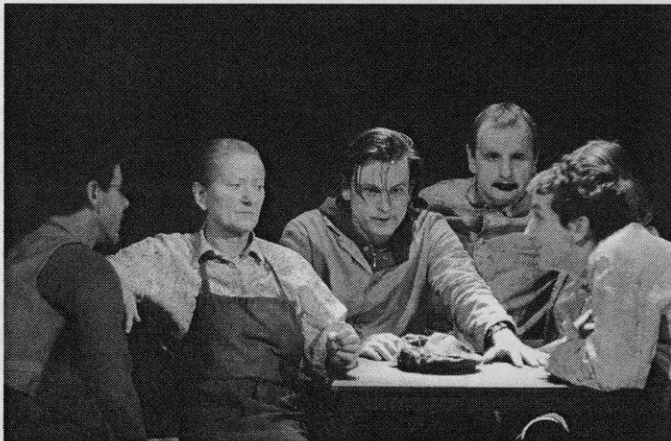
Berliner Zeitung, 28./29. Juni 2003

DIE MUTTER AT THE BERLINER ENSEMBLE

Laura Bradley

After a fifteen-year break, *Die Mutter* has returned to the Berliner Ensemble in a vibrant and entertaining new staging by Claus Peymann. In choosing this play for his first Brecht production at the BE, Peymann is confronting two aspects of the theatre's past: Brecht's legendary *Modellinszenierungen* and his posthumous status as GDR status symbol. But this is a production for the reunified Germany, for it represents the confluence of two threads of the play's post-war performance history: the BE's three in-house stagings by Brecht, Ruth Berghaus and Manfred Wekwert, and the three West German productions that Peymann had witnessed at the Schaubühne, in Stuttgart and in Bochum. The publicity makes a strong case for the play's topical relevance, arguing that it is "voller Aktualität und Brisanz. Ein Theaterstück, eine Utopie, ein Traum von einer besseren Welt. Vielleicht heute wichtiger denn je?"

History and contemporary politics are the twin reference points of this production, as photographs in the programme of *Bloody Sunday* in 1905 and *Grozny* in 1994 indicate. The staging was premièred on the eighty-fourth anniversary of the



murder of Rosa Luxemburg, whose image is displayed on flags flying from the theatre roof. Between the scenes, Therese Affolter appears as



Luxemburg and delivers extracts from her speeches, in place of Brecht's scene captions. Whilst her confidence in the Revolution's victory seems impossibly dated, her anti-war propaganda has an acute contemporary relevance: on the first two nights, the question "dürfen wir uns Krieg, den wir nicht gewollt haben, ungestraft gefallen lassen?" received prolonged and enthusiastic applause.

Although Peymann accentuates the topicality of the play's political and socioeconomic problems, he acknowledges that the failure of state Socialism has discredited Brecht's Marxist solutions. For instance, he contrasts Brecht's "Lob des Kommunismus" with Luxemburg's definition of freedom as "die Freiheit der Andersdenkenden" and portrays the revolutionaries as figures with chalk-white faces, caked in the dust of history. The blood-stained edges of a small white triangle jut out from Karl-Ernst Herrmann's set, alluding to the human sacrifices in and beyond the action. But such a pro-

Communist play still has the power to provoke controversy in Berlin, and several reviewers regarded the production as insufficiently critical of Brecht's Marxist agitation. Indeed, the conservative *Die Welt* even accused Peymann of using theatre as 'eine demagogische Anstalt' -- prompting *Die Zeit* to respond that it appeared to have suffered "einen Frontstadt-Flashback."

Peymann resists the postmodern trend towards fragmentation and pastiche, instead foregrounding the Brechtian *Fabel*. As Wlassowa, Carmen-Maja Antoni quickly builds up a rapport with the audience, displaying her comic virtuosity and down-to-earth wit. Peymann creates striking visual images and, with the aid of Michael Gross's new arrangement of Eisler's score, injects fun and energy into the performance. For instance, at the end of the butcher's scene, the musicians perform a fast, jazzed-up instrumental, while the kitchen staff fan out in front of the stage, passing plates down the line and throwing them diagonally into the stage space, where they are -- mostly -- caught and set down on a table for the strikebreakers. This episode -- borrowed from Manfred Karge's Bochum staging -- elicited enthusiastic applause from the audience and, from one spectator, the verdict "Also, doch kein langweiliger Brecht!"

This production offers a refreshing take on Brecht's familiar text, problematizing its Marxist ideology but moving beyond the trauma of the GDR to the problems facing the new Berlin Republic. The action ends with the failure of the Socialist project, as a wounded and disorientated Wlassowa staggers around the stage. But the final words in the programme are taken from a recent issue of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*: "London und Paris bereiten sich auf Krieg vor." Correspondingly, Wlassowa's final message is delivered not to the characters on stage but to the audience: "Bedenkt, wenn ihr versagt."

England

DIE HEILIGE JOHANNA DER SCHLACHTHÖFE AT THE BERLINER ENSEMBLE

Peter W. Ferran

The Berliner Ensemble's September 2003 opening of *Die Heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* in Claus Peymann's Inszenierung will excite controversy of two kinds. One will take the familiar old form of arguing whether the young Brecht too obviously articulated his anti-capitalist convictions (because most of the 1930-31 text is retained and delivered). The other will revolve around the unabashed theatricality of the staging -- the scenic and lighting design of Achim Freyer, the costumes of Maria-Elena Amos, the music of Michael Gross, and Peymann's directorial invention, embracing acting choreography, and overall production rhythm -- all of which will be cited in judging an unexpectedly engaging interpretation of this critical Brecht play. A proper review will have to wait until the production has officially opened, presumably with its artistic intentions more fully realized. The preview performances in early July offered ample evidence of these intentions.

We may start with the decor. A massive, planked flooring, steeply raked and stained blood-red, rises up and away from the apron, cresting at mid-proscenium-frame height and falling away toward the visible rear wall of the deep Schiffbauerdamm stage. This monolithic *Boden* gains affective power and interpretive range throughout the performance, not only by its Shakespearean accommodation of shifting locales (from Meat Exchange to Slit's Rooms to Straw Hats' Meeting House to Street to Mauler's Office), but also through ingenious lighting, portable furnishings, and an especially startling red curtain with a vault-like door in it, which descends mid-stage to form Mauler's frequent escape chamber, a place that increasingly strikes one as a boiling private confinement stained the color of beef blood.

The severity of the raked floor presents the actors with physical challenges -- they must climb up to its apex from both sides, they often stagger or lean awkwardly, and now and then they threaten to pitch into the parquet. At the same time, its open expanse affords a creative liberality of movement

and positioning. Under Peymann's direction, the several delineated groups -- Arbeiter, Fleischfabrikanten, Arme, Viehzüchter, Aufkäufer, Kleine Spekulanten, and of course Schwarze Strohühle -- create variously integrated choruses who, in scene after scene, execute fascinating choreographic patterns; these, for all their obvious fashioning, have the look of an improvisatory genesis. Added to this visual pleasure is the astonishing vocal produce that director and actors together have hewn from Brecht's exacting verse texts. This choral articulation (notoriously difficult to perfect) will require constant practice before September's opening; but the promised gratification of the audience's aesthetic sensibility is already evident. One hopes that the critic's sensibility will also be stimulated towards judicious appreciation of the production's many deliberate theatrical choices, which constitute artistic rewards for the audience. One of them is the costuming, which should be remarked as decidedly gestic. The Fabrikanten, Aufkäufer, and Spekulanten are made up in varying degrees of white-face. Criddle, Graham, Lennox, and Meyers are all dressed in carnival-esque striped pants and semi-formal jackets; Graham, wearing his long-legged trousers high in the waist, looks as if he's on stilts. The visually defined clownishness of these commedia-inspired characters must therefore play against their anguished, quasi-tragic poetic expressivity. A similar disjunction issues from the costuming of the four Viehzüchter, who are clad in white gypsy shirts and green long pants suggestive of Lederhosen. And they have been adorned with green ears! They must strike us, therefore, as a new species: an amalgamated cowboy-Jäger-gardener who can raise cattle and hogs by a deft aural husbandry.

The Workers and the Poor (cast, of course, with some of the same actors in each of their appearances) are all clothed in similarly grey-toned trousers and coats, and they wear the crowned hats of the American Depression Thirties instead of the now prosaic Brechtian workers' caps. The 'Schwarze Strohühle' have colorful uniforms that hark back to a Prussian military era. And when they march, their own music is produced by a drum beaten by Johanna and a bass saxophone played (and carried) by a male soldier. The unwieldy bass sax is an inspired bit of incongruity for the audience

to mull over.

Perhaps the most inspiring artistic decision is the casting of Manfred Karge as Pierpont Mauler. Made up with splotchy red paint on top of a white-face mask, and wearing assorted combos of correct executive suit, formal dinner costume, and casual-to-disheveled undress (including a red bow tie that he never loses, however untied it becomes), he looks like both a florid executive courting heart attack and a feral circus creature set loose in city streets. He is heavy and deliberate, this Mauler of Karge's, and also quick and agile: deceptively stolid, dangerously kinetic. He puffs, groans, sighs, roars, cries, moves, talks, and even exhales with clearly defined intent. He suffers and calculates and lyricizes and manipulates with a precisely crafted gravity measured to mythic proportion.

Best of all, Karge speaks the text's poetry (and prose) with sensuous relish and knowing gratification, communicating the kind of sensitive understanding that can only come from an actor who is also a first-rate playwright filled with spiritual and practical respect for Brecht's artistry. This "fellow-artist" *Gestus* about Karge's performance puts Mauler firmly at the heart of the production's interpretation of *Die Heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe*. It is therefore easy to see in Mauler both a developed version of Baal and a progenitor of Puntilla and Arturo Ui.

Johanna's actress, as Peymann pointedly told the audience in his pre-show chat, is a newcomer to the BE: Meike Droste. She achieves an impressive ironic naivete for the heroine in the first half of the play, making good use of her fine-featured physiognomy and vivacious bearing, not to mention her clear and broad-ranged voice. Her Johanna's early effusions of pleasure over her apparent success in "converting" Mauler tickle the audience quite as much as Karge's knowing expressions of Mauler's hypocrisy. (Indeed, both actors' actorly executions drew appreciative noises from Peymann himself, sitting in a rear box with his note-taking assistants.)

After Johanna leaves the 'Strohütte' Droste's performance takes a turn into an affective territory that critics may justly term melodramatic. Perhaps this will get tempered to some degree in further rehearsals. Then again, perhaps not: the production seems intent on widening the discrepancy between the play's serious substance and its playful

theatricalist rendering. (For example, Mauler's last letter from New York is delivered by a flying yellow postman.) In any case, there must be a polishing of the second halves blocking and choral coordination, and also a sharper stylistic definition of the final scene -- including perhaps some preparation for Michael Gross's surprisingly formal music (accompaniment: four flutes, two harps, and drum), which makes an abrupt entrance there. In the preview of July 1, which Peymann said was only the third "Durchlauf," both the new actress and the interpretive inclinations of the scenes following Johanna's "third descent" were less certain than they had been in the first half of the production.

As the Berliner Ensemble begins its new season, then, we can look forward to a scintillating revival of this play that refers both backward and forward in Brecht's work of the late Twenties and early Thirties, a production that complements the BE's 2003 staging of *Die Mutter* and the International Brecht Society's "Mahagonny.com" Kongress in late June, and one that signals at the same time the company's positive embrace of some critically neglected theatrical energies in Brecht's emergent "epic theatre." This Peymann-Freyer-Karge collaboration will give Berlin audiences a *Heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* marked by consciously histrionic poetry, gestically acute scenography and costuming, and a performance rhythm created out of an astute and admiring reading of the rich text. It promises to be a vibrantly and indulgently theatrical realization of one of the twentieth century's most important works of dramatic art.

Rochester Institute of Technology, NY

THE GOOD PERSON OF SZECHWAN IN DELAWARE

Charles H. Helmetag

When the audience entered the theatre at the March 7 premiere of Heinz-Uwe Haus's new production of Brecht's *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* at the University of Delaware, they saw some ten actors standing motionless at the back of the stage area facing the bleachers on which the spectators sit. Precisely at 7:30 p.m. the actors let out an Expressionistic scream and began marching toward the audience with stylized gaits, deformed and dehumanized by their jobs. Several of the cast members maintained stylized movements throughout the play and all wore masks that covered their entire faces except their mouths. The actress portraying the "good person" Shen Teh not only marched toward the audience but was also engaged in a kind of shadow boxing suggesting the play's underlying premise that in modern society the poor must engage in a life and death struggle in order to survive.

Haus used Paul Dessau's music and John Willett's translation of the play with the more appropriate genderless rendering of the title, *The Good Person* (rather than *The Good Woman*) of *Szechwan*. From the outset, Haus urged his student actors to observe human behavior, look for contradictions in that behavior and then do improvisations on these observations. Then they were able to draw on these improvisations during rehearsal. Haus encouraged the actors "to go one way and then to jump the other way and then to make it obvious that you've changed, that there is change in your world."

The set for the production, designed by William Browning, consisted of a large metal cage that took up roughly half the playing area, a smaller cage stage right that contained the six-piece orchestra, a still smaller cage carved out of the front seats of the audience and at the back wall of the stage an elevated track with a miner's cart on it. This track led upstage right to something resembling a fire escape. Haus explained that he wanted to create a large open stage space so that his actors were forced to create the setting themselves (cf. Peter Brook's concept of "empty space"). The large cage served as the tenements of Szechwan. It

contained cage doors of various shapes and sizes, some the size of regular house doors, some low to the floor like the doors to animal cages so that the actors had to go in and out on all fours. In Act II the cage served as the tobacco factory and, when the front side of it was opened near the end of the play, as the court, atop which the gods sat in judgment over Shen Teh. Not only was the entire orchestra visible to the audience in keeping with Brecht's insistence on reminding the spectators that they were witnessing a theatrical performance, at times individual musicians appeared directly in front of the audience. The small cage at the front of the bleachers permitted the actors to emerge from the midst of the audience. "Die Schauspieler krauchen gewissermaßen aus dem Leib des Publikums," Haus said. "Wir sind der Ort des Geschehens."

At the beginning of the play the water seller Wang was sleeping under the fire escape. He woke up, introduced himself to the audience and explained that "utter poverty is the rule" in Szechwan and that "only the gods can save us." Wang and many of the poor people of Szechwan wore quilted pants reminiscent of Chinese peasants' pants while most of the principals wore western clothing. Shen Teh, for example, was dressed in a fashionably short, sleeveless red dress with a plunging neckline. The three gods wore expensive looking suits and oriental-style beards and were able to descend to earth only after Wang let down the suspended portion of the fire escape. They had come to investigate the rumor that "no one can stay on earth and remain good."

In Shen Teh the gods found the good person whom they were seeking who would be willing to give them lodging for the night. When they realized how desperately poor she was, they gave her a thousand silver dollars. She used the money to buy a small tobacconist's shop from Mrs. Shin (played by Sarah Norman). Haus explained to me that he wanted to portray Shen Teh not as a prostitute but as a normal woman. Mrs. Shin, on the other hand, was the real slut. Although she wore a business suit, its micro-miniskirt was designed to show off her legs and she clearly enjoyed Yang Sun's advances. Mrs. Shin is the true business person who is willing to sell herself for profit while Shen Teh willingly gives herself for love and has to split herself in two in order to follow capitalistic business practices.



Soon Shen Teh took in a poor family and there were nine people crammed into the small shop. To “entertain their hostess,” they sang the Song of the Smoke. Not only the songs by Brecht and Dessau—sung directly to the audience -- achieved *Verfremdung*; so did the costumes and the acting style. Here the Niece was dressed like Britney Spears and sang the song like a rock star, using a lollipop for a microphone. This was one of the many examples of the alienation effect realized throughout the production. In this scene, the Niece’s performance made it clear that this was theatre while the allusion to Britney Spears called attention to the relevance of the play’s message: the fact that dire poverty exists in our world today and that only we, the spectators, can change things.

The production was not without humor. Shen Teh’s jilted client at the beginning of the play growled like a tiger. At the end of one scene the gods exited walking like a flock of geese. When they appeared to Wang for the last time, disillusioned by their experiences on earth, two of the gods were in their longjohns wrestling with each other on the ground because of the misery and ungodliness they had witnessed.

The role of Shen Teh was played by Megan L. Noble, a tall, agile actress with curly, short blonde hair. As the compassionate Shen Teh she wore a long brown wig and was easily seduced by the pleas of the poor and Yang Sun’s sweet talk, but strutting around in a man’s short brown wig and a double-breasted suit Noble seemed to slip just as naturally

into the role of the harsh evil cousin Shui Ta. Even if one anticipated the scene in which Shen Teh sings “The Song of the Defenselessness of the Good and the Gods” and transforms herself onstage into Shui Ta, it came as a shock when Noble ripped off her mask and wig and revealed this 21st-century actress before “becoming” a man. Here the script called for *Verfremdung*, which was heightened by Haus’s direction. The wedding scene was one of the more realistically staged in the production. There was a long banquet table with paper lanterns in

the background. Yang Sun wore a dinner jacket, his mother wore a suit and hat, Shen Teh wore a bridal veil with her red dress. Yang Sun drank the whole time he was waiting for Shui Ta to arrive. He finally sang the Song of Saint Never Comes Day and passed out drunk. As staged here, the song called to mind not only Eilif’s sword dance in *Mutter Courage* with its glorification of war, but also the blustering break-dancing of Eminem connecting the Thirty Years’ War with 21st-century America.

Since society did not change, Shen Teh (now pregnant with Yang Sun’s child) had to resort more and more to the persona of her “cousin” Shui Ta, so much so that he was accused of having done away with her. Eventually Shui Ta opened a tobacco factory in the large cage that represented the tenements at the beginning of the play and recruited Yang Sun as his foreman. The workers marched to the factory in a style reminiscent of the workers in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* or Brecht’s 1932 film *Kuhle Wampe*. Yang Sun exploited them and sang the Song of the Eighth Elephant. As portrayed by Michael Gotch, Yang Sun seemed not just an opportunistic seducer and abusive foreman but also a product of his society who could not act any differently.

In the final scene the large cage was moved center stage, the front side was opened to form the courtroom and the gods climbed on top of the cage to sit in judgment over Shui Ta as magistrates. Shui Ta fainted when he saw the gods, but he eventually

testified, "All I did was to save my cousin's bare means of existence." After the courtroom had been cleared of spectators, he "confessed": "I am your good person.... Your world split me in two." He took off his mask and ripped away his costume, revealing Shen Teh's pregnant condition. The gods climbed down from their magisterial perch and left, wishing Shen Teh farewell and good luck. She then turned to the audience and implored them to change society "to help good people to a happy end. Ladies and gentlemen, in you we trust: There must be happy endings, must, must, must!"

As indicated above, Wang had to let down the fire escape before the gods could descend to earth. Thus in this production the gods are able to make contact with the earth only when Wang as a human being or in his role as narrator assists them. This is not far-fetched since in the end the gods are helpless. Only the audience, the earth-dwellers of the 21st century, has the power to create a better world in which the good and the poor can find justice.

Villanova University

STRANGE BEDFELLAS? *ARTURO UI*, AL PACINO AND DUBYA

Normann Roessler

The National Actors Theater's production of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* played out amongst a number of fascinating contexts. The new home of the National Actors Theater, the Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts at Pace University, is a few blocks away from the gaping hole that was the World Trade Center. A little more than a year later the War on Terrorism and its main protagonist Osama bin Laden still dominate the public's attention. Moreover, in the wake of President Bush's Address at the United Nations, a new / old protagonist – Saddam Hussein – has become the center of attention for the War on Terrorism. At the

same time, a more historical yet no less nefarious figure of terror, Adolf Hitler, dominates cultural discourse in a number of curious ways. On Broadway, Mel Brooks' Tony-award winning adaptation of his own film, *The Producers*, continues its successful Broadway run. A new television mini-series, based on historian Ian Kershaw's biography has drawn the attention of disappointed and irate public intellectuals. And the classic of Hitler parody, Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, has been re-released throughout the world over the last year. Finally, the star of the show, Al Pacino, brought his own curious pedigree to the production. As a film star, Pacino is most well known for his portrayal of gangster characters in films such as *The Godfather*, *Scarface*, and *Dick Tracy*, which makes him the heir to the famous gangster characters of the 1930's, upon which Brecht based his characterization of Ui. If we add to this already heady mix, the traditional difficulty of mounting successful Brecht productions on the American Stage, it is a wonder that production even made it to the stage. Yet, it did make it to the stage and somewhat miraculously was able to successfully negotiate the aforementioned minefields. This success had much to do with the dialectic energy produced by the joint venture between Tony Randall's National Actors Theater and London-based Theatre Complicité; with a great deal of credit going to the co-founder and artistic director of Complicité, Simon McBurney, and the lead actor, Al Pacino.

The stage and costume design was spare and unremarkable, and this allowed the visual and musical elements of the production greater illumination. Sound Designer Christopher Shutt, a longtime collaborator with Complicité, constructed an interesting musical score. Retaining the insertion of the "Lied der Tünche" (taken from *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*) from the 1958 Berliner Ensemble production, but eschewing the overtly pop music thematic of the 1995 Heiner Müller-produced BE production (which used such bubble-gum standards as "The Night Chicago Died") McBurney and Shutt drew upon avant-garde music compositions (John Cage and Dmitri Shostakovich), Tin Pan Alley Standards "Ain't Misbehavin'," "My Melancholy Baby" and a selection of songs from contemporary musician

Tom Waits ("Rainbirds," "Coney Island Baby," and "Knife Chase"). The latter two Waits' songs were taken from his collaboration with Robert Wilson on *Woyzeck*, which coincidentally was opening the following month at the BAM. This combination of musical narratives proved quite effective in evoking 1930's Gangster Chicago, the chaotic modernist background behind Hitler's rise, and the contemporary War on Terrorism. The enigmatic carnival barker Tom Waits appears to increasingly be one of the main interpreters of Brecht and Weill. Steve Buscemi's rendition of "Das Lied der Tünche" right before intermission confirmed this designation; if one did not know the true origins of the song, one could easily assume it was part of Waits' discography.

Longtime Complicité collaborator, Rupert Bohle, matched the musical accompaniment with a creative visual aesthetic. Texts and images were projected on the upstage screen, at times working in consonance and at times in dissonance with the musical score. The initial projections were generic 1930s-era cosmopolitan city images, which were produced through IMAX-type screen effects and induced vertigo-like feelings: apt metaphors for the chaotic rise of Hitler and perhaps also an allusion to the late grandness of the World Trade Centers. As the production went on these images gradually segued into textual supertitles. At first, these supertitles were drawn from the Brecht text, and detailed Hitler's rise to power. Bohle juxtaposed these projected texts with images from Nazi Germany. However, as the Reichstag Fire Trial scenes played out the supertitles evinced a more contemporary dimension. The supertitle that read in Tabori's adaptation, "Hitler starts reign of terror" now stated, "Hitler's use of terrorism." Perhaps an innocent contemporary modification, but it was somewhat strange to hear Hitler used in association with the very contemporary word "terrorism." This ambiguity was quickly set aside as the judge rendered the verdict at the end of the trial. As the judge spoke in a southern accent, the Constitution of the United States of America was projected upon the entire front of the stage, even extending beyond the stage to the front wall: "We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense...." This projection

remained as Buscemi gave his rendition of "Das Lied der Tünche": "So we need more whitewash, lots and lots of whitewash, 'cause the pigsty's just about to quit! Give us whitewash, please! We'll do a bright wash! Whistling while we work, to cover up the shit!" This was an unequivocal gesture toward the recent Homeland Security initiatives of the Bush administration, and left many audience members aghast.

The musical and visual aesthetic worked well with the minimalist stage, but it was McBurney's choreography which provided the final crucial element to the scenic aesthetic. Movement, gesture, spacing, and location (especially in the group scenes) exhibited a fluid, choreographed theatricality, which is rarely seen on the American Stage, except perhaps in musical theater. McBurney's choreography was able to create an aesthetically engaging, but critically reflective atmosphere, producing a rare combination of Brechtian praxis and American Staging. A final element, worth noting, was the lobby at intermission. Quotes from Brecht poems, "Legende vom toten Soldaten" and "Radwechsel," as well as quotes by the critics Herbert Ihering and Robert Brustein exposed the audience to the linguistic and political power of Brecht.

With a cast including Al Pacino, Dominic Chianese, Chazz Palmentieri, Charles Durning, Billy Crudup, Tony Randall, John Goodman, and Steve Buscemi the spectator entered the auditorium with a mix of excitement and anxiety. The star power engaged in a Brecht play brought excitement; but the often-unfortunate experience of a star ensemble (not enough time to rehearse) and film stars mounting the stage (some who no longer know how to play before a live audience) brought anxiety. In the end, the acting was competent but not inspired. Both John Goodman and Steve Buscemi turned in very good, but also very predictable performances, due in large part to typecasting. Goodman played Giri / Goering, the giant, murderous clown with a fetish for hats taken from people recently murdered. In one sense Goodman was perfect for the role: his impressive physicality, which oscillates between teddy bear and middle linebacker, his comic touch, both physical and verbal, and his likability, despite playing a villain, are trademark contradictions of the historical

Göring. However, Goodman seemed to play the role in a rote fashion, not really extending himself. In my opinion, his acting skills would have been better displayed in the character of Roma. Buscemi was also typecast as the ferret-like, limping Givola / Goebbels, a role he seems to play in many movies; however, Buscemi was able to show a bit more finesse, perhaps due to his experience in avant garde theater (Wooster Group) and independent films. The weakest role was Palmentieri's Roma / Rohm. Palmentieri never seemed comfortable onstage, indecisive in both characterization and stage choreography.

Of course, Pacino was the star of the ensemble and it was his performance which would make or break the production. If Goodman and Buscemi had trouble working outside stereotypes, than Pacino faced even greater difficulties. In light of his tremendous celebrity aura it was a question of whether he would be able to pull off the role; or would the audience only see the star of the previous gangster roles? Despite his Hollywood pedigree, Pacino is no novice to the play nor its Shakespearean genealogy. He had played the Ui character in a 1975 production at David Wheeler's Theater Company in Boston; his interest in *Richard III*, which Brecht referenced in the play, dates back to productions in Boston (1973), Broadway (1979), and is captured most succinctly in the film *Looking for Richard* (1996).

Pacino built the character physically and linguistically from the ground up. Similar to Martin Wuttke's 1995 BE performance, the audience witnessed the evolution of Ui from proto-human street thug to a more polished, celebrity dictator. In the opening "line-up" scene set against the background of a police mug shot, Pacino's Ui appeared as a drugged-out zombie: disheveled hair, gaunt and pale face, catatonic eyes, slumped shoulders, hanging, ape-like arms, and a stumbling gait. The stooped shoulders and a lethargic left foot were, for the astute observer, reminiscent of Richard III. Vocally, Pacino spoke like a punch-drunk boxer: laboriously slow to respond, slurred speech, always running out of air, and ending each sentence with a scratchy gasp. Linguistically, Pacino emphasized incorrect syntax, mixed metaphors and malapropisms. As Ui ascended the political and social world of Chicago, his physical and linguistic

mannerisms improved dramatically. By the end of the performance the only thing that remained were the random malapropisms, which recalled Hanna Arendt's famous assessment of Eichmann's parrot-like way of producing clichéd party statements.

Two scenes are worthy of special mention: the actor's scene and the finale. As usual, the actor's scene drew the greatest response from the New York audience. As Pacino's Ui learns classic poses through Shakespearean models, the audience was treated to the development of classic Hitler gestures: goosestep, finger-stabbing-the-air gesticulation, head thrust back with a visionary look, folded arms across the chest with a tucked-in chin. The audience responded to the evolution of Ui and the craft of the star actor with laughter and applause. At the crucial moment of breakthrough (the goosestep), Pacino came downstage, closer to the audience, and generated the biggest applause and laughter of the evening. As the audience became entranced by the Ui / Hitler / Pacino creation, a projection of Hitler was shown for a very brief period. It was a fleeting moment, which I'm not sure many people in the audience really noticed. Should it have been held longer? Should it have been held until the audience ceased to applaud and laugh? Perhaps McBurney sensed this would have been too dogmatic. In any case, it was a fascinating moment in which Brechtian Theater dialectically engaged both the dictator Adolf Hitler and the actor Al Pacino. The final scene has Pacino end an impassioned speech to the citizens of Chicago with the phrase, "Today New York, tomorrow the world!" and then descend from his podium, take off his mustache, and address the audience, "If we could learn to look instead of gawking, / we'd see the horror in the heart of farce / although the world stood up and stopped the bastard, the bitch that bore him is in heat again." Some believe Tabori's adaptation is too free, but the finale showed that Tabori's many years in America have granted him special access to Brechtian Staging in America.

For many audience members as well as some critics the connection between Brecht's Hitler parable and the current War on Terrorism was obscene. The analogy drawn with Osama bin Laden or Saddam Hussein I assume was less obnoxious than the similarities asserted between Ui and George W. Bush, and the *Machtergreifung* of Hitler

and the Homeland Security Initiatives. Without a doubt these were disturbing juxtapositions, which pushed the boundaries of historical relativism and morality. However, it was precisely these connections which gave the production a directness and edginess which is all too often missing on the American Stage. It was unequivocally contemporary and political, and a reminder that terrorism has more than one side.

Temple University

ARTURO UI IN THE USA

R.G. Davis

Way back when Heiner Müller was still alive he came to San Francisco and a friend of mine who knew him well invited me to lunch with Müller, his new wife, baby, a local theatre director and one other family friend. The local theatre director kept on talking about her own projects interminably. Finally I interrupted and asked Müller about *Arturo Ui* he had done in Berlin at the Ensemble. "How was it?" Good, he nodded. "Why did you do it?" I asked. "They needed it" he said. That's about the end of our conversation and the lady from the local resident theatre kept on with her chatter. I left the luncheon and remembered his comment which was similar to others he had delivered over the years -- crisp -- in English. Statements that sort of slapped your head with its precision.

When I heard about the US *Arturo Ui* with Al Pacino I wondered "Did we need it?"

Reading the *New York Times* review and then the *New Yorker* review, out here on the edge of the Pacific one must do a double reading. What the *New York Times* reviewer says and the *New Yorker* reviewer says plays to their own audiences. The New York audience in my estimation after experiencing it up close is no great intellectual

conglomeration, rather the audiences are usually sentimental wherein older folks go to the theatre, get out of the cold and be warmed over by Broadway musicals.

The production itself not only raises eyebrows while it causes one to wonder who was this for? Tickets \$115? Why that high and to what end? Who was supposed to pay for it? It becomes obvious when both reviews focus on Al Pacino. Brantley of the *NY Times*: "Mr. Pacino seems to be channeling most of his famous roles." While John Lahr for the *New Yorker* writes: "I am a Pacino diehard. I have followed him from the 1968 Off Broadway *The Indian Wants the Bronx*... (and so on through his career). "But of the many unusual paths Pacino has explored, surely this Brechtian adventure is the oddest." Then Lahr goes off on his interpretation of the play, which I will address later.

The curious or perhaps not so curious emphasis in the American theatre on the actor/star is here in full. Such emphasis might cause some problems for people interested in social matters, since the focus of the play is the rise of fascism in Nazi Germany rather than the efforts of a commercial star in various poses.

There is one indication that someone in the National Actors Theatre group or the British director had the wit to consider not inviting the critics announcing to the newspapers: "the show was still a work in progress." Had the producers and the star had the courage to fend off the reporters the playwright and the production would not have been slammed by commercial critics and perhaps allowed to grow or at least be perceived by a general audience and then debated.

For Brantley, "*Ui* has never been an exciting play," while Lahr calls it a "clown show... *Ui* was written and as exemplified by Brecht's Berliner Ensemble in performances first by Ekkehard Schall and later by Martin Wuttke, is essentially a clown play -- Chaplin was Brecht's model of the epic actor." [I Thought Mei Lang Fang was the epic performer?] Lahr faults Pacino for not making all comic moments stand out. Lahr's second review in the same issue of the *New Yorker* is of "Flower Drum Song" which to his mind is a hit because of its jazzy turn to Asian identity politics. The comparison between the *Ui* review and "Flower Drum Song" reveals that Lahr is a perfect New

York, New Yorker and *Ui* is out of step with show biz. Isn't that the problem with Brecht's play in the first order?

[Someone advise Stephan Brecht to refuse to allow class a Broadway productions of Brecht's plays, they only demean the integrity of the author.]

Brantley is even more negative about the play itself: "For the truth is that *Arturo Ui* has never been an exciting play. Yes it features dazzlingly sordid throat slitting goons like those of *Three Penny Opera* and some witty bits of music hall style violence. But it is also numbingly detailed and literally-minded allegory, cluttered with descriptions of business transactions that parallel events in Hitler's road to power." Brantley refers to other New York productions in 1963 and 1991 but its not clear if he saw those productions however it is clear that the "business transactions" are annoying. Brantley's focus is again a New York view, where therapists outnumber the homeless. "This man is all id and Mr. Pacino's enjoyably audacious performance is about an id in search of an ego." We might respond there is that third leg of the Freudian order the "super ego" which might have put Brantley on the right course.

There are other experiences with the play. In the mid 70s I was in Berlin to seek out films that I could bring back to the United States to show people how the Ensemble did Brecht's plays so as to clear up the confusion instilled in most Americans by Bentley and Esslin. My proposition was: let us see the originals -- as best we could -- the films would help -- then reinterpret and understand what epic was and what Brecht was about and then proceed to critique the whole. I was sitting in a room at a 'Fernsehen' location and they put on a small screen the film copy of the Wekwerth (and Tenschert) production of *Ui*. Remember Brecht was gone, Weigel was in charge, Wekwerth directed the 1958 production. It might have been different if BB was there but from my understanding they were still working with the breadth of the old man and the production was a flash. The opening showed light bulbs ringing the proscenium arch like a Burlesque/Carney show. The characters were brought out to trap drum vaudeville music with intro by a barker showing the famous Hitler, Goering, Goebels, et al in animal face make up. Bear, rat, fox and white face for *Ui*. The pace was brisk. The hair began to

rise on the back of my head -- what they had done was to snappily present these horrific characters and get away with showing them to people who knew all about the killing destruction and barbarism of their immediate past. By not elevating the Nazis to horrific monsters rather as low life gangsters (Carney characters) the production got away with showing the audience of Germans how these gangsters fit the gangsters of Chicago so very well. No wonder Brecht had said run it quickly and no wonder the animal makeup for the characters. If the play had been done realistically or so-called naturalistically it would have been unbearable for the Germans. As a carnivalesque event it was swift kick in the head and the kidneys. It had 'distance' and therefore was disturbing without being refused.

If there is a lesson in the BE production it is that to confront difficult subjects, like fascism to people who lived it or racism to people who live it, or the Empire by people who live it, you have to distance the subject and do it rapidly. "Oh What a Lovely War" comes to mind by Joan Littlewood in that show (1963) -- a Pierrot Pantomime play designed to burn the guts out of patriotism and war mongering in the British mind; my own "Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel: the Minstrel Show" was also designed to sneak in under the skin of the racists in the US, as Brecht's *Arturo Ui* in Germany in 1958 must have had that effect and Heiner Müller's *Arturo UI*, although bemoaned by critics here, was from all accounts a sneaky event in the United German mind and addressed the 'beast' of capitalism and its relationship to fascism. (The Müller production requires a longer argument, but one item is most interesting, that of the tune constantly played on the piano throughout the ending, "Hans Beimler Comrade" referring to the Civil war in Spain, -- where German Communists fought against German, Italian and Spanish fascists.)

Could the English director Simon McBurney have accomplished anything like that in New York City? How long were rehearsals? Five weeks? Was the subject of the play appropriate for the moment or was it star turn event? Was George Bush supposed to be Hitler? All these matters would have to be fleshed out in a longer article with more research, however in short, I think it is the wrong choice (and certainly the wrong production

venue).

The appropriate play for this moment is not to claim that Bush and his friends Chaney, Rumsfeld, Rice, and Powell are similar to Hitler's crew since the extremities of the Nazi's is not yet apparent in American life. What is, in my estimation, a closer parallel one that needs be heard by liberals who go to the theatre, and expect that the Patriot Act and the machinations of the Attorney General Ashcroft are 'natural' or 'normal' is *The Fear and Misery of the Master Race (Furcht und Elend. ..)*, the erosion of civil liberties militarizing American life, High school ROTC units, Hollywood War films, laws against immigrants, dissidents, arresting green card Iranians, Moslems, even demonstrators without any notice. The Poindexter Total Information System incursion, the return of the Reagan regime Elliot Abrams, Otto Reich, and Bush calling Sharon 'a man of peace' leads me to think the first step is to clarify where we are and what has been incrementally lost. Hitler and his crew could be matched by Rumsfeld, Chaney and the others however Hitler is more like a Hollywood clown in the American culture and psyche. Not only Chaplin's film, but all those glitzy Nazi films wherein the enemy shows up so sharp. What is not so glitzy is the daily role of fascism -- the mundane stuff, the arrests out of sight, the illegal interventions, the oppression of any and all democratic responses. The 'war on terrorism' has given the government (Republicans and Democrats united) the ability to not only put dark skinned people with mustaches in jail but also begin to stop Green party people along with suppressing opposition to Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. Are we at 1934 Nazi Germany or 1939?

Even Brecht's *Fear and Misery* might not have the necessary juice for this historical event. The approach I think would be helpful, but even Brecht has to be adjusted to this present moment in the rise of the US Empire.

San Francisco

ARTURO UI IN SAN BERNADINO

Sherli Leonard

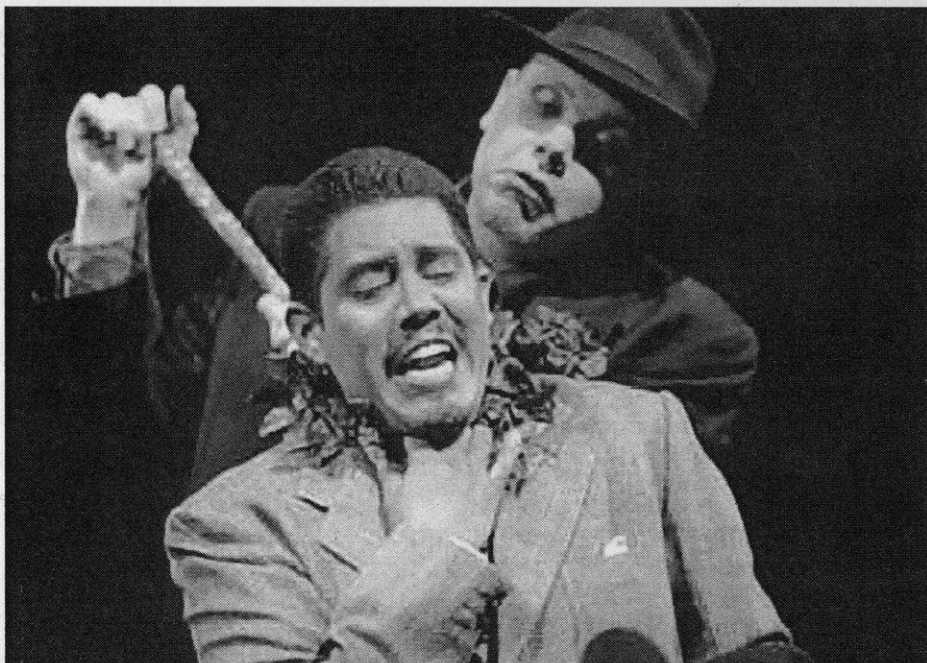
What's a simple boy from Brooklyn doing in Chicago, running a grocery protection "business"? *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, now in production at Cal State San Bernardino, answers that question with a finger pointed at the audience.

The play follows two-bit thug Arturo Ui of Prohibition-era Chicago, paralleling his power trip to that of Adolf Hitler's. Ui exudes the same gargantuan belief in himself and manipulates the masses through cronyism and fear. Like Hitler, the former Brooklynite gets carried out of obscurity into the limelight through a series of situations: widespread poverty, a power vacuum and a society peopled by egotistical, opportunistic characters.

CSUSB's extraordinary production charges this powerful Bertolt Brecht play with fabulous energy and provocative acting, staging, makeup, costumes and lighting. The players entertain from the moment the viewer steps into the theater where the actors, in character, are involved in a baseball game, spontaneous and impromptu, immediately engaging the audience. Brecht's play uses projected slides and film clips from Hitler's era and supertitles to match the play's action to the historical events it mimics; actors occasionally address the audience through asides; a hand-held video camera projects newsy images of the action; a barker, played with commanding animation by Rebecca K. Roppolo, introduces the action.

The play, with its dense dialogue, could have become a muddy pile if not under the control of such a powerful cast. By himself, Ricardo Jose Valencia as Ui could have carried the play, acting as he did with complete passion and total commitment. With masterful gestures, body language, and a delightful Brooklyn accent, he made his character evolve from a fumbling, crippled minor gangster into a dynamic, single-minded vicious leader.

As Dogsborough, the parallel to President Hindenburg, Tom Provenzano, associate professor of theatre arts at CSUSB, rendered his own marvelous transition from a, pleasant gentleman to a whipped and beaten failure. David Siler portrayed Clark, the parallel for Rudolf Hess, as a slickly polished back-stabber, and Alberty Lee Lockhart delivered a smiling, glad-handing Guiseppe "the



Florist" Givola, Joseph Goebbels' counterpart.

Aaron Nathaniel Burr, as a capily teasing Emmanuel Giri, parallel to Hermann Goering, strutted around with big, fat cigar in hand, delivering his character with a perfectly ludicrous pinched voice. Billy Felt, as the betrayed Ernesto Roma, counterpart for Ernst Roehm, worked every detail of his character with nonstop nervous ticks and the gangster stance.

Two scenes absolutely riveted the audience: Ui's coaching session from a has-been Shakespearean actor, with Ui and the actor reciting together from *Julius Caesar* while clips of Hitler using the same gestures appear on the overhead screen; and the "trial" of an arson fall-guy, with split-second glimpses of jury, judge, attorneys and witnesses making a mockery of justice.

Director Steve Earnest, assistant professor of theater at CSUSB, has created a phenomenal production of an important work which reminds us that the archetypal bad guy, whether Hitler or Arturo Ui, remains ready and waiting to jump on opportunity.

San Bernadino

MOTHER COURAGE IN ENGLAND

Benedict Nightingale

Halfway through *Mother Courage and Her Children*, war claims yet another victim, this time the title character's deaf-mute daughter, Kattrin. A violent attack by a soldier has scarred her face and destroyed her one big hope, which was to find a husband and have children. It's a shocking scene and, as Graeae presents it, a moving one too. Pauline Heath's Kattrin stumbles to the back of the stage, where she's gradually joined by the rest of the cast in their wheelchairs: a great phalanx of private camaraderie, silent suffering and collective hatred of that destroyer of bodies and minds, war.

I wish I could say that our leading disabled theatre company had come up with other such simple yet pointed moments, but it hasn't. If you want a sample of Graeae's work at its best, you should see *Peeling*, an imaginative take on Euripides' *Trojan Women* which will be going on a national tour after a stint on the Edinburgh Fringe.

But Jan-Willem van den Bosch's revival of Brecht's greatest play strikes me as fussy, cluttered and none-too-lucid.

There's nothing wrong with Liz Carr's playing of a protagonist whose folly is to wander Europe's battlefields, battenning off the war and being destroyed by it. A tiny, truculent figure in her wheelchair, she's especially effective at the famous moment when, having failed to offer a large enough bribe to save him, she must listen to the firing squad as it executes her son. "I think I bargained too long," she says, her pale face wizened with dread. Nor do Michael King, Adrian Wilks and other supporting actors let the side down.

But the director's efforts to emphasise that Brecht's Thirty Years' War might be happening now get in the way of the narrative. The decor distractingly mixes roadworks, traffic bollards, AA and RAC jackets and a BT repair tent. We also see a lot of *Mother Courage* plc, a company with a logo like McDonald's, on a screen just above the stage. One of this multinational's newscasters serenely informs us of stockmarket rises and falls. Its ads -- "Your children are annoying, shut them up with McDrugs" -- appear in jerkily filmed cityscapes. And so on.

It's not just that the attack on global capitalism is over-italicised. It's that some scenes get shortchanged. Take the one in which Courage's companion, the Chaplain, enrages her by tearing up valuable officer's shirts to help the wounded.

What I mainly recall of that is Katrin defiantly menacing her mother with a piece of road barrier -- and, frankly, it looks absurd.

The Times (London), July 14, 2003

HUNT DELIVERS *THREEPENNY'S* WORTH; WILLIAMSTOWN VERSION OF *OPERA* ENTERTAINS

Malcolm Johnson

Peter Hunt has staged at least three versions of the Bertolt Brecht-Kurt Weill-Marc Blitzstein *The Threepenny Opera* in New England, the first at the Hartford Stage Company in 1968. Each improved on the one before, but the new effort, which opened Thursday night at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, is less than definitive, as it runs on too long and lacks cogency at times. But with its dueling divas in the overpowering second act, this is unmatched musical theater.

The four principal women in Hunt's latest collaboration with designer John Conklin are all either top Tony winners or nominees: Betty Buckley, Karen Ziemba, Randy Graff and Melissa Errico. In the unforgettable second act, each of the great lyric theater voices has at least one moment that sends the audience into paroxysms.

As the greedy, caustic Mrs. Peachum, Graff (who won her Tony for *City of Angels*) sets off the musical fireworks with a biting, rangy "Ballad of Dependency," tromboning to lusty low notes and underlining words like "lechery." Then Buckley (who won for *Cats*) piercingly delivers the big number for Jenny Diver, "Pirate Jenny." This pitch-black ballad of revenge, which Buckley performed in an earlier Hunt version at Williamstown, suits her scorching emotive style perfectly. She spits out the "black ship" line with burning venom and weeps at the end, before sliding into a brief, sensual tango with Jesse L. Martin's suave, dapper Capt. Macheath.

Ziemba (who won for *Contact*) is essentially a comic soul, and she uses her round playful eyes and tossing Louise Brooks bob with humor and sauciness as Lucy Brown. Her "Barbara Song," expresses a lighter sort of acrimony regarding Mack the Knife and his ilk, and with the Graff turn, lifts the evening to its witty high point. Then Ziemba's Lucy pairs with her rival, Errico's innocent yet crafty Polly Peachum, in a humorous, bitchy "Jealousy Duet," and their clashing personas charge the song with sharp, tangy humor.

All four women are loves or foes of Martin's swashbuckling Macheath, the master criminal that

Brecht (and Elisabeth Hauptman) transposed from the 18th-century *Beggar's Opera* to 19th century London. Young Polly is the dashing bouncer's baby bride. Her mother is an implacable, scheming adversary. The whorish Jenny is a castoff innamorata, out for vengeance, while Lucy still regards herself as his woman. These are the tantalizing romantic strains in a scathing cityscape devised by Brecht as a caustic vision of decadent Weimar Berlin, with its official corruption and widespread poverty and turmoil. Nearly everyone in *The Threepenny Opera* is a crook or a slut, and Polly's father, Mr. P. J. Peachum, represents phony piety and pompous platitudes as he lords it over his gang of regimented mendicants.

David Schramm, looking like a dyspeptic Oliver Hardy, and sometimes breaking into silly little dances, presents Peachum as a cartooned Brechtian businessman, complete with fake morality. His voice is unmusical but true enough, and he ably blends absurdity and pig-eyed arrogance. He forms a telling counterbalance to Martin's unapologetic gangster for all seasons.

Martin, sporting a red shirt, black leather vest and white spats designed by Laurie Churba, gives Hunt the Mack he has been searching for, though he looks a tad young for Buckley, whose tight black bustier and pin-striped suits show she has morphed from Grisabella to Jenny Anydots. Goateed and slick-haired, he saunters about as the ultimate rake, and can sing sweetly with Errico, or bawlingly with Jack Willis' proudly two-faced Tiger Brown, the police commissioner.

Williamstown has recruited an outstanding supporting cast led off by the sardonic Laurent Giroux, who opens the show with the number made famous by Bobby Darren and Louis Armstrong.

This is, it would seem, the *Threepenny Opera* that could take Hunt back to Broadway, where he won a Tony for "1776." Alas, as in many a Williamstown extravaganza, the show is presently unwieldy, with three acts. For Errico, nominated for a Tony for last season's *Amour*, Hunt and his indefatigable music director, James Sampliner, have interpolated "Surabaya Johnny" from *Happy End*, and Errico's liquescent silver voice does it full credit. But it does add another number.

The revival also fails to advance a strong social viewpoint. Though perhaps inspired by Sam

Mendes' *Cabaret*, it misses its cutting edge. Conklin has created an environment that says more than the show itself: a three-tiered scaffold with iron staircases, huge gears and pulleys, a *Metropolis* backdrop and surreal hanging panels. It is a brilliant theater, with Hunt filling the stage and platforms with harshly vivid groupings under Rui Rita's noir lighting. But after three tries, the journey through Brecht, Weill and Blitzstein is still not finished.

Hartford Courant, June 28, 2003

THREEPENNY OPERA, NATIONAL YOUTH THEATRE

Ian Johns

It's hard not to admire the National Youth Theatre, not only for encouraging such future talents as Timothy Spall and Derek Jacobi, but also for its scale of ambition. Last year the company brought to London an enjoyable staging of David Edgar's two-part epic, *The Life and Times of Nicholas Nickleby*. This year it's Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill.

So much of Brecht's work now reeks of museum mustiness, but the NYT makes a game attempt of updating his and Weill's 1928 bitter satire *The Threepenny Opera*. Just as Brecht transplanted John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* from the 18th century to a mock-Victorian Soho, the director Edward Wilson now updates the action to 2002. Since Brecht's original parallels between the criminal underclass and the ruling elite no longer carry satirical clout, this version plays out the story as one of power and destitution in which all the parties are motivated by self interest. The gang leader Macheath and Tiger Brown (here not a jailer but the chief of police) are ex-squaddies who fought together in the Falklands and are now as corrupt as each other. Peachum, the king of the beggars, is planning to disrupt the Golden Jubilee celebrations with his army of professional vagrants. His

daughter Polly, newly married to Macheath, is eager to take over his gang when her husband is betrayed by the torch-carrying whore Jenny Diver and caught by the police.

Like Phyllida Lloyd's contemporary reworking of Brecht and Weill's anti-opera at the Donmar Warehouse in 1994, this production uses Robert David Macdonald's earthy translation and Jeremy Sams's lyric translation. The songs -- packed with a wealth of modern references from Channel 4 executives to Goose Green -- display a savage cynicism that live up to Weill's sardonic chords.

Mac the Knife, nowadays so often sounding like a nostalgic lament, here forcefully tells us in a catalogue of Macheath's crimes that he is an arsonist and rapist. As delivered by Lucy Voller's vocally strong Jenny, it becomes a mordantly chilling finale to Act I.

But elsewhere Wilson's committed company never manages to conjure up a real sense of sleaze and danger in this world of crooks, corrupt police and vengeful, lovelorn prostitutes. Even the brothel tango seems more like a tea dance.

Vocally the cast is also very uneven, with the actors proving to be either better singers than actors or vice versa. Gareth David-Lloyd has the presence to deliver Macheath's heartless insolence and swagger but not the voice to suggest that he's a name to watch in musical theatre. Jo Nesbitt as Polly has a raw, edgy energy when she sings but often resorts to a one-note shrillness for the dialogue.

The rest of the cast snatch moments for themselves -- Beverley Rudd as Mrs Peachum delivers flashes of cynicism with a Dickensian flourish -- and the music still has a haunting power. But there's a softness at the heart of this diverting production that suggest this bitterly cynical work requires a cast with a bit more experience than innocence.

The Times (London), September 2, 2002

ARTURO UI, AT BRIDEWELL, EC4

Ian Johns

BRECHT emphasised theatre's political role with so much theory that British directors have often buried his plays in a stultifying portentousness. Thankfully, Phil Willmott's staging of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* ensures that this cartoon-strip of a play doesn't stall as ponderous polemic.

Written in 1941 in Scandinavia, while an exiled Brecht was waiting for his US visa, the play portrays Hitler's rise to power in terms of a burlesque gangster movie. In one broad stroke, Brecht combines his loathing of Hitler with his contempt for US capitalism. But by depicting Hitler and his henchman as Chicago hoodlums who corner the protection racket in the greengrocery trade, Brecht reduces the downfall of the Weimar Republic to nursery level.

The gangster analogy leaves no room for Hitler's appeal to his followers with his policy of anti-Semitism and lebensraum. It's the capitalists -- here the directors of the Cauliflower Trust that the mobster Arturo Ui muscles into -- who are solely to blame, while the workers can only acquiesce or die.

Using a new translation by Andy de la Tour, Willmott dispenses with the usual captions that dutifully spell out the relevant bits of German history with which the play ironically parallels historical events. In a program note, de la Tour argues that prewar German politics are now likely to be familiar only to students of history. His free adaptation has more modern echoes of moral laziness, big business and dictatorships.

Yet nowadays Arturo Ui tends to survive more as a star vehicle than political satire. Its comedy and terror often rests on the shoulders of Ui, a meaty role that's Richard III and a Runyonesque Al Capone as well as Hitler.

Peter Polycarpou has an authoritative, swaggering presence as Ui but doesn't quite capture the mix of the preposterous and the psychopathic that the part demands. But he's chillingly funny in the best scene when Ui is given lessons in mob oratory by a Shakespeare luvvie (an amusingly boozy, fawning Kevin Moore) and the goose-stepping dictator evolves before us.

The intimate Bridewell lends itself to

Willmott's film noir moodiness as he drives the play along with all the speed of a Cagney gangster movie. This revival hardly reclaims Brecht's parable as a timeless classic but it does make it an enjoyable one.

The Times (London), August 20, 2002.

JOHANN FATZER, EIN DEUTSCHER DESERTEUR, IN FRANKFURT

Tilman Spreckelsen

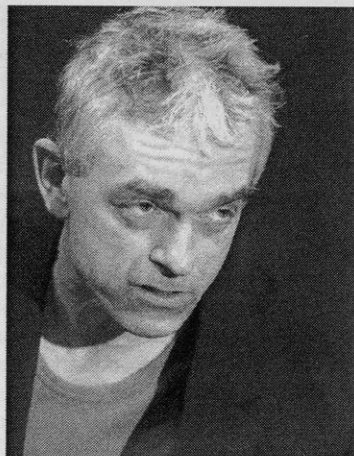
Desertieren kann so schön sein: Da sitzen vier Soldaten in einem Panzer und schreien aus Leibeskräften, weil sie die Stille zwischen den Kämpfen nicht mehr ertragen, weil sie Angst haben vor dem Gegner und vor den eigenen Leuten. Doch einer von ihnen reckt den Stahlhelm und spricht so lange auf die andern ein, bis sie mit ihm zusammen das Schlachtfeld verlassen. Betört von seinen Worten, die von Freiheit und einer neuen Welt erzählen, betört aber auch von der plötzlich anschwellenden Beatmusik, hüpfen sie förmlich aus dem Panzer, wiegen sich in den Hüften, schlenkern mit Armen und Beinen und bewegen sich schließlich wie beim Tanz auf einer Sixties-Party.

Zwei Stunden lang geht es so expressiv weiter in dieser Frankfurter *Fatzer*-Inszenierung, diskrete Gesten, leise Töne oder gelassene Dialoge wird man vergeblich suchen. Daß im raschen Wechsel der Stilmittel der Text zu einer Ansammlung von jäh unterbrochenen Szenen zerfällt, wird ihm nur gerecht. Denn das Stück, an dem Brecht zwischen 1927 und 1930 arbeitete, blieb Fragment, lediglich einige Szenen wurden 1930 im ersten Heft der "Versuche" gedruckt.

Übrig blieb ein Konvolut von fünfhundert Blatt. Für die Schaubühne entstand daraus 1976 eine erste Bühnenfassung, zwei Jahre später schuf Heiner Müller eine weitere. Sie ist die Grundlage für Thirza Brunkens Inszenierung, die jetzt im

Schauspiel Frankfurt aufgeführt wurde und dabei jede Illusion, man habe es mit einem abgerundeten Stück zu tun, lustvoll unterlief.

Die Desertation der vier Soldaten leitet eine quälende, von Nahrungsmittelorganisationen und Streitigkeiten geprägte Zeit im Versteck ein, bis Fatzers drei Kameraden sich gegen ihn zusammenschließen, weil er nach der gemeinsamen Flucht zunehmend die Lust verliert, sich ihnen gegenüber solidarisch zu verhalten. Sein empfindliches Ehrgefühl und das Bewußtsein seiner geistigen Überlegenheit lassen ihn mehr als einmal zur Gefahr für die Sicherheit der Gruppe werden. Am Ende bringen ihn die anderen um, während draußen schon die Härscher auflaufen, um die Deserteure festzunehmen.



Michael Weber spielt den Individualisten, der sich so beharrlich gegen jeden Gruppenzwang auflehnt, mit weit ausladenden Bewegungen und verzerrten Grimassen. Er schreit, er lacht, hüpf oder wirft sich zu Boden, er, der kleinste unter den Schauspielern, gestikuliert am auffälligsten, und wenn Fatzer einmal einen Selbstmordversuch unternimmt, bleibt Weber auch mit dem Strick um den Hals ein Zappelphilipp. Gleichzeitig aber macht er deutlich, wie sehr Fatzer auch auf die anderen drei angewiesen ist: ein Individualist, der nicht allein sein kann, der sein Publikum braucht und wütend die Solidarität der Kameraden einklagt, auch wenn er sie damit in Lebensgefahr bringt. Manchmal geht das Licht im Saal an, und die Schauspieler schlüpfen aus ihren Rollen, um das Geschehen zu kommentieren. Sie lehnen sich an den großen Laufsteg, der im spitzwinkligen Dreieck um die eigentliche Bühne herumläuft und nach hinten ansteigt. Einmal klettert Fatzer, der sich partout nicht auf den engen Raum im Versteck beschränken will, über den Laufsteg und zwingt sich durch die Zuschauerreihen.

Ein Antagonist erwächst ihm in dem Intellektuellen Koch (Tim Grobe), der den basisdemokratischen Widerstand gegen Fatzer organisiert. Als sich die vier in einer Szene mit Perücken und Bärten zu späteren Hippies ausstaffieren und anschließend lebende Bilder aus der Welt der Studentenrevolte nachstellen, legt der

kahlgeschorene Koch einen Kinnbart um, so daß er fortan wie Lenin aussieht. Nicht nur deshalb erinnern die Befragungen, die er mit Fatzer abhält, so sehr an kommunistische Schauprozesse, und es ist der Verdienst Thirza Brunckens, daß sie diese Szene kenntlich macht. Den Konflikt zwischen Individuum und Gemeinschaft, das einigende Band um die *Fatzer*-Teile, konfrontiert sie mit Lösungsvorschlägen aus dem vergangenen Jahrhundert und unterstreicht damit auch deren eng begrenzten Nutzen. Am deutlichsten ist dies freilich in dem Stück angelegt: Um dem Schlachtfeld zu entkommen, um sich also überhaupt in Freiheit als Gemeinschaft konstituieren zu können, brauchen die Soldaten Fatzers unkonventionelle Weltsicht, die ihm den Weg zur Desertion weist. Doch genau diese Eigenschaft macht ihn untauglich für das Kollektiv, das Koch aus der zusammengewürfelten Gruppe formen möchte.

Einmal, ganz am Ende, will er sich nicht einmal mehr auf seinen Stuhl setzen, der im Versteck auf ihn wartet. Er macht sich steif, als die anderen ihn zwingen wollen, die ihn zwingen wollen, klammert sich an der Lehne fest, und widersteht tatsächlich allen Versuchen, seine Knie zu beugen. Da können sie ihn nur noch erschießen.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, March 22, 2003



ARTICLES

BARTHES ON BRECHT'S TABLEAU: FETISH MEETS FLUX

Meg Mumford

Barthes' article "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein" wilfully struts its own gaps: its lack of particulars with regard to the very performative aspects it is concerned with tableau making, gesture, and spectatorship. The following response to Barthes' provocations is partly fuelled by a desire to reinstate the neglected particulars through a consideration of Brecht's 'Apollonian' theatre-making at the Berliner Ensemble, using the theories of Diderot to highlight Brecht's work by means of comparison. Yet in many respects my reflections are powered more by a susceptibility to the magnetism of Barthes' arguments. In particular I am drawn to his claim that Brecht's pictorial approach to theatre is fetishistic. By 'pictorial', in keeping with Barthes, I mean the tendency to treat theatre as series of framed compartments and tableaux, images that result from a process of retardation almost to the point of motionlessness. What especially intrigues me about Brecht's interest in pictorial forms, which -- like fetish objects -- are associated with fixity and wholeness, is how it relates to his Marxist concern to promote the reality and enabling possibilities of flux and transformation.

Barthes describes 'pictorialism' as a geometrical discourse and defines geometry as "that practice which calculates the place of things as they are observed." In turn he associates this discourse with the 'Organon of Representation' which he claims has "as its dual foundation the sovereignty of the act of cutting out [*découpage*] and the unity of the subject of that action."¹ For Barthes, the cut-out piece is the tableau whichever form it may take: the scene, the picture, the shot and so on. This tableau is "a pure cut-out segment with clearly defined edges, irreversible and incorruptible; everything that surrounds it is banished into nothingness, remains unnamed, while everything that it admits within its field is promoted into essence, into light, into view."² With only an instant at 'his' disposal, the tableau maker must ensure that the field encompassed by the frame is a pregnant moment, one that

offers up the present, past and future in a readable single glance. Barthes cites the social *gestus* in Brecht's theatre as a typical pregnant moment.

The representational enterprise, according to Barthes, rests on a fetishistic structure. Barthes is characteristically playful in his discussion of fetishism, drawing clearly on Freud's psychoanalytical thesis but also incorporating the anthropological and psychiatric usages. Freud's article "Fetishism" appeared in 1927, approximately the same year that Brecht first defined *gestus* as a performance practice based on a socially significant gesture or bearing.³ Whatever similarities may be drawn between the pregnant gesture and the fetish-object, in the second half of the 1930s at least it appears that Brecht would not like to have had his work associated with fetishism. According to Marieluise Fleisser's autobiographical piece "Early Encounter," this attitude surfaced for example when Brecht witnessed Moriz Seeler at the 1926 premiere of *Purgatory in Ingolstadt*. In accordance with his usual custom at premieres, Seeler was sporting an old bowler hat. "Someone ought to bore a hole into his hat," Brecht said scornfully, "he believes his luck sits in his hat. If he can't wear the hat, the whole man is knocked for six, he is a fetishist, it's that easy for me to do for him."⁴

In Freud's account, the cause of fetishism is the infant boy's discovery that his mother or another woman lacks the penis he had always assumed to be present. This discovery triggers a fear of castration and to counter this fear the boy enters into a process of disavowal. That is, he both retains the belief that the woman *has* a phallus by creating a substitute, while simultaneously relinquishing that belief in the face of uncomfortable new knowledge.⁵ The substitute for the phallus, the fetish-object itself, is the last phenomenon which left an impression on the infant -- be it a shoe or piece of underwear -- before his eyes moved directly to the absence at the centre of his traumatic discovery.

According to the bowler hat anecdote, the aspect of fetishism mocked by Brecht is the desire for the security offered by the fetish-object, the object that fixes the subject in the same cozy position vis-à-vis the world, separate from "the terrifying area of difference opened up by the perception of

the mother's non-possession of the phallus."⁶ As Giles Deleuze puts it, the fetish offers security and stability through "a frozen, arrested, two-dimensional image, a photograph to which one returns repeatedly to exorcise the dangerous consequences of movement."⁷ The fetishistic subject is magnetically drawn through its desire for fixity and wholeness to the position of separation and the frozen image. That Barthes views the fetish-object in a manner similar to Deleuze is suggested by the way he refers to the pregnant moment as an *immobilized* instant and to the tableau as a discontinuation of the overall totality.⁸ Barthes also draws upon the psychiatric usage of the term 'fetish' to denote a substitute for an inaccessible object of sexual desire. The fetishistic object is the symptom, then, of an erotic desire for control over the elusive living whole. What seems to trigger Barthes' wariness of representational art and fetishism is his dislike of any attempt to control and delimit meaning and desire, through techniques like the omniscient Brechtian actor, master of meaning, or the author who constructs essential meaning in accordance with the Law or System of the Party.⁹ As Susan Sontag puts it, Barthes does not believe that the commitment art makes to something outside of itself, to a social or moral goal, makes art an instrument of subversion. By contrast, such position-taking merely reinscribes power. In the manner of an individualist anarchist, Barthes advocates instead a certain excessive, playful art which eschews such acts of power.¹⁰

Barthes' indictment of political theatre points to the wide-ranging issue of what constitutes oppositional art, an issue I will not attempt to tackle within the parameters of this study. Rather, my focus is an issue related to that debate: the extent to which Diderot and Brecht's different types of oppositional theatre fall into the trap of fetishism. I say 'trap' because the passive fetishist subject who compulsively seeks stable identity or to master the unruly world, and the fetish-object's metaphysical immobilization of the world it represents are phenomena seemingly contrary to Diderot and Brecht's dynamic materialist vision of transformability.

One of the reasons why Brecht wanted to give the title 'Diderot Society' to the scientific group he attempted to found in 1937, and which he hoped, in vain, would initiate a "new, social and antimetaphysical art,"¹¹ was because the "great Encyclopae-

dist wrote about the theatre philosophically in the sense of materialist philosophy."¹² Barthes carelessly dismisses Brecht's interest in Diderot when he writes that "Brecht knew hardly anything of Diderot (barely, perhaps, the *Paradoxe sur le comédien*)."¹³ The carelessness is made apparent when, in the next breath, Barthes goes on to assert that Brecht was likely to be interested in "a man of the theatre whose theory aimed at dispensing equally pleasure and instruction."¹⁴ For a start, Diderot's dialectical insistence on the combination of entertainment and instruction is more the subject of his 1758 treatise "On Dramatic Poetry" than of the later essay "The Paradox of Acting" whose primary focus is the notion of an actor-character split. That Brecht was likely to have been familiar with "On Dramatic Poetry" is suggested by his reference in a 1937 article to Lessing's translation of Diderot's essays on theatre, a reference embedded in a discussion about European theatre's long history of realistic depictions of human behaviour.¹⁵ Brecht praises Diderot's understanding of the complementary relation between education and entertainment in the 1939 paper "On Experimental Theatre" where he presents Diderot and Lessing as the Enlightenment founders of bourgeois revolutionary aesthetics.¹⁶

As Brecht himself indicates, a point of connection between his work and that of Diderot is their mutual interest in a materialist philosophy. Of course, the point of connection is also a site of divergence. While Brecht pursued a historical and dialectical materialism, Diderot's brand has often been described as vitalist owing to his belief that "movement, whether it was a physical or chemical force, was the vital principle of all organic existence."¹⁷ And while Brecht directed his attention to historical movement brought about through social conflict and the practice of rational intervention on the part of the spectator, Diderot tended to observe movement as inherent dynamism rising out of the causal system of nature and to dwell on the movements of the beholder's heart and soul. Sensibility, the ability to move and be moved, was the vital force within each human organism.¹⁸ Despite such important differences in their materialist outlook, both subscribed in broad terms to the Heraclitean notion of a universe in flux, where being is replaced by becoming and the infinite change of all things.¹⁹ This vision of flux partly explains their mutual at-

traction to certain art forms and practices such as the incomplete draft, the sketch, theory carried out in the form of dialogue and, in Brecht's case, the blocking run typified by a light sketching of positionings.

Diderot's attempt to embody living flux is reflected in his rejection of the frozen signs of Neoclassical drama. That is, the rhetorical verse and coded aristocratic movements which he sought to replace with prose dialogue and spontaneous gesture. In Rousseau's fashion, Diderot regarded gesture as an expression which would connect man with the flow of life in the universe. As Herbert Josephs puts it, to this end "the dynamic and fugitive gesture that was born and that vanished with the rapidity of the pulsations of the mind" seemed to Diderot the perfect vehicle of movement.²⁰

Diderot's representation of polyphonous flux was, however, somewhat undermined by the lengthy and wordy monologues in his own plays and the tendency in his dialogic essays to subordinate conflicting voices to the all embracing view of the interlocutor planted as his spokesperson.²¹ The stage tableau, which Diderot defined as "An arrangement of those characters on the stage, so natural and so true to life that, faithfully rendered by a painter, it would please me on canvas"²² also undermines Diderot's vision of flux through what appears to me a fetishistic structure. Michael Fried has argued that Diderot "found in the fully realized tableau an external, 'objective' equivalent for his own sense of himself as an integral yet continuously changing being." Here Fried draws on Diderot's comment in *Lettre sur les sourdes et muets* (1751) that "Our soul is a moving tableau which we depict unceasingly; we spend much time trying to render it faithfully, but it exists as a whole and all at once. The mind does not proceed one step at a time as does expression."²³ While at the level of impact the tableau may have been capable of causing movement in the sense of emotional engagement, to what extent did the Diderotian tableau at the level of content express the movement of becoming and continuous change?

In several respects it seems to do the opposite. When viewed as a historical phenomenon, the tableau was created in the context of Diderot's attempt to promote emergent bourgeois genres. In the theatre essay "Conversations About 'The Natural Son'" Diderot advocates the elimination of a prominent

feature of Neoclassical theatre, the *coup de théâtre* - "an incident which takes place in action and which suddenly changes the characters' situation"²⁴ - and its replacement by the more lasting and deeply moving tableau.²⁵ In his analysis of Diderot's tableau, Peter Szondi argues that the *coup* was an expression of the world of the court, mirroring "the fickleness of princely moods and the inconstancy of alliances in a situation where everyone is hunting for power, favor, and happiness."²⁶ In keeping with his class-struggle framework, Szondi describes the tableau in Diderot's plays as a vehicle of early capitalist thought insofar as it replaces the chance model of the *coup* with the static image of a fortified nuclear family, "united in the certainty of how well disposed each of its members is towards the others."²⁷ For example, the focus in the opening and final tableaux of Diderot's *The Father* is the disruption of the family's wholeness - the son is absent from the assembled group, an instance of absence ultimately replaced by the concluding picture of familial unity, restored through the return of the son and a double wedding presided over by a benevolent father.²⁸ The illusionist nature of the tableau - Diderot insisted on the removal of spectators from the proscenium stage, thus creating a more hermetically sealed stage environment - is interpreted by Szondi as symptomatic of the bourgeois retreat from the public realm into the privacy of its own four walls.

Thus described, Diderot's tableau brings flux to a halt, with regard to both the vision of the world presented and the spectator. The vision of the world is referred to by Barthes as the "ideal meaning", a phrase he uses for metaphysical entities (Good, Progress, the Cause, the triumph of the just History). In terms of ideal meaning the tableaux in *The Father* impress upon the viewer the virtue of the unity and stability of the paternal nuclear family through a careful grouping of figures, eliminating other perspectives, that of the *coup* in particular, from its canvas. In the manner of a classic fetish-object, Diderot's illusionist tableau framed by the proscenium arch is not only readable and portable, but places the spectator in a position of voyeuristic separation. Fried's commentary on object-beholder relations in mid 18C French painting, a discussion that highlights Diderot's contribution to the debate as a prominent art critic, elaborates further on the fetishistic nature of spectatorship in his pictorial

theatre. History and genre paintings of the period, Fried argues, were marked by the attempt to create a sense of the characters' absorption in the world of the painting and obliviousness towards the presence of the beholder. Fried cites the work of one of Diderot's favourite artists, Jean-Baptiste Greuze, such as the ubiquitous painting *Le fils puni* (1778) as typical of this attempt. The overall aim behind such depictions was to eliminate the theatricality of spectatorship which was considered "a medium of dislocation and estrangement rather than of absorption, sympathy, self-transcendence." Beholding would only become a mode of access to truth if it was de-theatricalized through the fiction that no one was standing before the canvas.²⁹ Paradoxically, only through the establishment of his absence could the beholder's "placement before and enthrallment by the painting be secured."³⁰

Brecht's insistence on an overtly theatrical performer-spectator relation through the conscious disruption of fourth wall illusionism would seem a deliberate assault on the fetishistic structure of Diderot's tableau. Brecht's *Schaustück* spectator,³¹ though usually seated in a proscenium or end-on theatre, intellectually at least is not positioned in passive separation from the stage events but is subjected to a distanciation process designed to shake the spectator out of his habitual passive attitude towards the making of art and of society. Any state of hypnotic attraction to a unified whole is replaced by critical appraisal of social positioning, that of the spectator included. Brecht's tableaux are not illusionistic in any sustained way, something again casually underplayed by Barthes in a bracketed aside where he lets drop that "in Brecht the tableau is offered to the spectator for criticism, not for adherence."³² Roswitha Mueller's focus on the relation between the tableau and the fable in Brecht's theatre opens up a further gap in Barthes' argument. She maintains that Barthes' emphasis on the separate and autonomous nature of the segment in Brecht's theatre, leads to an unbalanced presentation, one which fails to take into consideration Brecht's emphasis on the fable and the way the "frame-like closure of each element in the fable is nevertheless embedded in the flow of events," just as an individual event is connected with "the context of its socio-political determinations." In other words, the relation between the gestural episode and

the continuum is one in which the episode is only *relatively* autonomous.³³ Because of its relation to the fable, and, as Peter Brooker has pointed out, its connection to neighbouring units via Brecht's montage structure, the framed element is only a piece with *partially* as opposed to fully dotted lines for cutting out.³⁴

What then does Brecht's tableau and pictorialism possibly have in common with Diderot's pictures and can they be regarded as fetishistic at all? One similarity between the Brechtian and Diderotian tableau is the emphasis on the careful framing of gestures and figures, though the focus of Brecht's spatial display is social contradictions not dramatic expressiveness or the causal unity of nature. Another point of contact is the stress on visual intelligibility -- both practitioners were interested in the notion of a theatre that would be accessible to a deaf spectator. The steps Brecht took to ensure visual intelligibility, especially at the Berliner Ensemble, included: pre-production sketches of possible *Arrangement*, that is, groupings and movements of characters in accordance with the fable³⁵ and concentration in the early rehearsals on the positioning and actions of characters and groups in relation to other characters. In order to enhance the clarity of each picture, it was typical of Brecht to exaggerate its separateness by, for example, encouraging actors to refrain from speaking while moving from one position or space to another.³⁶ The gestic blocking was then scrutinized with the aid of photos taken at rehearsals.³⁷ As David Richard Jones points out in his analysis of the Ensemble's *Mother Courage* staging, photographic aesthetics are complementary to a theatre which freezes a motion or condition in order to stop the action for a closer longer look.³⁸

One of the first commentators to analyze the pictorial nature of Brecht's epic theatre was Walter Benjamin who drew attention to the tableau quality of a theatre rich in its use of interruptive gesture. Benjamin described the defining feature of gesture as its fixable beginning and end, its frame-like and enclosed nature and the way it interrupts a *Haltung*, a complex of gestures "which is in a state of living flux."³⁹ He alerted attention to the way the frame-like quality of gesture is precisely what makes it a useful tool in the promotion of human intervention. Because a gesture is both a tangible and discrete phenomenon, and one that interrupts and retards the

action, it gives the spectator an opportunity to intervene mentally in the stage events. Helene Weigel as Mother Courage created several memorable examples of interruptive frame-like gesture. One was the ritualistic snapping of Courage's leather purse upon the conclusion of every business deal. The finality of the sharp audible click and the repetition of the hand movement served to isolate and defamiliarize a usually mundane gestural complex. It emphasized the character's enjoyment at the conclusion of a deal and her need continually to ensure and safeguard the means of economic subsistence. Weigel's pictorial style was the type of "classical form" Brecht was seeking in order to present complicated contemporary human attitudes with epic calm.

Group tableau as distinct from the single performer's gesture, was for Brecht also a pedagogical experiment in collectivist politics. His model-book commentary on the *Mother Courage* production's opening scene and the way individualist performers sought to move out of the picture and draw attention to themselves is underpinned by his collectivist stance. In this scene Brecht wished to concretize the link between war and capitalism through his depiction of the exchange between Mother Courage's family and the representatives of war, the Sergeant and Recruiter: "The professionals of business and of war encounter one another; the war can begin."⁴⁰ Therefore, initially he kept the two parties apart from one another in order to establish them as separate forces. The men of war remained together downstage right while Mother Courage's family and wagon entered from upstage right and rolled down left to the apron. Then he let the groups merge. When the Recruiter moved to the wagon to assess whether the two sons would provide adequate cannon fodder, treating them like a horse dealer would in the process, the symbiotic relationship between war and business was reinforced. Brecht warned that it would be difficult to convince the actors playing the war representatives to stay in one place and together until the wagon appears. He feared they would tend to behave egotistically and change their movements just to attract audience attention.⁴¹ He insisted that placements should be retained or else the movements would suffer devaluation and the spectator would no longer seek their special meaning.

As Barthes acknowledges, the composed na-

ture of the tableau is not a source of fetishistic activity, for at the Berliner Ensemble its self-referential pointing to its own communal construction disrupts the structure of commodity fetish by showing the theatre event as a social process of labour rather than as a fixed unchangeable whole.⁴² Yet from the example of gestural and group tableau I have given it would seem that Barthes has a point when he describes the fetish-object of Brecht's tableau as the ideal meaning. In the case of the opening war-meets-business scene the revered object is the social meaning of the positions -- and that meaning is part of a single if dialectical perspective. I would argue that Brecht's tableaux are also fetishist-objects insofar as they fuel the desire of a scientist who seeks to control an everchanging totality through the device of framed pictures. The Brechtian actor approximates an experimental scientist in her careful retardation of movement for the benefit of critical bystanders, as in the case of Brecht's street scene model, or when she selects "gestures that are rich in themselves" by watching herself move in a mirror while wearing a mask.⁴³ Like Barthes, some of Brecht's successors, Heiner Müller in particular, have rejected Brecht's scientific picture making as the perpetuation of an exclusive closed system. In a protest against the fetish for scientific vision embodied in the Brechtian tableau, Müller asserted in 1988 that contemporary art should concern itself instead with the *gestus* of aggressively "stepping out of the picture."⁴⁴

ENDNOTES

- 1 Roland Barthes, "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein" in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 69-70.
- 2 Ibid., 70.
- 3 Brecht, "Über einen Typus moderner Schauspielerinnen," c. 1927, *Bertolt Brecht Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, vol. 21 (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, and Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992), 214. Henceforth this edition of Brecht's writings will be referred to as *GBA*. Unless otherwise indicated, English translations are my own.
- 4 Marieluise Fleisser, "Early Encounter," trans. Tinch Minter, in Annie Castledine (ed.), *Plays by Women: Volume Nine* (London: Methuen, 1991), 112.
- 5 Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," 1927, in Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, vol. 7, trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1991), 353.
- 6 Colin MacCabe, "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses," *Screen* 15. 2 (1974): 22.
- 7 Giles Deleuze, 1967, as quoted in Jay Caplan, *Framed Narratives: Diderot's Genealogy of the Beholder* (Manchester: MUP, 1985), 19.
- 8 Barthes, "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein," 73, 74.
- 9 Ibid., 76-77.
- 10 Susan Sontag, "Introduction" in Barthes, *Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag (London: Fontana, 1983), xi-xii.
- 11 Brecht to Jean Renoir, 17 March 1937, *Letters 1913-1956*, trans. Ralph Manheim and ed. John Willett (New York and London: Routledge and Methuen, 1990), 249.
- 12 Brecht to Max Gorelik, 19 March 1937, *ibid.*, 250.
- 13 Barthes, "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein," 77.
- 14 Ibid., 78.
- 15 Brecht, "Realistische Abbildungen des menschlichen Verhaltens," *GBA*, vol. 22.1 (1993), 277.
- 16 Brecht, "Über experimentelles Theater," *GBA*, vol. 22.1 (1993), 546.
- 17 Herbert Josephs, *Diderot's Dialogue of Language and Gesture* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1979), 50.
- 18 Caplan, *Framed Narratives: Diderot's Genealogy of the Beholder*, 10.
- 19 Josephs, *Diderot's Dialogue of Language and Gesture*, 50.
- 20 Ibid., 51.
- 21 Peter France, *Diderot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 22-24.
- 22 Diderot as quoted in Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 95.
- 23 Ibid., 91.
- 24 Caplan, *Framed Narratives: Diderot's Genealogy of the Beholder*, 16.
- 25 Denis Diderot, "Entretiens sur le fils naturel" in John Hope Mason, *The Irresistible Diderot* (London: Quartet

- Books, 1982), 134; Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, 78.
- 26 Peter Szondi, "Tableau and Coup de Théâtre: On the Social Psychology of Diderot's Bourgeois Tragedy," *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 11. 2 (1980): 329.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid., 325-326.
- 29 Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, 104.
- 30 Ibid. 69, 103.
- 31 Brecht applied the term *Schaustück* to those of his plays designed to be presented by rehearsed actors and observed by spectators. By contrast, in his *Lehrstücke* ('learning plays') this opposition is replaced by the dialectical 'spectator' a participant who both acts and observes.
- 32 Barthes, "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein," 71.
- 33 Roswitha Mueller, "Montage in Brecht," *Theatre Journal* 39. 4 (1987): 474-475, 477.
- 34 Peter Brooker, *Bertolt Brecht: Dialectics, Poetry, Politics* (London and New York: Croom Helm, 1988), 57.
- 35 See, for example, Brecht, "Über den Bühnenbau der nichtaristotelischen Dramatik," autumn 1936/early 1937, *GBA*, vol. 22.1 (1993), 232.
- 36 See, for example, Käthe Rülcke, *Leben des Galilei* rehearsal notes, December 1955, Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv (BBA) 1134/9; transcriptions of the tape recordings of the *Leben des Galilei* rehearsals, Scene 13, 21 January 1956, BBA 2191/143.
- 37 Hans Bunge, *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*, diary of a production, 4 December 1953, BBA 944/25.
- 38 David Richard Jones, *Great Directors at Work: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Kazan, Brook* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1986), 87, 91.
- 39 Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Verso, 1973), 3; Benjamin, *Versuche über Brecht*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), 9-10.
- 40 Brecht, "Couragemodell 1949: Anmerkungen," *GBA*, vol. 25 (1994), 181.
- 41 Ibid., 184-185.
- 42 Mueller, "Montage in Brecht," 474, 483.
- 43 Brecht, "Hervorbringen des V-Effekts," c. 1938, *GBA*, vol. 22.1 (1993), 355.
- 44 Heiner Müller in discussion with Rainer Crone, "Fünf Minuten Schwarzfilm" in Heiner Müller, *Gesammelte Irrtümer 2, Irrtümer und Gespräche*, eds. Gregor Edelmann and Renate Ziemer (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1990), 141.

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TAUBE FIGUREN AUS DEM JENSEITS: VARIATION EINES THEMAS BEI BRECHT UND DÜRRENMATT

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Das Auftreten göttlicher Figuren in der Welt und ihr Ergründen des menschlichen Befindens gehört zu den ältesten und am weitesten verbreiteten Motiven der literarischen Überlieferung. Ich nenne nur einige der bekanntesten Beispiele: Im Alten Testament unterhält sich Gott mit seinem Vermittler Abraham über die Sündhaftigkeit der Menschen in Sodom und Gomorrah, und weil auf der Suche nach gottgefälligen Menschen nicht genügend von ihnen gefunden werden, läßt Gott beide Städte zerstören¹ Christus kommt im Neuen Testament eine ähnliche Aufgabe zu, obgleich er als Überbringer der göttlichen Gnade das verdiente Todesurteil der Menschen durch seinen Tod ins ewige Heil umwandelt.² Goethes *Faust* fällt in diese Tradition, weil Faust sich unter die Führung von Mephistopheles stellt, der mit dem "Herrn" eine Wette über den Ausgang dieser metaphysischen Beziehung abgeschlossen hat und sich selbst sieht als "ein[en] Teil von jener Kraft, die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft."³ Einen weiteren Schritt in dieser literarischen Überlieferung betrat Strindberg zu Beginn des Zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, weil er in seinem Drama *Ein Traumspiel* die Tochter der Göttin Indra irdische Wege wandeln läßt, um sie auf diese Art mit der leidenden Menschheit in unmittelbare Berührung zu bringen. Bedenkt man, daß die metaphysische Figur in Strindbergs Drama aufgrund ihrer irdischen Erfahrungen zu dem refrainartig wiederholten Schluß gelangt, daß es "schade um die Menschen" sei,⁴ weil ihr Leben aus Leiden bestehe, und sie [die metaphysische Figur] keinerlei Hilfe leistet -- am Schluß des Stückes verschwindet sie in einem brennenden Schloß -- so erweist sich das mit anderen Werken Strindbergs den Beginn der Moderne markierende *Ein Traumspiel* als eine die Existenz Gottes wohl nicht leugnende aber Gottes Macht sehr begrenzt zeigende Projektion des Autors. Für meine gegenwärtige Untersuchung habe ich zwei Stücke des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts gewählt, die offensichtlich beide in diese Tradition von auf der Erde wandelnden Figuren aus dem

Jenseits gehören, Brechts *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* und Dürrenmatts *Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon*,⁵ und in denen jeweils die aus dem metaphysischen Bereich kommenden Figuren das Ausmaß der menschlichen Befolgung von Gottes Auftrag an die Menschen zu einem uneigennütigen Leben nachprüfen.

In Brechts Stück wird bereits in dessen Vorspiel deutlich, daß für diese Rolle eigentlich nur eine Person in Frage kommt, nämlich die Prostituierte Shen Te, die als einzige von den Angesprochenen den drei nach einem Nachtquartier suchenden Göttern ein Zimmer, nämlich ihr eigenes, zur Verfügung stellt. Bereits hier wird vom Autor auch die gesellschaftliche Unmöglichkeit solch uneigennütigen Handelns zum Ausdruck gebracht, wenn er die Götter nach Shen Tes Klage über die Notwendigkeit der Ausübung ihres verachteten Berufs zum Zwecke des Überlebens die ihnen von einer höheren Instanz aufgelastete Bedingung brechen läßt, weil die Götter ihr für das Nachtquartier eine beträchtliche Geldsumme zustecken. Der weitere Handlungsverlauf des Stückes verdeutlicht, daß Shen Te auch mit diesem Geld nicht allzu lange ihren uneigennütigen Bestrebungen nachkommen kann, weil sie zum Zwecke des Überlebens immer wieder von der egoistischen Taktik des Übervorteilens der Mitmenschen unter der Maske des gewieften Geschäftsmannes Shui Ta Gebrauch machen muß.

Bei Dürrenmatt findet die Suche nach dem guten Menschen ebenfalls im sozialen Bereich statt, denn der Engel, der hier die Person aus dem Jenseits darstellt, soll die göttliche Gnade, bzw. aus der Sicht der Menschen das Glück, das durch die allegorische Figur des Mädchens Kurrubi dargestellt wird, dem "geringsten der Menschen" als Geschenk vermachen (16). Der wirtschaftliche Faktor der Unmöglichkeit des Überlebens eines selbstlosen Menschen in einer ausbeuterischen Gesellschaft spielt jedoch bei Dürrenmatt keine Rolle, weil ja gerade dem geringsten Menschen, d.h. dem Bettler, das Geschenk der Gnade zukommen soll und, wie sich im Laufe des Stückes herausstellt, der Bettler diese Rolle freiwillig einnimmt; er tut dies sogar gegen die ausgesprochen entgegengesetzten Bemühungen des den perfekten Staat anstrebenden Königs, vertreten durch die literarische Doppelfigur des babylonischen Machthabers Nebukadnezar-

Nimrod. Anders ausgedrückt: Während Brechts Interesse in *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* offensichtlich eine starke Kritik an den ökonomischen Verhältnissen eines Staates mit freier Marktwirtschaft beinhaltet, geht es Dürrenmatt in *Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon* um eine entschiedene Absage an das menschliche Streben nach Macht; und sein Stück drückt somit eine starke Kritik an der Ausgrenzung und Unterdrückung des freien Geistes aus.

Inwieweit gleichen oder unterscheiden sich dann die Personen aus dem Jenseits in den beiden Werken? Zunächst fällt auf, daß es sich in jedem Fall in deren Aussehen und Gebaren um sehr irdisch wirkende Figuren und somit letztlich um bewußt vom Autor als Projektionen einer menschlichen Vorstellung metaphysischer Mächte handelt. Brechts Götter sehen gut ernährt aus und tragen menschliche Kleider, die im Laufe der Handlung stark abgenutzt werden; sie "haben Staub auf den Schuhen" (1490), bis sie überhaupt nur noch "barfuß" daherkommen (1595); und einem Gott ist der Hut vom Kopf geschlagen worden. Auch mit ihren Physiognomien wirken diese göttlichen Figuren äußerst menschlich: Sie werden müde; und ein Gott verliert sogar sein Bein in einer "Fuchsfalle" (ibid.). Ihre Charaktere sind ebenfalls die von Menschen: Des einen Sprache enthält einen stark autoritären Ton, der andere zeigt sich skeptisch distanziert, und der dritte gibt sich herablassend gutmütig. Schon bei ihrem ersten Auftreten erinnern alle drei Vertreter einer metaphysischen Macht an materialistisch orientierte, stammtischfrequentierende Kleinbürger; und in der Schlußszene stellen sie als Richter ein distanziertes joviales Auftreten zur Schau.

Dürrenmatts Engel ist zwar in Aussehen und Charakter anders geartet, doch entspricht auch er offensichtlich einer menschlichen Projektion. Schon zu Beginn seines Auftretens ist er müde, wohl weil er auf seiner Reise zur Erde eine riesige Entfernung zurückgelegt hat und ihm ist -- damit Dürrenmatts Lust an grotesker Beschreibung zum Ausdruck bringend -- ein Mond des Jupiters zwischen die Beine geraten. Nachdem er aber zu Beginn der Handlung in der Verkleidung eines zerlumpten Bettlers auftrat, nimmt er immer mehr das Aussehen eines akademischen Wissenschaftlers an. Im zweiten Akt sitzt er mit den Objekten seiner

Sammellust -- Tannenzapfen, Mohn, Sonnenblumen und Zweigen -- auf dem Kopf einer Gilgameschstatue; und im dritten Akt sind es seltenere Naturobjekte -- Korallen, Seesterne, Muscheln, Schneckenhäuser und Tintenfische -- die seinen Enthusiasmus für naturwissenschaftliche Forschung bezeugen. Trotz seiner Begeisterung für die Natur zeigt sich der Engel aber ohne Verständnis für menschliche Probleme und gleicht auch in dieser Hinsicht Brechts Göttern.

Hier befinden wir uns am entscheidenden Punkt meines Vergleichs der beiden Stücke. Einerseits ist ihre Übereinstimmung in den Reaktionen der Figuren aus dem Jenseits geradezu frappierend, andererseits weisen ihre Bedeutungen in bezug auf die Absichten der Autoren in verschiedene Richtungen. Beide Aspekte dieser Behauptung gilt es jetzt noch genau zu erkunden.

Ich habe bereits angedeutet, daß die Götter in Brechts Stück kein Verständnis aufbringen für Shen Tes Dilemma, "gut zu sein und doch zu leben" (1603). Nachdem sie sich am Ende des Vorspiels von Shen Te mit leeren Floskeln wie: "Laß es dir gut gehen!" und "In das Wirtschaftliche können wir uns nicht mischen" verabschiedet haben (1498), lassen sie sich ohnehin bis zur Schlußszene nicht mehr vor ihr blicken, sondern erscheinen nur noch in den Träumen des naiven Wasserträgers Wang, dessen Plädoyer für eine Milderung der moralischen Forderungen durch die Götter an ihrem Unverständnis und ihrer Unwilligkeit abprallt. Alle Handlungsstränge kulminieren in der das Stück beendenden Gerichtsverhandlung, worin die drei metaphysischen Figuren die Stelle von Richtern einnehmen und der Dritte Gott seinen zwei Kollegen gegenüber verlauten läßt, daß ihre Zertifikate gefälscht seien (1597). Die unter der Maske des Shui Ta angeklagte Shen Te bekennt in der von ihr erbetenen und von den Göttern bewilligten Klausur, daß sie unter den gegebenen wirtschaftlichen Verhältnissen nur deswegen uneigennützig -- ein "Engel der Vorstädte" wird sie genannt (1529) -- überleben konnte, weil sie gleichzeitig als Shui Ta den Mitmenschen gegenüber mit ausbeuterischer Härte entgegentrat. Auf ihr Bekenntnis dieser Doppelrolle reagieren die Götter ohne jeglichen Bezug auf die gerade erfahrene Wirklichkeit. Der Erste Gott macht sich zum Sprachrohr für alle drei, indem er zuerst die

ganze Situation als ein "Mißverständnis" zu deuten versucht, dann an Shen Te als eine "kräftige Person" appelliert, die "viel aushalten" könne und es letztlich direkt ablehnt, auf die strengen göttlichen "Gebote" verzichten zu wollen (1604-06). Shen Tes verzweifelter Flehen, entweder Zuflucht zu ihrem Vetter (dem alter-ego Shui Ta) oder direkt zu den Göttern nehmen zu dürfen, kontrastiert mit den trochäischen Schlußversen der metaphysischen Figuren; und diese Verse stellen, indem sie die erfolglose Rückkehr der Götter ins Jenseits markieren, eine deutliche Travestie auf die Verse des Pater Seraphicus in der Schlußszene von Goethe's *Faust* dar (Verse 11890-93 u. 11918-25). Shen Tes letzter Schrei um "Hilfe" verhallt unerhört unter den Lauten des von Brecht ironisch verstandenen Chores, mit dem die Götter auf einer Wolke die irdische Bühne -- diese im doppelten Sinne -- verlassen:

Und lasset, da die Suche nun vorbei

Uns fahren schnell hinan!

Gepriesen sei, gepriesen sei

Der gute Mensch von Sezuan! (1606)

Nicht viel anders als Shen Te ergeht es unter ganz verschiedenen Umständen -- wie bereits oben erwähnt -- dem Mädchen Kurrubi in Dürrenmatts Drama. Hier wiederholt sich der Abschied der Figur aus dem Jenseits dreimal und zwar in jedem der drei Akte. Das erste Mal entschwindet der Engel gegen das Ende des ersten Aktes, nachdem er Kurrubi bereits dem von ihm nicht erkannten, weil als Bettler verkleideten Nebukadnezar zugesprochen hat. Dieser hat sich vorher in einem Wettbewerb mit dem wirklichen Bettler Akki als unterlegen und somit scheinbar "Geringster" unter den Menschen erwiesen. Obwohl Kurrubi infolgedessen dem verkleideten Nebukadnezar anzugehören hätte, erkennt sie instinktiv den vom Engel begangenen Irrtum und bittet den sich entfernenden Engel, sie mitzunehmen. Dieser weigert sich jedoch kategorisch, auf ihr Flehen einzugehen, indem er ihre wiederholt geäußerte Bitte: "Bleib, mein Engel" nur mit begütigenden Worten beantwortet (45). Diese Szene wiederholt sich im Zweiten Akt, in dem der Engel von einer seiner Forschungsreisen zurückkehrt, als Kurrubi, nachdem sie von Nebukadnezar am Ende des Ersten Aktes verstoßen wurde und bei dem Bettler Akki in dessen Behausung unter einer Euphrat-brücke Zuflucht

fand, große Verwirrung unter den Bewohnern Babylons verursachte: bei den Männern, weil sie sich alle in sie verliebt haben, und bei den Frauen, weil sie Kurrubi deshalb aus der Stadt jagen wollen. Wieder erweist sich der Engel völlig blind gegenüber der Wirklichkeit, indem seine ganze Reaktion auf Kurrubis Bitten darin besteht, eine Lobrede auf die Wunder der Erde und die Verschiedenartigkeit der Menschen zu halten. Kurrubis eindringlichem Flehen darum, sie nicht zu verlassen, entgegnet der Engel mit Phrasen wie: "Wird sich klären" und "Muß studieren, mein Mädchen, muß studieren" (69-70); ihre flehentlichen Bitten "Hilf mir, mein Engel!" und "Bleib, mein Engel, bleib!" treffen bei der metaphysischen Figur auf völlig taube Ohren (68 u. 70). Ein letztes Mal erscheint der Engel Kurrubi im Dritten Akt, nachdem Nebukadnezar erfahren hat, daß das Mädchen sich in ihn nur unter der Maske des Bettlers verliebt hat und sie nicht gewillt ist, mit ihm auf den Thron zu steigen. Dies veranlaßt den König, Kurrubi dem vermeintlichen Henker zu übergeben, unter dessen Maske sich aber der wahre Bettler Akki verbirgt. Auch diesmal überhört der Engel nach einer erneuten Hymne auf die große Vielfalt der irdischen Natur das Flehen seines Schützlings; und wie in Brechts Schlußszene ist der Abschied der metaphysischen Figur am Ende des Dürrenmatt-Stückes endgültig: "Lebe wohl, Kurrubi, mein Kind, lebe wohl auf immer!" (120)

Trotz der großen Ähnlichkeit im Verhalten der Figuren aus dem Jenseits -- sie erweisen sich als unheilbar taub gegenüber den Bedürfnissen ihrer Anbefohlenen -- besteht ein Unterschied in der Frage nach dem Ort, aus dem die Figuren kommen und in den sie zurückkehren, somit also auch in ihrer übertragenen Bedeutung aus der Perspektive der beiden Autoren. In einem der letzten Verse der Schlußszene von *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* bekennen die drei Götter, daß sie "[h]eimgehen in unser Nichts" und drücken damit Brechts Negierung eines Glaubens an metaphysische Figuren nach Art der dargestellten drei Götter aus (1606), die alles eher als omnipotente metaphysische Mächte, höchstens menschliche Projektionen solcher Figuren aus der bourgeoisen Perspektive verkörpern. Ich mache diese Behauptung mit Betonung von "nach Art der dargestellten drei Götter," weil diese ja selbst von einem "Beschluß"

sprechen, dem sie zu folgen haben (1498) und nahe daran sind, bereits im Vorspiel ihre Mission als "gescheitert" zu betrachten (1492), kurz nachdem der Zweite Gott die im Lande stattgefundenen "Überschwemmungen" nicht wie der Wasserträger Wang als eine Folge von mangelnder "Gottesfurcht," sondern "weil man den Staudamm verfallen ließ," gedeutet hat (1491). Diese Überlegung läßt es offen, ob der Autor religiöses Denken als solches -- seine Protagonistin Shen Te befürwortet immerhin Regeln, die den christlichen und jüdischen Geboten sehr nahe kommen -- oder ob er in dem Stück nur herkömmliche bürgerliche religiöse Praktiken verspottet bzw. abgelehnt hat. Dennoch: Die Handlung und der Ausgang von *Der gute Mench von Sezuan* läßt den Schluß zu, daß Brechts Weltanschauung diesseits verankert ist und er eine Lösung des in seinem Stück vorgestellten gesellschaftlichen Problems nicht auf religiöser sondern auf politischer Ebene für notwendig und auch für möglich hält.

Anders verhält es sich bei Dürrenmatt. Bereits in der Bühnenanweisung zum Ersten Akt heißt es, daß man sich für den Hintergrund der Komödie einen "unermessliche[n] Himmel" zu denken habe, "in dessen Mitte der Andromeda-nebel über allem schwebt" und daß der Engel und Kurrubi aus "diesem Himmeln" herabsteigen (13). Folgerichtig entschwebt der Engel am Ende des Dramas auch nicht wie die Götter bei Brecht ins "Nichts", sondern "in das milchige Weiß des Andromedanebels in dämmerhafter Ferne" und "in das dunkle Feuer des Antares" (120). Der Ernst dieser Szene hat nichts gemein mit dem satirischen Ende von Brechts Drama; und auf den letzten Schrei nach dem Engel folgt nur die lapidare Bühnenanweisung: "Schweigen" (ibid.). Zweifellos geht es dem Autor von *Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon* nicht darum, die metaphysische Herkunft seiner allegorischen Figur Kurrubi zu widerlegen, sondern er bejaht geradezu deren wunderbaren Charakter, indem er sie als sympathisierender Autor dem ganz unter positivem Vorzeichen verstandenen Bettler Akki zuteilt und ihre Polarität zu der auf bloße Diesseitigkeit ausgerichtete Gesellschaft seines literarischen Babylons hervorhebt, das mit seinen technischen Attrappen für jede moderne westliche Großstadt steht. Dem ist allerdings hinzuzufügen, daß das Jenseits, an dem der Autor

offensichtlich festhält, in eine unheimliche Distanz gerückt ist und von der menschlichen Gesellschaft, wie er sie erlebt, kaum noch wahrgenommen werden kann -- dies trotz oder gerade wegen der im Stück vorkommenden und die Menschen für dumm haltenden betrügerischen Theologen.

Man könnte den Schluß von *Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon* genauso wie den Schluß von *Der gute Mench von Sezuan* als einen "tragischen" sehen, wenn man bedenkt, daß in jedem Fall die Protagonistin hilflos auf der Erde zurückbleibt. Bei Brecht handelt es sich aber nicht um eine eigentliche "Tragödie" wegen des politischen Demonstrativcharakters seines Stückes, den der Autor außerdem in einem angehängten "Epilog" besonders hervorkehrte. Dürrenmatt hingegen hat sein Werk ausdrücklich als eine "Komödie" bezeichnet, weil die Handlung nicht nach den Erwartungen der Protagonisten (vor allem jenen des Engels und des Königs) abläuft, wobei der Autor auch nicht gelegentliche situationskomische Effekte nach Nestroys Manier verabscheut.⁶ Ganz entgegen dem Sinn einer Tragödie ließ Dürrenmatt die pathetische Abreise des Engels und das scheinbar tragische Aufsichselbstgestelltsein der Kurrubi in einen Trugschluß münden, dem er den eigentlichen Schluß erst folgen läßt.

In der wahren Schlußszene sieht man, wie Kurrubi und Akki, in dem die erstere letztendlich den wahren Bettler gefunden hat, einem Sandsturm trotzen, der die Wüste des modernen Daseins, wie es das Stück gezeigt hat, symbolisiert und in dem sich der Mensch, welcher bleibenden Besitz und willkürliche Macht über andere verachtet, seine geistige Freiheit bewahrt. Daß den beiden Flüchtlingen aus der Welt der Moderne noch "einige dissidente Dichter" im Sandsturm nach "hüpfen" (123), unterstreicht sogar Dürrenmatts Glauben an das Geistige und somit Metaphysische im Menschen. Man achte aber darauf, daß der Autor dies nur den "dissidenten" Dichtern zubilligt, womit er diese nicht nur von seinem Spott auf die im Zweiten Akt ebenfalls unter Kurrubis Anblick in Verse ausbrechende Dichter ausnimmt, sondern auch seine dort von Akki verabreichte Hölderlin-Parodie in dem Satz "Was bleibt, stifte ich den Dichtern" wenigstens zum Teil wieder zurücknimmt (80), wie ja auch das dem ganzen Stück vorangestellte Hölderlin-Motto ("Ihr Städte des

Euphrats!") des Autors Lob auf den nicht zerstörbaren Geist ausdrückt (11).

Zusammenfassend kann man sagen, daß der dramatische Gebrauch von Figuren aus dem Jenseits den gemeinsamen Nenner von Brechts *Der gute Mench von Sezuan* und Dürrenmatts *Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon* darstellt. Beide Stücke bedienen sich solcher Figuren, damit die Zuschauer und Leser die Wirkungslosigkeit dieser ohnehin nur als Projektionen menschlicher Vorstellungen erscheinenden Kräfte erkennen lassen. Während aber Brechts vermenschlichte Götter zuletzt dem Abdank des Autors anheimfallen, was im engen Kontext mit seiner Kritik an der bourgeois Klassengesellschaft steht, stellt Dürrenmatts Engel, dem ebenfalls sehr menschliche Züge anhaften, noch ein letztes Glied einer menschlichen Bindung an eine metaphysische Macht dar, die allerdings in mystische Ferne gerückt ist. In den Werken beider Autoren erweisen sich die Figuren aus dem Jenseits als taub gegenüber den irdischen Nöten der ihnen anbefohlenen Schützlinge. Brecht sah die Lösung des Problems des unter diesen Umständen leidenden Menschen in der Notwendigkeit einer Erneuerung der Gesellschaft durch politisches Handeln. Dürrenmatt, der wohl dramaturgisch viel von Brecht übernommen hat, sah für den Gehalt seines Werkes nur noch die Möglichkeit der totalen Negation der modernen Gesellschaft, wie sie in der freiwilligen Distanzierung des geistig von seiner gesellschaftlichen Umwelt unabhängigen Menschen möglich ist.

ANMERKUNGEN

1. Buch Mose, 18. 22-19.24.
2. Unter den zahllosen Stellen der Verkündung von Christi Heilsbotschaft und Mahnung zu einem gottgefälligen Leben, z.B. Matthäus 5.19-20.
3. *Faust: Der Tragödie Erster Teil*, Verse 1335-36. Zum Abschluß der Wette zwischen Gott und Mephistopheles, Op. Cit., Verse 312-23.
4. So äußert sich die Tochter Indras wiederholt im zweiten Akt des erstmals 1901 u.d.T. *Ett drömspel* erschienenen Stückes, z.B. gegenüber dem Offizier und dann wieder gegenüber dem Dichter, in der Übersetzung von Willi Reich, August Strindberg, *Dramen*. Dritter Band (München, Wien: Albert Langen und Georg Müller, 1965), 110 u. 137.
5. Brechts 1938-40 entstandenes Stück erschien erstmals im Druck in des Autors *Versuche*, 12 (1949-57); zitiert wird hier aus Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke*, 4, *Stücke*, 4 (Frankfurt a.M.: edition suhrkamp, 1967). Die erste Fassung von Dürrenmatts Komödie in drei Akten erschien 1954; zitiert wird hier aus der Neufassung von 1980 u.d.T. *Ein Engel kommt nach Babylon. Eine fragmentarische Komödie in drei Akten* (Zürich: Diogenes Verlag, 1985).
6. Wie Gerhard P. Knapp behauptet, hat Dürrenmatt wiederholt seine Vorliebe für die Possen und Schwänke von Johann Nepomuk Nestroy bekundet. "Wege und Umwege: ein Forschungsbericht", in *Friedrich Dürrenmatt: Studien zu seinem Werk*. Hrsg. Von Gerhard P. Knapp (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm, 1976), 27; einen von vielen Beispielen von Nestroys situationskomischen Einfällen findet man im 7. Auftritt des 2. Aufzugs seines international bekannten Dramas *Einen Jux will er sich machen*, wo die Frau von Fischer darauf eingeht, daß der Protagonist Weinberl, der sie vorher nie gesehen hat, sie in seinem Gespräch mit Frau von Fischers Freundin, Madame Knorr, als seine Frau bezeichnet hat und diesen damit in arge Verlegenheit bringt, aus der er sich nur durch sein gleichfalls gewandtes Reden retten kann, bis aus den zwei Fremden ein Hochzeitspaar wird.

Nashville, Tennessee

A NOTE ON THE RETURN OF BRECHT TO CUBA

Fred Hayden

Brecht's legacy in different countries of the New World has widely different expressions; two examples are Peru and the US. (S Joffe, 2001, H Blau, 2002). In the *Gaceta de Cuba*, a journal of Cuban culture out of Havana, there was a symposium in the March-April 2000 issue concerning "Cuban Theater: Questions at the End of the Century." The leadoff article of the symposium was entitled: "El Alma Buena de Se-Chuan, de Carlos Celdrin." It included responses of six critics to two Brecht plays recently performed in Havana: *El Alma Buena... (The Good Soul...)*, staged in 1999, the article's primary emphasis; and *Baal* (which had been staged earlier). *Baal* was discussed by two of the six contributing critics.

This note summarizes my observations of the situation of Brecht, based on that article and theater experiences during two visits (February 1994, and March 2002); I also incorporate brief interviews with two theater workers: Carlos Celdrin in February 1994 (he directed both of the above plays), and R.G. Davis (Northern California theater observer of global Brecht, and founder/director of the San Francisco Mime Troupe) who participated in a Cuban conference on theater in February, 1983.

The "Introduction" to the *Gaceta* symposium states that *The Good Soul...* was reprised from a production of the same play in 1960, wherein Brecht had been introduced to the theater-going Havana public. In 1999, *The Good Soul...* had been staged at the National Theater at Havana's Plaza of the Revolution by the Teatro Argos Group. As noted above, the production followed their staging of *Baal* (whose critical reception was not available).

In the lead article, referred to above, the first critic, Rosa Ileana Boudet, noted that the production of *The Good Soul...* was a response to the troubling contemporary presence of Brecht, following the younger generation's recent participation in Brecht's *Baal*. She says: "Hoy, como hace quar-ento anos, la obra nos asombra, solo que de manera diferente." She noted that the two plays represented two generational contrasts, as they had been for Brecht in real life. The two plays contrast getting ready for a new world war in mid-life, and re-

covering from a world war in youth (with hormones raging). Another critic, Norge Espinosa, noted that the two plays (*The Good Soul...* and *Baal*) showed why Brecht's return was not a luxury but a necessity, and as such was a challenge that Celdrin couldn't refuse.

For completeness, I refer to the other four critics who participated in the *Gaceta* article. They are: Vivian Martinez Tabares, Esther Suarez Duran, Amando del Pino, Marilyn Garbey. Three other commentator statements were by students of "Teatrologia": Arturo Infante Vieiro, Jaime Gomez Triana, and Abel Gonzalez Melo. These seven contributors referred, respectively to: "political theater" and a dialectic between it and more lyrical theater; a comparison with the theater of Vicente Revuelta (with which I am unfamiliar); a background take on the Teatro Argos; and various in-depth responses to *Good Soul...* (the three fat myopic gods/ the social schizophrenia/ the call/ the performers art etc.)

In 1994, I had asked the director Celdrin, while sitting on benches in front of the Writers/ Artists Union (UNEAC) building where he was (my notes say) "President of the Theater Division," about the influence of Brecht on modern Cuban theater. He said that those who were involved in the staging of *The Good Soul...* in 1960, including himself, had been trained in Stanislavskian methods but had studied Brecht's ideas in the course of the play's production at that time. Following this event, Brecht influenced Santiago's Teatro Cabildo (which Celdrin also had participated in). He said that in 1968-69 "a Brecht fever swept the island."

Testimony to Brecht's influence at the time of the "Brecht fever" is provided in a song for Brecht by the well-known nueva trova singer/composer Silvio Rodriguez ("the Bob Dylan of Cuba" -- Costa Rican President Oscar Arrias from an interview in *Playboy* about the time he won the Nobel Peace Prize -- in 1988). The song "Sueno con Serpientes" (recorded 1975, also in his greatest hits CD, 1994, "Canciones Urgentes") includes a dedication: "There is an hombre without precedent, who fought all his life: Bertolt Brecht." Bertolt Brecht's tenacity, not unexpectedly, appeals to Cubans.

Sometime around or during this "Brecht fever" came the Teatro Brecht and an associated or brotherly group, the Teatro Ironworks. In 1994 Celdrin told me that the Teatro Brecht group had since

renamed itself, the Teatro Mio Manteca (Cooking Oil Theater), which was separate from the Teatro Brecht. The Ironworks theater group had since renamed itself Teatro A Dentro (the theater inside?). The latter was an agitprop theater (American style), driven from within the factory (for exposing corruption etc.). These morphs became less recognizably political and more personal.

Between the "Brecht fever" (peaking in 1969, say) and 1994 (the time of the Celdrin chat/interview), individuals including Brecht sympathicos gathered in a conference (February, 1983) to discuss the possibility of a new theater, "nuevo teatro", a theatrical equivalent of *nueva trova*. R.G. Davis (who, among other activities, had been founder/director of the short lived Epic West -- center for Brecht Studies -- Berkeley, 1975-1980) participated in this conference. Theater ideas of others, particularly Enrique Buenaventura and Santiago Garcia, both from Colombia, seemed most influential. Different theater workers staged different pieces at the conference to indicate the proposed nuevo teatro's possibilities etc. Note that a reflection of Buenaventura's theories, if they underlie his play, *In the Right Hand of God the Father* (1971, first produced 1960), indicate an interest in magic in the theater (ex. heaven, hell, earth and the attendant theological personages). The proposed nuevo teatro apparently emphasized a collective, socially focused magical theater; Buenaventura's ideas are presented in his book -- *Collective Creation* (date uncertain).

Sometime between this 1983 conference and 1994, the Cuban rectification campaign began and continued, and after 1994 Brecht's powerful ghost returned to resettle in the island, as evidenced by *Gaceta's* March-April 2000 issue. (Note: the rectification campaign proceeded through the crushing of South Africa's apartheid military in Angola -- against the advice of the Soviet Union). Otherwise, in Brechtian culture, between 1994 and 1999, I don't know what happened. My theater experience in Havana in 1994 and 2002 provides me with a few observations (pre and post the return of "poor b.b.").

In my 1994 and 2002 visits I had seen advertisements for the Brecht Theater. I tried both times to visit this theater. In 2002, I almost succeeded. The following explains my theater experiences before (1994) and after (2002) the return of B. Brecht.

In February 1994, the Teatro Brecht being

closed, I had gone to see a very funny professional production of *Lysistrata* (Grupo Teatro Estudio), admittedly under virtual war-time conditions -- no paper for programs, no spare electricity, dark, quiet streets, etc.... The Teatro Estudio is claimed to be the "best theater group in Cuba" (Stanley, 2000). The production was a nifty piece, a fresh emphasis on the seizure of the Acropolis treasury after the feint to the crotch and illuminating a specific political time, Cuba in the Special Period. The actors were relaxed, and the show had some Brechtian anachronisms.

In March of 2002 I went to see a play presented by The Teatro Dos at the "sala alternativa, Centro Cultural Bertolt Brecht," which turned out to be a hall above the "Sala Teatro Brecht Cafe". Another play was performing downstairs in the "Brecht cafe" (*Tengamos el sexo en Pax* by Dario Fo), but I missed the play due to unavoidable conflicts of schedule. The teatro Dos play *La Edad de Ciruelas* (*Age of the Prunes*) by Aristides Vargas was effectively staged - with set spare, in primary and bald secondary colors. However the lines were too fast and angry for my limited Spanish to decode. The set consisted of a bone-white picket fence upstage of an upended top-hat with a flower growing out of dirt that filled it. The performers appeared upstage of the picket fence -- furthest upstage were a suitcase and an umbrella. A theme of flight relative to the US, by hypnotized "prunes" (cirulas) bereft of Cuban concerns was apparent. I confess I began to nod out midway along the showtime current. The piece apparently gripped the audience which gave it a standing ovation.

Is it possible that Bertolt Brecht would have lived in Socialist Cuba, a music-hungry antithesis to Miami's Mahagony-esque capitalism? And Havana, with its gorgeous colors amid splashes of gray, is an old worldclass antithesis to Washington D.C., the wannabe bullypulpit stockjobber of Brecht's "Golden West." In any case, the Brecht cafe itself was closed with chains and lock now, late in the evening; with only a sign on the door that said: "Tengamos el sexo en pas."

On my next study excursion to the island, I hope to get inside the Brecht theater and from there wonder how poor b.b. would compare the Havana experience with the New York and Berlin experience. I can see him already standing up to object.

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BRECHTIAN LAUGHTER? THE PHILOSOPHY OF LAUGHTER AND THE LIMITS OF DIALECTICAL THEATER

Norman Roessler

"A theatre that can't be laughed in is a theatre to laugh at."
(*Brecht on Theatre*, 173)

Brechtian laughter? It is relatively easy to find laughter, and associated words such as fun, humor, comic, and pleasure, in the Brechtian *oeuvre*. Brecht repeatedly mentions these words in his essayistic and theoretical writings;¹ his poetic and theatrical works contain moments that exude a brilliant and biting comic touch; and he often stylized himself -- in appearance, attitude, and social interaction -- as the wise fool or the carnival clown. Yet, at the same time, it is also very difficult to grasp and hold Brechtian laughter in order to examine it closely. His essayistic and poetical writings often emphasize the theoretical and didactic at the expense of deeper reflection; his theater works often seem more intent on analysis so that laughter is often forgotten; his wise-fool act often seemed superficial or inappropriate to the times he lived in. In short, Brechtian laughter is a conundrum that hides in plain sight. Scholars and theater practitioners have reacted to this conundrum in three general, and ultimately unsatisfying, ways. One approach is to ignore or dismiss Brechtian laughter entirely. According to this line of thought Brecht is a grim Teutonic Marxist, too intent on changing the world to have given serious attention to anything as mundane as laughter. An examination of such order is not worthy of mention, except for the fact that all too many scholars tacitly pursue it. A second approach grants Brecht a broad comic impulse, taking him at his word in his theoretical work, and accepting the premise that epic theater draws upon a fundamental comic structure, but denies the resolution into laughter.² This scholarly avenue has its merits, but tends to ignore Brecht's theatrical praxis. A third approach attempts to reclaim Brechtian laughter through a postmodern and praxis-oriented intervention, typically drawing upon Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque and emphasizing such car-

nivalesque moments in stage productions.³ This approach has its merits as well, but tends toward the injudicious and does not carefully delineate the distinctions between Brecht and postmodern perspectives.

In order to provide a new view of this conundrum we should consider pursuing Brechtian laughter through Brechtian method. In his later theoretical essays (e.g. *Messingkauf Dialogues*) as well as his later production models at the Berliner Ensemble (e.g. *Theaterarbeit*) we find Brecht engaging in dialogical experiments with philosophical and theatrical models. In the case of Brechtian laughter we can construct a dialogue between Brechtian philosophy and the philosophy-of-laughter tradition, embodied best in the ideas of Henri Bergson. Moreover, we can explore the ramifications of this imaginary dialogue by examining a model utilized by both Brecht and Bergson -- the street scene. The result of this methodological inquiry will show that Brecht did indeed have a philosophy of laughter, albeit a negative one; and it is this negative philosophy of laughter which helps to define the limits of his dialectical theater.

Bergson, Brecht and the Philosophy of Laughter

Laughter / Humor Studies is a broad domain which encompasses the disciplinary realms of biology, cognitive science, psychology, sociology, literature, cultural studies, linguistics, and philosophy.⁴ Henri Bergson's (1859-1941) "Laughter" (1900) is an often marginalized work (cited but quickly dismissed), but nevertheless an appropriate dialogue partner for the examination of Brechtian laughter.¹ First, Bergson's essay provides a broad foundation for the study of laughter, embracing the disciplines of philosophy, sociology, and aesthetics. At the same time, it touches upon the three major theories of laughter: the Superiority Theory (found in Plato and best expressed in Hobbes); the Incongruity Theory (first expressed by Aristotle and classically articulated by Kant); and the Relief Theory (first found in the work of Spencer, seriously examined in Freud, and represented in contemporary scholarship by the sociologist Eliot Oring). And, significantly for literary and cultural studies scholars, Bergson, according to the Slavist Larissa Rudova, is one of the most important influ-

ences on Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophical worldview (177). Moreover, Bergson's essay not only provides a broad philosophical overview, but also provides useful working definitions. In short, Bergson's essay is convenient one-stop shopping for the scholarly consumer of laughter. Second, of these three theories of laughter, Bergsonian laughter is best understood as a version of the Incongruity Theory. According to this theory, a certain mental or natural order of the world is *expected* by the individual and when these expectations are not met, an incongruity, and hence potentially laughable effect arises. Bergson was a non-systematic process philosopher who understood the existential world as one that was naturally fluid and defined by change. Aesthetic imagination and intuition best conform to this world, whereas excess rationalization creates a rigid, systematized version of this natural world. Excess rationalization leads to a basic incongruity, which according to Bergson creates a fundamentally comic world. If we follow Hayden White in his work *Metahistory* (281) and examine the Marxist foundations of Brecht's theory (especially in "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte") we find a more systematic and material interpretation of the world, but an interpretation which is predicated upon an analogous idea of incongruity. Capitalism, according to Marxian principles, is "fundamentally comic" in its worldview (McGowan 60). That is, capitalism turns people into machines, thus making them static in a world predicated upon and requiring change. Moreover, on a broader level, capitalism, especially in its end phase, becomes a static and hence comical system itself. Brechtian Theater, following Marxist theory, attempts to illuminate these fundamental incongruities created by the capitalist system. Third, Bergson's approach to the topic of laughter in his essay has both aesthetic and social dimensions. Unlike earlier philosophers, he not only discusses laughter in the abstract, but also grounds his abstractions in experimental social contexts, in which he consistently reflects upon the comic figure, the comic actor, and the comic audience. In this regard, his essay is close to the essays and fragments that form the basis for Brechtian theatrical praxis. Fourth, both Bergson and Brecht refer to a street scene in order to test their basic ideas.

Street Scenes

In Bergson's essay "Laughter" we encounter the following description:

A man running along the street, stumbles and falls; the passers-by burst out laughing [...]. They laugh because his sitting down is involuntary. Consequently, it is not his sudden change of attitude that raises a laugh, but rather the involuntary element in this change - his clumsiness in fact. Perhaps there was a stone on the road. He should have altered his pace or avoided the obstacle. Instead of that, through lack of *inelasticity*, through *absent-mindedness* and a kind of physical obstinacy, as a result, in fact of *rigidity*, or of momentum, the muscles continued to perform the same movement when the circumstances of the case called for something else. This is the reason of the man's fall, and also of the people's laughter (66). (*Italics mine* -- N.R.)

And here is how Brecht presents his street scene model:

It is comparatively easy to set up a basic model for epic theatre. For practical experiments I usually picked as my example of completely simple, "natural" epic theatre an incident such as can be seen at any street corner: an eyewitness demonstrating to a collection of people how a traffic accident took place. The bystanders may not have observed what happened, or they may not simply agree with him, may "see things a different way"; the point is that the demonstrator acts the behavior of the driver or victim or both in such a way that the bystanders are able to form an opinion about the accident (121) [...]. A whole series of characteristics of the victim ask to be portrayed. Was he absent-minded? Was his attention distracted? If so, by what? What, on the evidence of his behavior, could have made him liable to be distracted by just that circumstance and not other? (*Brecht on Theatre* 123).

At first glance, Bergson's street scene appears entirely spontaneous and instinctual, devoid of cognitive engagement and critical reflection, and hence the polar opposite of Brechtian Theater. However, when we take into account the entire analysis con-

tained in the essay, we discover that Bergson supplies a detailed logic of laughter, which can be contextualized within the street scene model. This logic has three elements. What seems spontaneous, instinctual, and emotional is actually the result of a sophisticated cognitive response located within the audience and comic actor. According to Bergson, laughter does not arise from nor reside in an emotional sphere; rather laughter arises out of an "absence of feeling" (63). Or more firmly stated: "To produce the whole of its effect, then, the comic demands something like a momentary anesthesia of the heart. Its appeal is to intelligence, pure and simple" (63-64). For Bergson, the intellect is able to retain a cognitive distance from the comic person or event and perceive the incongruous structure or elements of this event. Emotional identification runs the danger of reducing cognitive distance and flattening out the incongruous elements. It is not consonance or symmetry which is the foundation of the laughable, but rather the dissonant and asymmetrical (151-152). Hence, laughter arises out of the perception of an incongruous situation, the cognitive ability to suppress emotion and hold that moment of incongruity, and finally the cognitive ability to maintain an emotional detachment. This point concerning the "appeal to pure intelligence" corresponds to Brecht's insistent criticism of Aristotelian Poetics: too much identification, too much closeness will distort critical reflection. The difference is that Brecht is less confident that this distancing from the scene will happen naturally. This is why he insists on his street scene occurring as a demonstration of a past event. If the event were too direct, too immediate, it would be less certain that a proper critical distance and reflection would be achieved. Furthermore, even though the demonstrator is presenting what happened, he / she cannot become too consumed by identification. In the essay he insistently warns against the "powers of transformation," not to "cast a spell," and the "engendering of illusion" (122).

The other two elements of Bergson's logic of laughter are found in the comic figure. The cognitive structure of the mind seizes upon incongruous moments in human experience, which occur naturally and can also be reproduced artificially. The comic figure is inconsistent with the flexible, fluid world in body and mind. Bergson uses the term

"inelasticity" to describe the comic body, gesture, and movement: "just where one would expect to find the wide-awake adaptability and the living pliability of the human being" (66-67). The machine-like, the automatic, the rigid, the repetitive, the reversible, the puppet-like, and the thing-like are all versions of existential inelasticity which produce a comic incongruity and a laughable effect. The parallel is found in the inelasticity of the cognitive and linguistic spheres labeled as "absentmindedness." Bergson states, "A certain fundamental absentmindedness, as though the soul had allowed itself to be fascinated and hypnotised by the materiality of a simple action" (77). Bergson further states, "the comic person is unconscious and invisible to himself" (71), or lives in a dream (147), or a person "whose absentmindedness is systematic and organised around one central idea" (69).

Bergson's ideas of inelasticity and absentmindedness also broadly conform to Marxist / Brechtian principles of objectification, contradiction, and reification. Brecht's Dialectical Theater and its alienation effects strive to dramatize the contradictions and reifications inherent in capitalist society.

A major difference arises between Bergson and Brecht when we examine how the scene should be demonstrated by the comic actor. For Bergson it is clear: the incongruous moment of human behavior, out of sync with some expected or accepted context, must be reproduced and emphasized in order for the laughable effect to occur. In Bergson's review this is not slavish imitation, but rather a cognitive awareness of incongruity in order to reproduce it. Bergson admits that this creates a one-sided character, but the one-sided character stands in contradiction to the multi-dimensional, fluid world. This is incongruous, hence comic and laughable. It is this point which Brecht is fully cognizant of, but chooses not to pursue in his street scene. Brecht points out that the actor's demonstration is "essentially repetitive" (122) and the demonstrator must be careful not to turn this repetition into identification -- either on his part or the part of the audience. The actor must not "make his demonstration serve as an 'experience' for the audience" (122). Nor must he necessarily imitate the emotion surrounding the actual event: "The demonstration would become no less valid if he did not reproduce

the fear caused by the accident; on the contrary it would lose validity if he did. He is not interested in creating pure emotions" (122). Rather, he wants the audience of the street demonstration to be able to reflect and intervene in a concrete social manner. For this critical reflection and action to take place, only a qualified representation of the event is required and desired: "The demonstrator's purpose determines how thoroughly he has to imitate. Our demonstrator need not imitate every aspect of his characters' behaviour, but only so much as gives a picture" (123). This picture, according to Brecht, might include a "series of characteristics of the victim to be portrayed" (123). For example, "Was he absent-minded? Was his attention distracted? If so, by what? What, on the evidence of his behavior, could have made him liable to be distracted by just that circumstance and no other?" (123). Brecht emphasizes that his epic theater model provides a full and diverse range of possible portrayals; yet, he specifies a specific limitation which begins in the text and continues into a footnote. Let me quote the ideas as a whole statement:

Yet a theatre which tries to restrict its essential elements to those provided by our street scene will have to acknowledge certain limits to imitation. It must be able to justify any outlay in terms of its purpose. [...] We often come across demonstrations of an everyday sort which are *more thorough imitations* than our street-corner accident demands. Generally they are *comic ones*. Our next-door neighbor may decide to "take off" the rapacious behavior of our common landlord. Such an imitation is often rich and full of variety. Closer examination will show however that even so apparently complex an imitation concentrates on one specific side of the landlord's behavior. The imitation is summary or selective, deliberately leaving out those occasions where the landlord strikes our neighbor as "perfectly sensible," though such occasions of course occur. *He is far from giving a rounded picture; for that would have no comic impact at all.* The street scene, perforce adopting a wider angle of vision, at this point lands in difficulties which must not be underestimated. It has to be just as successful in promoting criticism, but the incidents in question are far

more complex. It must promote positive as well as negative criticism, and as part of a single process (123).

Here Brecht is drawing limitations on mimesis not because of identification, but because the demonstration would be too one-sided and hence comic. He does not want a seamless illusion of the demonstration of the event or the figures, but he does want a rounded and complex representation. In order to produce this full characterization the "demonstrator should derive his characters entirely from their actions" (124); by doing this a complex potential of the character is presented, not some idea of tragic fate or "unavoidable consequence" (124).

But this is exactly what Bergson counsels against in his definition of laughter. We laugh because of the inelastic quality of the person set within the specific context. In order for laughter to take place, the inelastic must be emphasized. In order to achieve this state, *gesture* and *not action* must be stressed, because gesture is the isolated element which denies the figure a consciousness, complexity, and completeness and in the process makes the person into a thing. This thing, this character, is asymmetrical to the fluid, changeable world, and hence we laugh. Action, on the other hand, creates a conscious and complete person that blends into the fluid world and hence we do not laugh. Bergson summarizes it in the following manner:

Action is intentional or, at any rate, conscious; gesture slips out unawares, it is automatic. In action, the entire person is engaged; in gesture, an isolated part of the person is expressed, unknown to, or at least apart from the whole of the personality. Lastly – and here is the essential point – action is in exact proportion to the feeling that inspires it: the one gradually passes into another, so that we may allow our sympathy or our aversion to glide along the line running from feeling to action and become increasingly interested. About gesture, however, there is something explosive, which awakes our sensibility when on the point of being lulled to sleep and, by thus rousing us up, prevents our taking matters seriously. Thus, as soon as our attention is fixed on gesture and not action, we are in the realm of comedy (153-154).

This inelasticity of the mind, like the inelasticity of

the body stands in contradiction with the fluid, flexible world and combine to construct the comic character. The term "character" is itself always comic, because it reduces the full and fluid persona to a rigid, monologic idea:

In one sense it might be said that all character is comic, provided we mean by character the readymade element in our personality, that mechanical element which resembles a piece of clockwork wound up once and for all and capable of working automatically. It is, if you will, that which causes us to imitate ourselves (156).

The comic actor who plays this figure must emphasize gesture rather than action in the construction of the comic character (153). In Bergson's view action signifies consciousness and completeness; that is, when the comic actor constructs character through actions and not gestures, a whole person is represented, which runs the danger of not being incongruous with the fluid world, and most importantly, might allow for identification between spectator and figure. Brecht distrusts pure representation and imitation, in either the comic or tragic mode, because he believes it will reduce cognitive distance and incongruity -- therefore, critical reflection. Only a multi-sided representation, complex and contradictory, will retain incongruity and distance. Bergson believes just the opposite: it is by a faithful and conscious imitation of the static in a person that incongruity and distance, and hence the laughable, are created.

Now let us turn to the resolutions of each street scene. Remember that Bergson's scene ends in laughter, and Brecht's scene ends in conversation. According to Bergson, laughter corrects the inelastic absentmindedness of the individual from the social and fluid environment: "Each individual must be ever attentive to his social surroundings: he must model himself on his environment; in short, he must avoid shutting himself up in his own peculiar character as a philosopher in his ivory tower" (147-148). Laughter is meant to repress "separatist tendencies" and "convert rigidity to plasticity" (174). Bergson indicates a slightly new awareness, a learning curve for the comic figure, but spends little time exploring this pedagogical moment. He moves very little from the basic idea of "corrective." Not only does he resist moving to a more pedagogical view,

but also he resists any redemptive idea within laughter: "So evidently there is nothing very benevolent in laughter. It seems rather inclined to return evil for evil" (186). Laughter, although a corrective, is not "inspired by justice" (188). Bergson states, "laughter punishes certain failings somewhat as a disease punishes certain forms of excess, striking down some who are innocent and sparing some who are guilty, aiming at a general result and incapable of dealing separately with each individual case" (188). In order for laughter to be more pedagogical, redemptive, and just "it would have to proceed from an act of reflection" (188). Laughter does not reside in a systematized, highly reflective location; rather in order to achieve the result of laughter, the comic structure must resist depth. At the same time, the comic effect must go beyond the surface. Hence, laughter resides in an intermediate position: to penetrate too far into the personality, to couple the outer effect with causes that are too deep-seated would mean to endanger, and in the end sacrifice, all that was laughable in the effect. In order that we may be tempted to laugh at it, we must localize its cause in some intermediate region of the soul" (169). In sum, laughter in order to be laughter and produce laughable effects, must remain an ambivalent element.

In the essay "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction" Brecht claims that his Dialectical Theater can be both humorous and pedagogical: "Generally there is felt to be a very sharp distinction between learning and amusing oneself. The first may be useful, but only the second is pleasant. So we have to defend the epic theatre against the suspicion that it is a highly disagreeable, humorless, indeed strenuous affair. Well: all that can be said is that the contrast between learning and amusing oneself is not laid down by divine rule; it is not one that has always been and must continue to be" (72). Although Brecht wants to have it both ways, according to Bergson he cannot. The reflective, pedagogical moment that Brecht wants to have in his street scene runs counter to Bergson's idea of ambivalent corrective. Brecht does not simply want his street scene to end with a general corrective, but a distinct, reflective, and pedagogical conversation.

Limits of Dialectical Theater

What we find is that Brecht is willing to accommodate many of Bergson's principles of laughter, but at crucial stages, Brecht subverts the process. He is unwilling to allow the comic figure to be represented too narrowly and too rigidly; nor is he willing to live with the ambivalent corrective of laughter. Brecht wants change, and wants justice; as a result, he must consistently disarm the potential laughable effect. For laughter, in the Bergsonian sense, and echoing Nietzsche, is ultimately a deconstructive enterprise. Neither Bergson nor Nietzsche denies the affirmative and positive aspects of the laughter process, but it is exactly the process that they stress. Laughter does not, and should not be forced to, abide by any teleological or rational imperative. When laughter is treated in such a way, the results are melodramatic, as in Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*. Brecht, in many ways a comic genius like Chaplin, faced the same problem, but he pursued another solution. He understood and embraced the Bergsonian concept of laughter; however, the exigencies of Dialectical Theater compelled him to strategically sabotage the process of laughter in its crucial end phase. Brecht's Dialectical Theater is endowed with all the elements of laughter -- incongruity, emotional distance, comic figures -- and the audience is fully ready to embrace the laughable element; but Brecht denies this moment and hence we get *Arturo Ui* and not *The Great Dictator*. Perhaps this Negative Philosophy of Laughter is the most important element of his Dialectical Theater.

ENDNOTES

- 1 For example, see *Brecht on Theatre*, "Emphasis on Sport" (7), "Three Cheers for Shaw" (11-12), "Conversation with Bert Brecht" (14), "A Dialogue about Acting" (27), "Interview with an Exile" (68), "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction" (72), "Two Essays on Unprofessional Acting" (151-152), "Der Messingkauf" (173), and "Short Organum for the Theatre" (180, 193, 197).
- 2 The best and most current example of this approach is Ralf Simon, "Zur poetischen Anthropologie der Komödie in Brechts *Messingkauf*," *Brecht Jahrbuch* 24 (1999): 277-290.
- 3 See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984) and *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) for his exploration of the carnivalesque and carnivalization. For an example of postmodern reclamations of Brecht and the element of laughter, see the performance review of Heiner Müller's 1995 Berliner Ensemble production of *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg Arturo Ui* in *Theater der Zeit* Juli/August (1995): 4-6.
- 4 The main sources for the discussion of laughter in philosophy: Plato, *Philebus*, *Republic*; Aristotle, *Poetics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*; Rene Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*; Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*; Herbert Spencer, *The Physiology of Laughter*; Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* and "Humor." For excerpts and a brief overview of this tradition, see John Morreall, ed. *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987). Some other notable works on laughter from other disciplines include: William F. Fry "The Biology of Humor," *Humor* 7 (1994): 111-126; Elliot Oring, *Jokes and Their Relations*. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1992); Ulrich Profitlich, Hg. *Theorie der Komödie -- Poetik der Komödie*. (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2001); Robert R. Provine, *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation*. (New York: Viking Press, 2000); Attardo Salvatore, *Linguistic Theories of Humor*. (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994); Marcel Gutwirth, *Laughing Matter: An Essay on the Comic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Karl-Josef Kusche, *Laughter: A Theological Essay*, (New York: Continuum Press, 1994); Barry Sanders, *Sudden Glory: Laughter as Subversive History*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation*. (New York: Macmillan, 1964); Paul E. McGhee and Jeffrey H. Goldstein, eds. *Handbook of Humor Research*, Vols. I and II. (New York and Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1983); Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, eds. *A Cultural History of Humour: From Antiquity to the Present Day*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).

5 Other major works by Bergson: *Time and Free Will* (1889), *Matter and Memory* (1896), *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903), *Creative Evolution* (1907), *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*; *Matter and Memory* (1932), *The Creative Mind* (1934). Recent scholarship on Bergson includes: John Mullarkey, ed. *The New Bergson*. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999); John Mullarkey, *Bergson and Philosophy* (Notre Dame, In: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000); Hilary L. Fink, *Bergson and Russian Modernism 1900-1930*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999). L. Kolakowski, *Bergson* (1985); A.C. Papanicolaou, *Bergson and Modern Thought*, ed. (1987); G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (1988); Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (1993).

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BRECHT' CLOWNS AND THE NAZIS' OFFICIALIZATION OF POPULAR CULTURE

Peter Arnds

Fortunately, in times when humor, this most basic freedom of speech, threatens to disappear there are artists who remind us of that right. The trendiness of humour studies, this session on Brecht and humour, as well as the recent performance of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* in New York City could not be more timely. In the face of those who tell us that we ought to stand united behind our political leaders and who want to blacklist unpatriotic academics, in the face of these and in opposition to increasing censorship we ought to brandish certain books -- books that remind us that at times characterized by increasing political monologism we need to hear conflicting voices to preserve our democracy. What Bakhtin once defined as carnivalesque heteroglossia can still teach us this message. According to the Russian critic, in the comic modern novel heteroglossia is a form of parody or satire that aims "sharply and polemically at the official languages of its given time" (Bakhtin 668). The tyranny of unitary languages of regimes founded on "religious, national, cultural, racial, or even linguistic" monologues (Kern 82) is brazenly challenged by heteroglot satire. In reflection of Bakhtin's theory authors throughout the ages from Apuleius to Salman Rushdie have written works that display heteroglossia, a polyphony of languages, dialects, genres, intertexts, and through these a multiplicity of views and layers of meaning.

With Germany's discovery of democracy after 1945 satire once again flourished, while it had disappeared almost completely between 1933 and 1945. The picaro and his relative the clown, who both emerge from the mythological trickster archetype, celebrate their revival after World War II and once again contribute to the kind of satirical heteroglossia that used to be ubiquitous in marketplace performances in the Middle Ages but submerged increasingly with the rise of a rationalism-minded bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century. Examples for the picaro in German postwar prose are Thomas Mann's *Felix Krull* (1954), Arno Schmidt's *The Stony Heart* (1956),

Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* (1959), Heinrich Böll's *The Clown* (1963), and Edgar Hilsenrath's *The Nazi & the Barber* (1971), examples for the clown in theater are Peter Weiss's plays on madness, his *Herr Mockinpott* (*How Mr. Mockinpott Was Cured of His Suffering* 1968) and the Herald in *Marat/Sade*, who is dressed in a coxcomb and harlequin's motley. Other examples are Peter Handke's *Kaspar* and Franz Kilb in *The Unintelligent are Dying Out*.

Being a clown in democratic times is not that difficult. But what about the clown's survival in a totalitarian regime? In Nazi Germany, more than ever before the clown lost his faculty to contribute to democratic thinking. This process is the climax of a long development that started with Gottsched's banishment of the *Hanswurst* from the German stage, while Lessing was still trying to reinstall the clown. One common objection to the *Hanswurst* was that he was a foreign creation, which is true, since he derives from the harlequin of the *commedia dell'arte*. And yet, while in the Middle Ages the Lord of Disorder, as Bakhtin calls him, was still allowed to temporarily degrade his rulers, his political resistance became increasingly unacceptable to those in power. In the French *commedia*, the lunar and lunatic Harlequin and his fellow clown Pulcinella became the subversive counterparts to absolutism and its ruler, Louis XIV, the *Roi du Soleil*, who finally banned the *commedia* in France. The cheeky harlequin was subsequently reduced to the melancholy Pierrot of the *Théâtre des Funambules* (Theater of the High Wire). He became a central image of the politically powerless artist and as such much abused by society. Even in Italy, the *commedia* could not survive the Age of Reason. That the Neapolitan Pulcinella became increasingly unpopular during the Enlightenment is evidenced by the fact that in 1760 "the Neapolitan authorities considered banishing Pulcinella, judging his obscenities 'dangerous for noblewomen,' and he was viewed at various times as politically subversive" (Lawner 60). Pulcinella was ultimately deprived of any political danger he might pose to official culture when he was reduced to a mere mario-nette, like the German *Hanswurst* in puppet theaters. As an echo to Gottsched's banishing *Hanswurst* from the German stage, Tieck provocatively marginalized his clown Jackpudding

in *Puss in Boots* and in all his classical seriousness Goethe even “forbade audiences at Weimar to disrupt performances with laughter” (Schechter 19).

In 1926, Brecht noted the absence of ‘all fun’ in the German theatre. This disappearance of the clown and laughter from bourgeois society during the eighteenth and nineteenth century then prompted C.G. Jung’s theory that due to the suppression or ejection of the trickster archetype in German society his satanic side -- for every clown or trickster has a comical and a satanic side -- broke forth in the figure of Hitler as the shadow, both *Führer* and *Verführer* of the German *Volk*. This theory was echoed by a 1963 production of *Arturo Ui* in Warsaw, which presented “Hitler as a clown who is not funny [. . .] From the first to the last scene [the actor Lomnicki] is a clown; but not once does he make the audience laugh” (Schechter 78). It is also interesting to note that in Günter Grass’s *Die Rättin* Hitler is compared with a Pied Piper abducting the Germans. This Pied Piper, who became best known through the legend of the *Rattenfänger von Hameln*, the Pied Piper of Hamelin, is related to the harlequin in motley costume but also to the Erlking of Nordic mythology, who abducts innocent children. As Master of the Wild Hunt, the Erlking is a sinister cousin of the more jovial Italian harlequin, with whom he is also linguistically related (Erlking/Harlequin). Clowns, the trickster, the harlequin, the Erlking they are all relatives, and yet it is the politically subversive function of the clown that Brecht preserves at the toughest of times, the clown’s liminal status allowing him to counter officialized rituals through his alternative culture. Yet how politically subversive could Brecht’s clowns really have been? Wolfgang Zucker points out that the clown may dare to challenge the nomos of the gods as did the hero in Greek tragedy but, like the hero of tragedy, he must not eventually get away with such freedom. While the hero suffers his catastrophe in grand style, the clown is chased around the ring before an applauding audience. What a spectacle, what a twofold pleasure, to experience vicariously the assault on order and to witness simultaneously the reduction to nothingness of the transgressor (Zucker 306).

Although Brecht’s clowns remained politically ineffective, they are oppositional voices

in a vast ocean of political monologism. The Nazis either manipulated popular culture, like the carnival and the fairy tale, or they suppressed it if it could not be manipulated. Brecht’s clowns were suppressed in Nazi Germany and never reached a German audience until well after the war. *Puntilla* was not performed until 1948, *Schweyk in the Second World War* not until 1957, and *Arturo Ui* not until 1959, three years after Brecht’s death.

Bakhtin contrasted popular culture with official culture: yet if we argue that since the Enlightenment official culture has largely corresponded to Herder’s learned culture, then it seems peculiar that in the Third Reich the oral traditions of the Germanic past became preferable to much learned written culture. The fairy tale exemplifies this development: while the written literary fairy tale became unpopular in the Third Reich, the oral folktale experienced a revival, in support of party ideology. Yet this development has its paradoxes. The Nazis exploited certain themes of popular culture, such as the Germanic myths behind the folktales, for their blood-and-soil ideology, while suppressing other aspects that did not fit into their politics, such as the grotesque. In their persecution of *Untermenschen* they targeted primarily the *Unterschichten* because it was here that they perceived the greatest danger to the health of the collective body of the people, the *Volkskörper*. Thus popular culture became part of the official discourse, but at the same time the class from which this culture had originally emerged became increasingly targeted as asocial. Popular culture was detached from the people who had originally produced it and was entirely subordinated to party politics. This was as true for the folktale as it was for the carnival.

As Nazi Germany got rid of subversive carnival papers such as the *Münchener Netteste Nachrichten* it persecuted politically subversive clowns, a fact that led the American Blue Rider painter and University of Kansas Art Professor Albert Bloch to paint his *March of the Clowns* in 1941, a painting in which a cortège of figures from American popular culture walk around a circus arena carrying Hitler hanging from his own swastika. As insane and grotesquely deformed figures clowns joined the host of people whom the Nazis considered as *unwertes Leben*, although Hitler had

his very own clown named Grock from Switzerland. The manipulation of carnival, folklore, and the disappearance of the clown with the exception of those whose clowneries paid lip service to the party is a sad reflection of the disappearance of free speech, the prerogative of any artist, not just the circus clown. By officializing low culture the Nazis, and Stalinism too, if we think of the Stakhanovite movement, for example, deprived it of the free-wheeling laughter that it once contained in pre-bourgeois times.

During the Third Reich there was no liberation of popular culture from the shackles of ideology. Resistance to the Nazis' appropriation of popular culture was either temporally or spatially removed, temporally in that authors such as Günter Grass, Heinrich Böll, Thomas Mann, and the Jewish-German author Edgar Hilsenrath redefined popular "low" culture through their picaresque novels after 1945. The resistance was spatially removed in that Brecht's own clowns -- characters like Matti in *Puntilla and Schwegk* -- contributed to a democratic heteroglossia from the safety of their author's U.S. exile. In his anti-fascist satires *The Ballad of the Dead Soldier* (1922), *A Man's a Man* (1926), *The Baden Learning Play* (1929), *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (1941), and *Schwegk in the Second World War* (1944) Brecht did what might also find few supporters in this country nowadays. He ridiculed the military. The harlequin's duplicitous nature -- he can be comical as well as violent, a clown as well as a devil -- is a key device in *A Man's a Man*, possibly Brecht's fiercest opposition to war and militarism. With its transformation of harmless and comical figures into dangerous soldiers this play is connected in theme to *The Ballad of the Dead Soldier* from 1922, in which a corpse is dug up, declared fit for battle and sent back to the war front. The manipulation and persecution of ordinary people, for whom the clown always seems to be a representative figure *vis à vis* the power of the ruling class, is also a theme in Brecht's *The Baden Learning Play* and *Schwegk in the Second World War*. This manipulation of ordinary people in Brecht's plays from the 1920s is an early reflection of the Nazis' seduction of the Volk and their ideological appropriation of *Volkskultur*, popular culture. On the other hand, in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, which Brecht wrote during the

war, the clown no longer represents those who are being ruled and acted upon but has switched sides and represents the ruler and main actor. Through Arturo Ui Brecht depicts Hitler as a buffoon, something that Charlie Chaplin did before him in *The Great Dictator*. Hitler is represented as a gangster clown whose "solemn adaptation of archaic acting tricks makes him a comic figure" (Schechter 77), but the play also suggests that like a clown Hitler is an actor who needs his stage from which he can manipulate the audience. As Joel Schechter correctly points out, history has thus become a farce. The play exploits the sinister and at best farcical side of the clown, a phenomenon that is reminiscent of Grass's equation of Hitler with the Erlking and Jung's association of Hitler with the trickster archetype.

Yet most of Brecht's clowns are not fascists but victims of fascism. Especially through his thematization of the clown's grotesque body Brecht foreshadows the fascists' uses and abuses of *Menschenmaterial*, of human material. The grotesque body is a central paradigm in Bakhtin's analysis of popular culture. In Brecht's plays, I would argue, this category becomes strongly politicized. Already in *A Man's a Man* grotesque bodies loom large. *The Baden Learning Play* in particular targets militarism and its disregard for the human body and uncannily contains an early intimation of the Nazi crimes, their persecution of the physically disabled and their feeding bodies into the war machine. The 1929 production of *The Baden Learning Play* features Schmidt, a giant clown whose grotesque body reflects his marginal social status. Schmidt complains about his whiteface and the discomfort his body causes him, whereupon two fellow clowns persuade him to have his limbs and head amputated, a spectacle that created a huge riot among the Baden Baden audience. The scene suggests that men conquer men in the guise of helping them and, as Schechter has convincingly argued, that "men will consent to their own destruction, even encourage others to destroy them, if they do not learn rapidly about the debilitating consequences of help in contemporary society" (Schechter 51). Evil can come in the guise of good will or even comedy. *The Baden Learning Play* reflects the Janus-facedness of the universal trickster archetype and his descendants, the harlequin of the *commedia dell'arte*, the Kasper in the

Kasperletheater, and the clown, who all contain the divine and the satanic, and, thus Brecht's message, this doublesidedness is the very essence of the rising fascist politics: they pretend to do good but will ultimately reveal their true evil. We can see how clairvoyant Brecht was already in 1929.

The amputation of Schmidt's grotesque body heralds the Nazis' persecution not only of the physically disabled but ultimately their willingness to sacrifice the entire Volk as unworthy of life. Brecht's grotesquely deformed clowns contrast sharply with the Nazis' worship of the classical body, which in final analysis is the dead body. As Wolbert put it:

Die 'Schönheit' der nackten Gestalt in der Plastik des deutschen Faschismus beinhaltete als Maßstab des Lebenswertes in der Tat die Anweisung zum Mord, ihr übersteigertes Maß lieferte intentional all diejenigen der Knechtung und Vernichtung aus, die ihrem ästhetischen Anspruch nicht genügen konnten: das waren theoretisch alle Menschen, tatsächlich waren es Millionen [. . .]. Allein durch die Hingabe seines Lebens in Produktion und Krieg wurde den Menschen unter den Bedingungen des deutschen Faschismus Idealität in Aussicht gestellt, erst als Tote konnten sie eine mystische Identität finden mit dem Ideal der nackten Gestalt in der NS-Plastik (Wolbert 234 f).

Only the dead body was the truly classical body, or according to Bakhtin, the closed body because the live body is always a body in the act of becoming and hence a grotesque body. Brecht's grotesque clown as popular culture represents low culture, culture of the people with whom Brecht identified himself. Being a chief representative of the *Volk* Schmidt is depicted as a subservient clown, compliant with militarism's contempt for human life as "unideales und damit 'lebensunwertes Menschenmaterial,' eine Bezeichnung, die im zynischen NS-Jargon völlig ungeschminkt und selbstverständlich benutzt wurde" (Wolbert 241). A compliant clown, however, has lost his function of resistance to established social rituals. By so visibly complying to their own destruction Brecht's clowns achieve the typically Brechtian distancing effect in that the audience realizes the full extent of the relinquishment of subjectivity to a powerfully organized he-

gemony. And yet, Brecht makes us believe that compliance can also be subversive. Another little man, Brecht's Schwegel is the "legendary 'good soldier' who seems to comply with Nazi regulations in occupied Czechoslovakia, even when that means marching toward his own death at Stalin-grad" (Schechter 57). Schwegel consents to fascism and by consenting he ultimately survives. This all-too-ready consent seems to be subversive in that it implies that in order to survive in certain times one cannot help but consent because those who do not consent will die immediately, and, of course, death is a stronger form of consent than merely appearing to consent but managing to stay alive (Cf. Schechter 58). Schwegel shares this behavior with Grass's Oskar Matzerath and Solomon Perel in *Europa, Europa*.

Brecht's distancing effect, which he achieves through his clowns is a phenomenon that is also related not only to the *commedia* (cf. Green and Swan 114) but also to what Lewis Hyde says for the trickster, namely that his work initiates creative reflection within his society as to how to change its culture. More than his somewhat passive clowns Brecht himself can be interpreted as a cultural agent or trickster, since according to Hyde the trickster sometimes invents "the 'inner writing' of memory" and "what tricksters quite regularly do is create lively talk where there has been silence, or where speech has been prohibited" (Hyde 76). Hyde defines tricksters as artists that are "joint-disturbers," since the word *art* is also related to the Latin *articulus* and the Greek *arthron*, joint. But he points out, "not that they are much involved with making the firm and well-set joints that lead to classical harmony. What tricksters like is the *flexible or movable joint*" (Hyde 256), a detail that ought to be kept in mind for stage productions that involve Brecht's grotesquely misshapen clowns, and especially the amputation of Schmidt's limbs. According to Karl Kerenyi the trickster's "function in anarchic society, or rather the function of the tales about him, is to add disorder to order and so make a whole, to render possible, within the fixed bounds of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted" (Williams 32). And according to Claude Lévi-Strauss there are two types of societies, those which absorb their troublemakers and those which eject them, leave them in the woods or build jails

for them (Hyde 224). The Nazis ejected them through their officialization of popular culture, while Brecht accommodates them in his plays. And of course, Brecht also ejected himself from a society, of which he was sure that it would not accommodate him, by going into exile in 1933. Brecht's satire is part of that tradition of politically subversive literature whose trail reaches from the Menippean satire via the texts of Cervantes, Fielding, Swift, Rabelais, to Bakhtin, Bulgakov, and nowadays to authors like Don DeLillo, John Irving, and Salman Rushdie. Brecht's sources though are Karl Valentin and Charlie Chaplin whose "proletarian resistance to middle-class complacency" he echoes (Schechter 22). Like his clowns Brecht's plays ultimately add disorder to order, irrationalism to rationalism, and in truly Marxist fashion try to subvert the Hegelian master-slave dialectic. Salman Rushdie once pointed out that artists and politicians are "natural rivals" who "fight for the same territory" (Price 104). It is the role of art in general and satiric art in particular to challenge society into rethinking its status quo and its values. The satiric artist is both artistic but also artful, as satire is derived from *satyr*. As a cultural agent, the satiric artist disrupts social structure through anti-structure. His or her social position is what Victor Turner defined as the liminal space. Turner compared "leisure genres of art and entertainment in complex industrial societies with the *rituals* and *myths* of archaic, tribal, and early agrarian cultures" (Ashley xviii). I see Turner's concept of liminality in line with Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque and with anthropological work on the trickster archetype by critics such as Paul Radin and Lewis Hyde. Cultures that silence their clowns and tricksters and reduce or even abolish that liminal space in which artful art can thrive are always undemocratic. In light of this, it surely seems like great comfort these days that the performance of Brecht's *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui* starring Al Pacino was so successful in New York City in November of 2002 that it was extended for one more week.

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THE SOCIALLY COMIC "PUNTILA SONG"

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"Praktisch gesprochen: man muss versuchen, den *Puntila* in einem Stil aufzuführen, der Elemente der alten *commedia dell'arte* und Elemente des realistischen Sittenstücks enthält." (*GW* 17, 1168.) The "Puntila-Song" is unique in the catalog of Brecht's dramatic music. It is a ballad -- a song that tells a story -- and the story it tells is the same one the play itself dramatizes. This would seem to put it in the same category as the "Chorale of the Great Baal," or to liken it to the sung "legends" introducing the scenes of *Life of Galileo*. But this sung story, consisting of eight stanzas, stretches over almost the whole drama, in a repeated performance, one stanza at a time, by the minor character, Laina the cook. This makes the "Puntila-Song" resemble the recurring refrains of *Mother Courage's* "Business Song," or the narrative linking verses sung by Arkadi Cheidze in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, each stanza functioning like a "chapter" of the story. But two other traits define the song's uniqueness: first, each stanza follows the dramatic scene of the play to which it refers; second, each stanza selects a particular encounter from that prior scene and dramatizes it, in the ballad's musically-narrative style. Therefore, we can say, the "Puntila-Song" represents, selectively, in a performance mode that is musical, narrative, and dramatic, the story of *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*.

For a thorough assessment of the dramatic significance of this song's performance, we need to acknowledge the comedic genre to which the play belongs -- the "Volksstück" -- and to investigate the impulse that runs, with varying intensity, throughout the corpus of Brecht's drama -- the impulse of the "socially comic." In a piece of commentary on *Puntila* included in *Theaterarbeit* (1952), Brecht posits a category of comedy grounded in the theatrical sensibility he calls "das gesellschaftlich Komische," which he uses to distinguish the comedy of *Puntila* from the storeroom of the eternally comic. He says: "Of course, the 'eternally comic' (the self-confidently strutting clown falls on his face) has a social element, but this has been lost, so the pratfall appears as something simply biological, as something comic for all men in all situations. The actors

playing Mister Puntila and his Servant Matti must draw the comedy from the current class situation, even if members of this or that class won't be laughing." Then he illustrates how this socially-derived humor works in several examples of the play's action. For one: Puntila listens to the life stories of the women of Kurgela, but he doesn't really listen because he knows what's coming; at the end of each one he takes a long swig of his legal alcohol. Another: Puntila could take the "Plum Song" as a personal tribute to him, and this would be unobjectionably traditional humor; but "it is deeper if he manifests a kind of folkloristic interest and adopts the mien of a connoisseur." Perhaps the clearest example is the action in which a drunken Puntila retreats to the sauna in order to get sober enough to throw out the workers he has hired unnecessarily. Brecht says: "The cowardliness of this flight into sobriety is a comic feature scarcely realizable by an actor without social understanding and socialist attitude." (*Die Feigheit dieser Flucht in die Nüchternheit ist ein komischer Zug, kaum produzierbar von einem Schauspieler ohne gesellschaftliches Wissen und sozialistische Einstellung. [Theaterarbeit, 42.]*)

Now we want to distinguish between a "socially comic" incident (like Puntila's craven retreat to the sauna) and the gestically more complex, "socially comic" operation of the dramaturgical ingredient that is the "Puntila-Song." The first thing to investigate is the song's composition: its lyrics, its stanzaic structure, and its music (actual and virtual -- i.e., Paul Dessau's version and some other, as-yet-unwritten, one). Then account should be taken of its positioning in the drama's overall structure. And finally some conjectural judgments should be made about the style and deducible effect of the song's performance.

Briefly, we note some basic points. First, the narrative character of the song is reinforced by its would-be "naïve" rhyming scheme, its irregular metre, and its tonally unrefined folk vernacular. These qualities mark it as belonging to the broad genre of Brechtian ballad, which ranges from his early "Hauspostille" and personal songs (like "Pirates," "Marie A.," and "Infanticide Marie Farrar") to lyrics he used in plays of the Twenties (like "Pirate Jenny," "Salomo-Song," and the "Moritat von Mackie Messer"), and to later achievements like

Frau Kopeckais "Und was bekam des Soldaten Weib" and Azdak's "Lied vom Krieg." This song shares with the earliest ballad poems and songs the prosody that belongs to the simple voice of ordinary people. Thus the audience should be hearing the Puntila story re-told through the singularly clever-naïve expression and mood of a character at once shrewd and guileless; and this basic disposition should also be demonstrated by the way her actress performs the song. With these considerations, we are in the realm of *Gestus*: the "Haltung" of the cook creates a certain perspective on the Puntila Fabel, making his "Geschichte" equivalently legendary. This is the aggregate aim of Brecht's Epic Theatre. Brecht puts it this way in his Notes on Puntila: "Das Lied kommentierte die Vorgänge auf Puntila von der Küche aus und, indem es sie sozusagen berühmt machte, gab es den Streichen des Puntila einen lokalhistorischen Charakter." (GW 17, 1173)

Next point: each of the eight stanzas is constructed like a joke -- a dramatized narrative vignette with an abrupt reversal of situation based on a developed incongruity. Take the first verse as an example. A few narrative premises create a setup: "Herr Puntila soff drei Tage lang / Im Hotel zu Tavasthus. / Und als er ging, da entbot ihm doch / Der Kellner keinen Gruss." Then comes some reproduced dialogue in Puntila's character: "Ach, Kellner, ist das ein Betrug? / Ist die Welt nicht lustig, he?" And then, with dialogue from the Waiter, the climactic turning point is engineered in the form of a punch line. "Der Kellner sprach: Ich kann es nicht sagen / Meine Füß tun vom Stehn weh."

The performer of this song needs to duplicate the colloquial rhythm and tone of the German text, which perfectly catches the style of joke-telling, and at the same time honor the rhyming, which Brecht has accomplished with natural genius. (These two features give English translators problems.) The actress might practice the requisite *Gestus* by paraphrasing the lyrics in the mode of an unrefined joke-teller and then taking this stance back to the formally demanding poetry of the lyrics. Something like this: "So, this fat cat Puntila boozes for three days in a joint out in Tavasthus, and when he's leaving he sees that the waiter looks pissed off, so he says: 'Hey, waiter, what's eating you? Lighten up! Ain't life a ball, huh?' And the waiter says: 'I

couldn't say, my feet are killing me.'"

Admittedly, this doesn't sound funny in the way of jokes we usually hear. But it is a wry poetic dramatization of the first scene of the play, re-told by the cook, who shifts the point of view to the waiter. What makes it a "Witz" (a witty concoction) is precisely the socially comic premise lurking in its gestical structure: the waiter's feet hurt from standing up the whole damn three days that Puntila's been boozing, and now the drunken capitalist wants him to be cheerful! ["Ain't that just like them?"]

And how should the music reinforce this socially-comic *Gestus*? Paul Dessau's revealing description of his composition for the Berliner Ensemble production (in *Theaterarbeit*) makes it clear that he was concentrating on the whole play's folk feeling, as he saw it figured forth in the "Puntila-Song." Calling it "eine leichte ansprechende Musik," he gave his composition "etwas vom Charakter slawischer Volkslieder, da sie tänzerisch sein sollte." He employed "die Variationsform" of composing for the eight "gleichgebauten Texte" instead of "Strophensatzkomposition," which would have led to "Gleichförmigkeit." So his melody is fairly simple. And he spends a good deal of compositional effort on varying the accompaniment, with his ear on maintaining basic motifs, creating metrical variations, and supplying melodic and harmonic embellishments. He adds a second voice (Fina's) to the sixth verse to make a duet out of it, changes the key (the only time, he says), and slows the tempo, explicitly stating that the *Gestus* for this stanza's music is "tragikomisch." In every verse Dessau consciously uses contrasting, even contradicting, musical shapes ("Gestalten"); there is an increasing complexity in the accompaniment as the song approaches verse number seven, and then the last one returns to motifs that dominated the first. Overall, we grasp that his music modifies its melodic, harmonic, and metrical details from stanza to stanza in accordance with his own interpretive attitude about the content of each verse. Underlying the whole, however, is the idea of a Slavic folk-dance feeling.

This is not the most gestical music that could have been concocted. For one thing, Dessau may have put too much emphasis on using foreign dance music to match the "folk" feeling of the whole play. He could just as well have written a more dissonant, metrically avant-garde tune, and still kept some kind

of folk feeling, so that the singer could use the music's strangeness to help her show the social incongruity at the base of the whole story. As it is, Dessau's music seems rather to reinforce her own character's folk basis. That social incongruity is also the basis of a conscious enjoyment that must be shown to belong, not alone to the character of Laina, but also to the actress, the author, and the composer himself. Dessau may indeed have been showing his pleasure in the song's socially comic *Gestus* by appropriating Slavic dance music; but his specific mention of "danceable" music strongly suggests that his compositional motive was otherwise.

No matter what its style, the "Puntila-Song's" music must gestically reproduce the rhythmic shape of each joke-telling stanza. Quite obviously, it should use harmonic and metrical changes to match the raconteur's tonal modifications, from set-up to dialogue (with quoted voice) to climactic punchline. And it should also possess its own overall feel of conscious story-telling. For the song must stand apart from the play's sequential narrative, varied and epically arresting as that is. The "Puntila-Song" must be composed in such a way as to emphasize its own distinctive performance style.

With this we come to the key point about the song's socially-comic definition. Most of Brecht's balladic lyrics contrived for plays possess a variation of the epic-theatrical "historicizing" *Gestus*: that is the cabaret style of composition and presentation. This kind of balladic performance is of its essence comic; indeed, it is "socially-comic" in Brecht's special sense, because it is historically grounded in class differentiation. The song is Laina's to perform. In Brecht's theoretical view, the actress has the task of lending its interpretation her own critical bias. She must find the song's gestical peculiarity and add to it her sovereign, individual "take," giving its performance her unmistakable signature. As working material, she has the song's words, its music, and her own talent, experience, and style. The composer, too, has had the words to mold to his own creative style. Ideally, he should also have had the working acquaintance of his singer. In short, composer and singer should have naturally approached the "Puntila-Song" as a collaborative cabaret performance.

So: by the time the play is ready to go on, author, composer, and singer-actress should have

become a team. This very artistic teamwork becomes another strand in an extended definition of "the socially comic," because it illuminates the social basis of theatre work itself. More specifically: if Brecht's special coinage, "das gesellschaftlich Komische," denotes a brand of theatrical provocation that should occasion in the audience an experience inspired both by a generally familiar feeling for the incongruous and by a particularly illuminating idea of a social basis for the incongruity, it is also a part of this "social" basis that the three artists have been conspiring to produce this effect.

And now it is only a short hop to the recognition of what conjoins their temperaments: they are all making fun of the presumed title character, Puntila, by selectively telling his story over again, from the perspective of Laina the cook, and by the shrewdly satirical concoction of words, music, and narrative structuring that we have analyzed, however fragmentarily. It will remain for the theatre director, working from the artistic trio's concoction, to make sure the whole thing has the "correct playing style" (die richtige Spielweise), to use Brecht's controversial admonition about the production of *Mother Courage and Her Children*. And that will mean insuring that this re-told version of the biographical story of Puntila, a prehistoric beast called "estatum possessor," should also bear -- histrionically -- the usual warning that legends carry: "Let this be a (historical) lesson to you!"

But the "lesson" resides wholly in the experienced performance, which will depend on all those features we have been talking about. It goes without saying that the performance will be anything but a sermon. Rather, it will be a musical and narrative variation on the joke's "eternally comic" form ("Did you hear about the Finnish landowner who . . .?"), gestically defined by the performer's cabaret-style demonstration of the conscious enjoyment taken (by character, composer, and author) in the socially-based incongruities selectively re-played in each stanza of the song to represent the story, "told from the kitchen's perspective," of the self-styled national hero named Puntila.

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DRAMA WITHIN DRAMA: BRECHT'S USE OF TRIAL SCENES

Guy Stern

Last year I was invited to be one of the speakers on "What's the Word," the weekly program of the Modern Language Association, moderated by Sally Placksin and aired over PBS. The specific program was entitled "Trials in Literature;" I had selected Brecht as my subject, but found that in the 10 minutes allotted to me I could scarcely scratch the surface, never mind waxing epic. Hence this paper.

Brecht, though never a student of law, and unlike Ernst Toller, not a defendant until caught up in the meshes of the House Un-American Activities Committee¹, suffused his dramas with trial scenes. While these, especially their functions, form the focus of this article, it needs to be added that references to law, justice, judges, and trials form metaphors, analogues and throw-away lines in his plays, supply material and/or motives to his poetry and fiction, and even intrude themselves into his essays. Examples abound. In the *Threepenny Opera*, long before the mock-happy ending of MacHeath's pardon, Mrs. Peachum complains about her son-in-law: "er lacht aufs BGB," the code of law.² In his poem "Von der Kindesmörderin Marie Farrar" (*W* 11, 44-46), he pillories the judicial murder of a young woman guilty of infanticide; in *Mutter Courage* he exposes military justice as a travesty, when the vaunted war-time heroism of the protagonist's son, Eilif (*W* 6, 69-71) becomes a crime a few hours into an armistice. Here Brecht anticipates a factual and modern exposé entitled *Military Justice is to Justice what Military Music is to Music*.³ Lawmakers, in Brecht's *Flüchtlingsgespräche*, have relaxed their country's immigration laws during the Third Reich, but do not allow the refugees to earn a living within their own profession (*W* 18, 267).

The trial scene in *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* was intended by Brecht as a direct analog to the Reichstagsbrandprozess (*W* 7, 63-74).⁴ The brutality of the Inquisition surfaces in *Der Mantel des Ketzers* (*W* 18, 374-382) and in *Galileo Galilei* (*W* 5, 61-63 in der Fassung von 1938-39). In one of his essays, "Über die Popularität des Kriminalromans," he muses "Dann werden die Zeugenaussagen kritisch gemustert: dies ist die Lüge, das Irrtum" (*W* 22.1, 504-510; here 507).

A throw-away line lights up a drinking scene in *Herr Puntilla und sein Knecht Matti*. Puntilla and a judge, a miniscule role in the drama, are stupefyingly drunk in a tavern. The judge, suddenly awakening, asks the court to come to order. Puntilla comments: "Er meint, er ist im Gerichtssaal, weil er schläft" (*W* 6, 262).

Brecht's predilection for actual trial scenes in his dramas, beyond these occasional but illuminating references, have stirred the interest of scholars from the most varied fields, far beyond the to-be-expected literary researchers. An article "Truth and Justice in Bertolt Brecht," appeared in a predominantly legal journal.⁵ Its author characterized his findings as a "study through legal spectacles of a literary text." Last year a highly topical political study invoked Brecht, when its author, Lewis Lapham, argued that "the inheritors of the estate [after World War II, emphasis added] tended to confuse the practice of real -- politics with ... a play by Bertolt Brecht"⁶ -- clearly conjuring up the epilogue to the *Kaukasische Kreidekreis*. Even a belletristic work, Peter Weiss' *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*, recalls Brecht's plan, ultimately abandoned, to dramatize the life, trial and murder of the Swedish revolutionary and peasant leader Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson.⁷

If we now address ourselves to some -- though not all -- of the major examples of trial scenes in Brecht's dramas, it will be relatively easy, in part because of past scholarship,⁸ to develop the themes that emerge from the reading or witnessing the staging of such trials. They are obviously and often foremost exposés of a venal society. In one of his last plays, *Das Verhör des Lukullus*, he condemns all forms of militarism and military glory, implicitly that of the GDR as well (*W* 6, 115-143).⁹

In the didactic play, *Die Ausnahme und die Regel*, the request for restitution by the widow of a murdered coolie is rejected, because the judge finds the villainous merchant innocent, since that worthy had every right to assume that the shooting of his hired help was acting in self-defense, even though the coolie was entirely innocent, if not outrightly altruistic. The judge concurs with the accused merchant's conviction that a resentful member of a lower class will, "as a rule," attack wealthy capitalists (*W* 3, 252-260).¹⁰

In this drama, members of the upper classes,

hypocritically claiming the pursuit of a common good, i.e., the opening-up of additional sources of oil, literally get away with murder. In other *Lehrstücke* the end justifies the means or, benignly put, the benefit of the masses justifies, as in the *Maßnahme*, the sacrifice of non-conformists. It is a continuation of the self-condemnation and sacrifice of the young boy in the school opera *Der Jasager* (W3, 47-55). In a scene in *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reichs* a judge abandons the last vestiges of his integrity for the pragmatic goal of professional survival (W4, 363-378). And, in the opera *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* capitalism and the deterioration of human relationships are laid bare.

Finally the ideology propelling the proximate justice in *Kaukasischer Kreidekreis* has been often and variously interpreted. As Siegfried Mews has summarized these explicatory possibilities: "... *Chalk Circle* is an extraordinarily rich play that provides a number of interpretive possibilities for directors, critics, audiences and readers; these possibilities range from the purely aesthetic to the pronouncedly political."¹¹ This observation applies as well to numerous other Brecht dramas and their trial scenes. In short, thematically, Brecht does not greatly deviate from dramas that place trials or quasi-trials on stage, from Euripides' *Antigone* to I. B. Priestley's *An Inspector Calls* to George Bernard Shaw's *Don Juan in Hell* or the multiple dramas about the trials of Joan of Arc, also thematically seized upon by Brecht.¹² His texts also do not differ greatly from more recent works, such as Hermann Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial* or Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *Die Panne*.¹³

Yet Brecht would not be "one of the most significant writers of this century," as Martin Esslin put it, or "the greatest dramatist of his age," according to J.P. Stern,¹⁴ if he had trotted the same path in his trial scenes -- so prominent in his works -- as his predecessors or successors. Such scenes also served, at least by his lights, the most important structural principle undergirding his plays. They are, or become in the performance, servants of Brecht's alienation effect; in fact they add at times yet a further dimension to its execution, one that I would like to call, at a venture, "double alienation."

Such an explication of the structural function of the trial scenes suggests itself directly from Brecht's famous illustration of the alienation effect.

In his widely known essay "Die Straßenszene. Grundmodell einer Szene des epischen Theaters" (W 22, 370-381), he explains that, rather than show an automobile accident in realistic or naturalistic fashion, he would have actors, playing eyewitnesses to the occurrence, reenact the scene for various listeners, a street crowd, a policeman, and ultimately a judge. In short the audience learns of the accident at one remove. When Brecht's envisioned court action itself would then ensue, we would be even further removed in time and space from the event.

And that is what eventually happens in Brecht's trial scenes. Two years have elapsed in the *Kaukasische Kreidekreis*, since the governor's wife and Michel's mother has abandoned her son. Or, in *Die Maßnahme*, the striven-for revolution is well underway (W 3, 101), when the executioners of their communist comrade must justify their deed before a party tribunal. More important still, it is already in the very nature of a trial, in these and other instances, that we are distanced, alienated from the actual event; they are -- to be sure, highly dramatic -- reenactments. In several trial scenes we are not even shown the virtual reality of a crime. For example, in another one of the Azdak's curious trials and verdicts in the *Kaukasische Kreidekreis*,¹⁵ we shall never know whether it was force or seduction (and by whom) that led to the coupling of an innkeeper's daughter and his servant (W 8, 73f). Not out of decorum which would be an oxymoron with Brecht, but because of alienation does Brecht produce here not an act but a reenactment.

Yet Brecht takes his alienation effect one step further by doubling it. Much debate has ensued about the ideological tenor of the prologue and epilogue of the *Kaukasische Kreidekreis*. But whatever its thematological function, it places the events of the play and with that the trial as yet one step further removed from the "realistic" stage action. The trial is the resuscitation, we learn of an older tale, acted out by the contesting parties in the drama's frame. Yet, the complexity of this dual alienation effect, especially in the *Kaukasische Kreidekreis*, does not end there. When the Brecht scholar J.R. Ritchie, in his insightful analysis of the drama, argues that, the effusion of epic-theater devices obviate the "need for the more obvious forms of the alienation effect," he is right, of course, as far

as one level of alienation is concerned.¹⁶ But Brecht, having already removed us from the stage reality of the trials, in the *Kreidekreis* through the prologue, alienates us further by preceding Azdak's first judicial act by a mock trial, by a moot court in lawyerly language. During the course of this mock trial Azdak attains his judgeship in a hilarious competition against the nephew of the governor (*W* 8, 66-70). And thus we proceed from a mock trial to the mockery of trials. This alienation device, showing a rehearsal of an event before its effectuation on stage, is -- incidentally, not uncommon in Brecht's oeuvre. In *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reichs* the Jewish wife "rehearses" her farewell remarks before actually confronting her husband (*W* 4, 387-389). In *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* the would-be orator Ui rehearses his gesticulations in front of a mirror before "going public" (*W* 7, 49-55). In all three instances the rehearsals bestow an atmosphere of artificiality on the ensuing action.

Similarly Brecht, in *Das Verhör des Lukullus*, doubles the alienation effect by letting the trial take place in heaven. In *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reichs* a trial is only foreshadowed (*W* 4, 363-378); it will take place after the curtain has dropped on the scene. We do not see Galileo's trial before the Inquisition; only the striking of the bells tells us of his recantation (*W* 5, 91). Also in the GDR-film version of *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Mathis*, with its one trial scene, the director out-brechts Brecht by constructing a narrative frame around the movie.

Yet another alienating arrow is unloosed from Brecht's theatrical quiver. As one article about Brecht puts it, it features "humor while the shark bites."¹⁷ Indeed several trial scenes or judgments are so ludicrous or hyperbolic in their conduct or execution that they compel us to a reexamination of their plausibility. Guffaws of the audience accompany, of course, the arrival of the riding messenger in the *Dreigroschenoper* who announces that Mack the Knife has not only been pardoned, but knighted and been endowed with a castle (*W* 2, 307). The point that this is a fairy-tale ending is driven home by Peachum. In real life, he sings "the endings aren't all that fine." "Die reitenden Boten des Königs kommen sehr selten..." (*W* 2, 308). A contrasting legal case and music are the means of marking the trial scene in *Aufstieg und Fall der*

Stadt Mahagonny as precursors to the ensuing theater of the Absurd (*W* 2, 176-381). A character named Bobby Higgins has been acquitted of murder, because he bribes the judge and advances the ludicrous explanation that he was merely testing an old revolver. The trivial crime of Jimmy Mahoney by contrast, is an unpaid bar bill and the unauthorized use of a curtain rod. But Kurt Weill's music, composed for the chorus, alienates us just as drastically. With equal fervor and with unvaried melody and orchestration, the chorus pleads alternately for Jimmy's acquittal and for his execution.¹⁸ The music in this entire trial scene further reinforces the alienation effect by scoring Brecht's hyperbole of miscarried justice with serious, intensely dramatic music. The theatricality of the trial -- reminding us that we are in a theater -- is further enhanced by having a stage audience, the spectators at the trial -- ridiculing the procedures by their sarcastic laughter.¹⁹ Finally the projections, frequently announcing the outcome of a trial, further enhance the alienation effect.

Brecht's technique of a dual alienation carries over into his adaptations. In order to insert trial scenes he even does violence to some of his sources. For example Brecht adds a law-making scene at the end of his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* to show the intransigence of the parliamentarians.

Were these innovative uses of trial scenes throughout essential to the plays? It would be presumptuous to arrogate to oneself a partnership in Brecht's dramatic creativity. Also it would be all too facile to pass the pronouncement of such a verdict on to the listeners, à la Brecht, who said, in the epilogue to *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* (*W* 6, 279): "Verehrtes Publikum, los, such dir selbst den Schluß" -- after an inconclusive trial scene. Yet raising the question about the motivation for the composing of such a plethora of trial scenes leads to further contemplation. Brecht inserted them, not always, but frequently, to question the very foundation of the prevailing judiciary system -- and not only remaining legacies of the feudal age.²⁰ In these assaults, by way of summary, all of Brecht's weapons often join forces, the unambiguously enunciated theme, the scornful humor and irony, the thought-provoking situations seasoned with arresting details -- and all delivered hand-in-hand with an alienation effect that sometimes doubles upon itself.

Blatantly so, for example, in *Schwejk im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, in which a Nazi official by brutally extracting a fuller confession, is feathering his own nest (*W* 7, 196). Scarcely more subtle is the self-serving, bribable judge Witwe Beckbick and the prosecuting attorney Dreifaltigkeits-Moses in *Ma-hagonny*. Outright sophistry marks the trial of the elephant calf in the epilogue of *Mann ist Mann*. In this, his very first introduction of a trial scene, the very title gives away his intention of excoriating the judicial system. The appendix is entitled, "Das Elefantenkalf oder die Beweisbarkeit jeder Behauptung" (*W* 2, 158-168). In a lighter vein he has Azdak say, while pleading for outdoor trials, that he wants to expose, both literally and figuratively, the bareness and barrenness of human justice; when he advocates for open-air trials. "Der Justiz tut es gut, es im Freien zu machen. Der Wind bläst ihr die Röcke hoch, und man kann sehn, was drunter ist." (*W* 8, 72).

In one terse story, planned as the basis for a film script, all the elements converge. It is entitled "Eulenspiegel als Richter." The very conceit of placing the well-known rascally "wise guy" as an impostor on a judge's chair would lift a would-be movie audience out of complacency. As the case proceeds, Eulenspiegel fixes a fine for assault congruent with his supposed liquor bill. The incongruity of this curious congruency further alienates us. The sought-for result of this alienation effect concludes the episode: "Als Eulenspiegel die fünf Gulden erhalten hatte, unterhielten sich die Bauern noch lange über das Urteil, wie Eulenspiegel es erhofft hatt..." (*W* 20, 195-196).²¹ But not only Eulenspiegel!

In short Brecht used skillfully constructed trial scenes for a variety of purposes ranging from broad humor to unremitting didacticism. They fit admirably into the discourse and economy of his dramas and in many cases become the focus, nexus and climax of a play. They served Brecht well, both as a means of attacking or satirizing the systems they represented and their ideological shortcomings, and as a natural vehicle to put his theory of alienation into effect -- and refining it.

ENDNOTES

1 For the complex history of Brecht's surveillance and interrogation see Alexander Stephan, *Im Visier des FBI. Deutsche Exilschriftsteller in den Akten amerikanischer Geheimdienste* (Stuttgart and Weimar: I.B. Metzler, 1995), pp. 194-232 and 342-343.

2 Bertolt Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenoper* in his *Werke*, ed. Werner Hecht et al. *Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, II, 229-331, here 269. All references, including internal ones, are to this edition.

3 See Robert Sherrill, *Military Justice is to Justice as Military Music is to Music* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

4 In a paper delivered April 25, 2003 at the Kentucky Foreign Language Conference Norman Roessler argued in a paper entitled "Between Aura and Alienation: Al Pacino and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*" that this work can also be interpreted as an analog to political events of our times, including current trials.

5 Michael Freeman, "Truth and Justice in Bertolt Brecht," *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature*, 11, No. 2 (Winter 1999), 197-214.

6 Lewis Lapham, *Theater of War* (New York: The New Press, 2002), p.8.

7 See Peter Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* in his *Werke* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp), 3, 255: "Es war nicht allein seine [Brecht's] Krankheit, in die er sich sozusagen verummte, sondern auch eine plötzliche Abschirmung, die eine Fortsetzung der Arbeit am Stück unmöglich machte."

8 See for example George A. Jocums, "The Dialectics of Law and Justice in the Plays of Bertolt Brecht," *Dissertation Abstracts* 31 (1991), 6613A. Also see a very short, but incisive article, John Fuegi, "Brecht," *CG*, 10 (1976), 299-308. See Elisabeth Scheele, "*La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu de Jean Giraudoux et Procès de Lucullus (Das Verhör des Lukullus)* de Bertolt Brecht," (*Neohelicon* 23, 226: "Brecht établit toujours un contraste entre la phraséologie de la gloire et de la victoire et les pertes des soldats....")

9 Brecht, in his didactic plays, repeatedly depicted trials as a clash between classes. For an excellent relevant analysis see Fritz Breithaupt, "Inversion der Tautologie: Die Waage und die Gerechtigkeit, in *Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe*," in *Brecht Yearbook* 18 (1993): 85-103.

10 Siegfried Mews. "Brecht, Motherhood, and Justice: The Reception of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in the United States." *The Fortunes of German Writers in America, Studies in Literary Reception*, eds. Wolfgang Elfe, James Hardin, and Gunther Holst, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1992, pp.231-249.

11 Priestley, *An Inspector Calls: A Play in Three Acts* (London, Toronto: W. Heinemann, 1947); Shaw, "Don Juan in Hell" in his *Man and Superman. A Comedy and Philosophy* (New York: Dudd, Mead and Co., 1939), pp.

129-136. In Shaw's play the devil of course acquires Don Juan. Also see Brecht's two variations on the Saint Joan-theme *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* in his *W. 3*, pp. 127-234 and *Die Gesichte der Simone Marchand* in his *W. 7*, pp. 117-180.

12 Herman Wouk, *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial, A Play* (New York: Doubleday, 1954) and Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *Die Panne. Ein Hörspiel und eine Komödie* (Zürich: Diogenes, 1985).

13 See Martin Esslin, *Brecht: The Man and His Work* (Garden City: Anchor Books), p. xv and J.P. Stern, "The Dear Purchase. A Theme in German Modernism," *Cambridge Studies in German* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1995), p. 37.

14 Numerous articles address themselves to the problem, but come to different conclusions. See for example Franz Lösel, "The Role of Azdak and the Question of Justice in Brecht's *Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis*," *New German Studies*, 15, No. 3 (1988/89), 187-206. Also see Lind Hill, "The Love of Life, Justice and Scandal: Azdak in Brecht's *Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis*," *GR.2* (1979), 135-330.

15 J.M. Ritchie, "Brecht: *Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis*" *Studies in German Literature* 10 (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), p. 49f.

16 Charles W. Hoffman, "Brecht's Humor: Laughter While the Shark Bites," *GR. 38* (1963), pp. 157-166.

17 This aspect was particularly in evidence during a performance at the Städtische Bühnen, Frankfurt of 1992. The video tape of the performance was subsequently shown on Hessische Rundfunk. I am indebted to Dave Stein, Archivist of the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music for calling my attention to this performance.

18 According to Weill's letters to Emil Hertzka of Universal Edition he worked very closely with Brecht on *Mahagonny*: "Ich arbeite täglich mit Brecht am Text.... Diese Art der Zusammenarbeit, durch die ein Textbuch nach rein musikalischen Gesichtspunkten gestaltet wird, erschließt ganz neue Möglichkeiten." Elsewhere he sees in the trial scene, among two others, the greatest potential for the opera's success. See Letters to U.E. of Nov 8 and Nov 22, 1927. Originals in the archives of the Kurt Weill Foundation.

19 See Jürgen Jacobs, "Die Rechtspflege des Azdak. Zu Brechts *Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis*," *Euphorion* 62 (1969), p. 422: "Ihren präzisen Sinn haben diese Urteile indessen als Parodie auf die feudalen und (nach Brechts Meinung) wohl auch auf die bürgerlichen Rechtsvorstellungen."

20 Also see the editor's commentary "Grundgedanken zu dem Film *Eulenspiegel*": "Am 5. Februar 1949 kommt ein Vertrag mit der DEFA über eine Film-Novelle zu *Eulenspiegel* zustande, die von Brecht, Caspar Neher und Weisenborn bis Ende des Jahres geschrieben werden soll." *W. 20*, 565-566.

THE SONG OF HOLY NEVERCOME DAY IN BRECHT'S THE GOOD PERSON OF SETZUAN

Frederick Tollini S.J.

In directing Bertolt Brecht's *Good Person of Setzuan*, I translated several songs to fit production needs. In the wedding reception scene, I sought to maintain what I considered Brecht's religious and biblical references, so essential to the irony of the song, "Das Lied vom Sankt Nimmerleinstag." John Willett's translation avoids any religious connotations by simply entitling the song, "The Song of Green Cheese," which does maintain an ironic reference probably more accessible to today's audiences. Eric Bentley retains a religious reference by calling it, "The Song of Saint Nevercome's Day," but skirts the significance of "Der in ärmlicher Wiege lag / Kommt des armen Weibs Sohn auf'n goldenen Thron," which I take to be a reference to "the Child in the Manger, poor (Mary's) Son, will sit on a Golden Throne." The rest of the song enumerates shocking reversals in nature and also in social behavior: "Und an diesem Tag zahlt die Güte sich aus, Und die Schlechtigkeit kostet den Hals / Und Verdienst und Verdienen, die machen gute Miene / Und tauschen Brot und Salz etc...." The tone of these and subsequent verses seem a parody of prophetic psalms of renewal found in Isaiah, with intimations of a Messianic banquet, and the sardonic use of "tauschen" implies an "immersion" in "bread and salt," rather than the "bread and wine" associated with the Eucharist. Images of social reversal may be related to the Magnificat of Mary in the New Testament (Luke I, 46-56), with again a sarcastic twist at the end, that eternal bliss will consist in a worker finding a day's rest. A last possible reference to the bible, lies in reference to "cockcrow" and Peter's betrayal: "Nicht erst auf die Nacht um halb acht oder acht, / Sondern schon beim Hahenschrei." Both Willett and Bentley suppressed this as undecipherable. It seems to me that Brecht's use of scripture is analogous to Marx's setting Hegel "on his head," but in this case, the inversion of values brings about a greater appreciation of what is implied in the original, even as that *Urtext* is mocked. If that is so, Brecht's message turns out to be eminently "Christian." In the production of the play at Santa Clara university in 1998, the music, composed

by Mr. Joe O'Keefe, was, in this scene, a combination of soft-shoe vaudeville and Gospel chorus. This emphasized the ironic juxtaposition of traditional faith and injustice in the world, while giving it the voice of the "common man."

THE SONG OF HOLY NEVERCOME DAY

[Gospel Music style]

One fine day, as we've each of us heard,
A Babe that lay in a manger.
This poor mother's son,
Some day will come
To sit on a golden throne.
And that day's called Holy Nevercome Day!

Chorus: 'Holy Nevercome Day, he sits on a Golden Throne!
On that day, the Good will be praised,
And the Bad will get the axe,
Master and Slave
At each other will smile and shine,
And share together their bread and brine.
And that day's called Holy Nevercome Day!

Chorus: 'Holy Nevercome Day, they'll share some bread and brine!
God's green Earth'll look down on Heav'n below,
And water upstream will quickly flow.
We will sing of our blessin',
Doin' just damn'd nothin'.
And our earth will be Paradise!
And that day's called Holy Nevercome Day!

Chorus: 'Holy Nevercome Day, our Earth will be Paradise!
On that day I'll fly my plane
And you'll be head of the Army.
Fat cats and bosses
Will work off their asses,
But we'll kick our heels up and rest.
And that day's called Holy Nevercome Day!

Chorus: Holy Nevercome Day, we'll kick our heels up and rest.
Since you and I can't wait any longer,
This can't be fer just up yonder
Tomorrow really early,

Not eight or nine thirty,
But 'soon as cock first crows!
And that day's called Holy Nevercome Day!

Chorus: Holy Nevercome Day, as soon as the first cock crows!

Santa Clara University

AUFSTIEG UND FALL DER STADT MAHAGONNY: EINE TRAGÖDIE?

Horst Jesse

Hat Bertolt Brecht Tragödien geschrieben? Auf den ersten Blick wird diese Frage verneint. Doch wenn man den ideologischen Blickwinkel auf seine Werke beiseite schiebt und seine Anmerkungen zu den Stücken liest, kann diese Frage bejaht werden. Eine Vorstellung der Tragödie kann weiterhelfen, denn auf dem dramatischen Höhepunkt seiner Stücke weiß er sich der antiken Tragödie verpflichtet. In seinen Stücken erscheint immer wieder der zerbrochene Mensch, der das Schicksal akzeptiert oder vergeblich dagegen ankämpft. Die Katastrophe führt nicht zum Aufbruch, sondern in den Untergang. Brechts Darstellung der menschlichen Verhältnisse läßt sehr gut die Tragik eines Menschen, wie auch sein vergebliches Bemühen erkennen.

Brecht gesteht, "Es (*Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar*) ist aristotelische (Einfühlungs-) Dramatik." (Brechts Anmerkungen zu *Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar*) Das Stück weist die drei Einheiten auf: die Spielzeit, den geschürzten Handlungsverlauf, die Notwendigkeit der Katastrophe. Mit dieser Tragödienvorstellung kann auch die Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* betrachtet werden.

1927 planen Brecht und Weill die Möglichkeit einer Oper. Weill vertont die Mahagonnygesänge aus Brechts Hauspostille. (Kurt Weill, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, hg. David Drew,

Frankfurt/M 1975, 56 ff.) Die Intention der Hauspostille ist, sich nicht in ein besseres Jenseits "verführen" zu lassen, sondern das Diesseits mit Genuß auszuleben. Im Rahmen der Musikfestspiele in Baden-Baden 1927 richtet Caspar Neher die Bühnengestaltung im Sinne des amerikanischen Milieus aus. Er kommt damit der Amerikabegeisterung seiner Zeit entgegen. (W. Helfried Seliger, *Das Amerikabild Bertolt Brechts*, Bonn 1974, 134 ff). Brecht nimmt die Opern- wie auch die Amerikabegeisterung der Menschen der Weimarer Republik in seinen Stücken auf. (Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Ein Jahr am Rande der Zeit*. 1926, Frankfurt/Main 2001). An der Neuen Welt als Ausdruck einer neuen Mentalität und des freiheitsbewußten Menschen kann er die ihre Licht- und Schattenseiten aufzeigen.

Brecht ist von der Großstadt fasziniert, die er als das biblische Babylon mit seiner Kehrseite durchschaut. Deutlich drückt dies der Name *Mahagonny* als Zusammensetzung von Manhattan und Babylon aus. In seinem Gedicht "Vom armen B.B." stellt er den "schwarzen Wäldern" die "Gehäuse des Eilands Manhattan" gegenüber. Das hektische Leben der Großstadt, wie er es in Berlin während der "roaring twenties" sieht, erlebt er auch als die Verlorenheit des konsumorientierten Menschen in seiner Einsamkeit, der selbst zur Ware wird. Der Genuß ist die Devise des Sich-Auslebens dieses Menschen bis zur Konsequenz Baalschen Selbstgenusses solange das Geld reicht, und dann kommt der Tod. Es ist eigentlich eine Verzweiflungstat wie es im Epilog des Songspiels heißt:

Aber dieses ganze Mahagonny
Ist nur, weil alles so schlecht ist.
Weil keine Ruhe herrscht und keine Eintracht.
Und weil es nichts gibt,
Woran man sich halten kann.
(BA 2, 390)

Die Möglichkeit des ungehinderten Sich-Auslebens seiner Zeit stellt Brecht an Hand der Tragik Paul Ackermanns als Illusion heraus. Demgegenüber betont er in seinen weiteren Werken als Lösung für das Individuum das "Einverständnis" mit der "Masse", der Partei, so *Die Maßnahme*. In seinen Werken spiegelt er realistisch die gesellschaftlichen Möglichkeiten der Menschen seiner Zeit wieder.

In Leipzig wird 1930 die Oper *Aufstieg und*

Fall der Stadt Mahagonny uraufgeführt. Brecht weiß um die Bedeutung und Wirkung der Oper und vor allem der rhythmischen Musik als Tanz auf dem Vulkan. In "Anmerkungen zur Oper" 1930 stellt er das vielzitierte Schema, der "Dramatischen Form" der "Epischen Form" des Theaters gegenüber. Es darf nicht absolut gesetzt werden, denn nach Brecht enthält das "epische Theater" auch das "dramatische". Die traditionelle dramatische Mittelpunktfigur wird in den gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhang gestellt. Der Einzelne als Individuum (das Unteilbare) ist Teil der Gesellschaft.

Durch die Oper als Medium will er seine Botschaft von der fraglichen Jagd nach Lebensglück und vor allem die Illusionen zeigen, die aus der Verbindung von Konsum und Freizeit, im Sinne von freier Zeit hervorgehen. Die Oper ist unterhaltsam und verfremdend durch die Amerikanisierung. Sie hat dennoch einen strengen Diskurs über zwei Fragen: Führt die Verquickung von Geld und Glück in den Tod? Und: Gibt es wahre Freunde auch in der Not?

Der Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* liegt indirekt die christliche Zweiwegelehre zugrunde: Weg in die Hölle und Weg in den Himme. Es bricht hervor als Paul Ackermann mit seiner Lebensdevise scheitert und die Theodizeefrage ausspricht. Trotz Studium der Werke von Karl Marx ist Brecht in seinem Herzen der christlich-humanistischen Erziehung treu geblieben, die ihm als Korrektiv des menschlichen Lebens dient und ihm auch die Sinnfrage des Lebens beantworten hilft.

Die Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* erscheint somit als eine kritische Satire auf die zu Ende gehende Unterhaltungswelt des Bürgertums mit all ihren Schattierungen und Figuren, der Flaneurs, der Eckensteher, der Neureichen, der Arbeitslosen und der Straßenmädchen der 30er Jahre des 20. Jahrhunderts in einer Großstadt, die von Glücksrittern bevölkert ist. Es ist auch im übertragenen Sinne eine Auseinandersetzung mit der gegenwärtigen "Spaß- und Erlebniswelt" (Gerhard Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft*, Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart, Frankfurt/M. 1996).

Die im grellen Licht erscheinenden Vergnügungshallen, als Kirchen des modernen

Menschen, sind eine kalte Welt ohne Freundlichkeit und Wärme und werden immer wieder von der Glückssehnsucht der Menschen aufgesucht. Die Mentalität dieser komplexen Welt- und Lebensweise bestimmt auch die Sehnsüchte und Wünsche der Arbeiter, die aus der Einöde Alaskas mit hart verdientem Geld nach schwerer Arbeit die Stadt aufsuchen, um Glück und Geborgenheit zu finden. Sie haben keine eigenständige Lebensweise, sondern liefern sich dem Vergnügungsleben der Stadt aus. Sie sind beherrscht von der Wahnidee nach schwerer Arbeit, das Leben und seine Freuden zu genießen.

Wie ein roter Faden zieht sich durch Brechts und Weills Oper *Mahagonny* das Motto, das im antiken Rom an den Hurenhäusern stand: "Hic habebas felicitas". Dieses Versprechen der bürgerlichen Unterhaltungsindustrie überprüft Brecht mit den Arbeitern, die in dieser Freudenwelt ihre existentielle Erfahrung machen. Doch sie finden nicht, was sie an Menschlichkeit und Glück suchen. Sie finden auch keinen Ausweg aus dieser vom Geld beherrschten Freudenwelt, sondern verstricken sich immer mehr in ihre Gesetze und vor allem in das Gesetz, wer nicht zahlt ist ein toter Mann. Es ist der Weg in die Hölle.

Durch die Verfremdung verfolgt Brecht mittels der epischen Oper die Aufklärung des gesellschaftlichen Seins wie auch des menschlichen Denkens und Tuns in der Stadt. An Hand von Panoramabildern, die an Bilder von Breughel erinnern, die wiederum das gesellschaftliche Sein widerspiegeln, zeigt Brecht Episoden und menschliches Verhalten in der städtischen Unterhaltungsindustrie. Er stellt keine utopischen Erwartungen der Arbeiter vor, sondern Menschen, die mit den bürgerlichen Gesellschaftsbildern von Lebensgenuss und Lebensglück ihre Minderwertigkeitskomplexe kompensieren wollen, um dabei groß herauszukommen. Vieles erinnert in dieser Oper an Molières *Der Bürger als Edelmann*. Der Neureiche schafft sich keine eigene Lebenswelt, sondern imitiert die des Edelmannes. Er führt ein Scheinleben und wird von Wahnbildern geleitet.

In aneinandergereihten Episodenbildern wird der Warencharakter der Menschen und des menschlichen Zusammenlebens in der Stadt vorgeführt. Das Geld ist das Öl des Lebens im Getriebe der Unterhaltungsindustrie. Alles ist

käuflich, sogar die Liebe. Geld ermöglicht erst Leben in einer solchen Stadt. Das menschliche Treiben (Fressen, Saufen und Liebe) wie auch der Sportbetrieb (Boxkampf) erscheinen als ein Tanz um das Goldene Kalb "Geld". Jeder der Akteure weiß, daß mit Geld weder die Profilierung der Subjektivität gelingt noch die Realisierung der Wünsche. Jeder der Akteure erkennt, daß er mit dem Geld steht und fällt, wie auch die Stadt Mahagonny. Mit dem Mangel und Fehlen an Geld öffnen sich die Abgründe: Ausschuß aus der Gesellschaft und Beginn des Chaos. Wer kein Geld hat, verstößt gegen die Regeln des Marktes, macht sich schuldig und wird zum Tod verurteilt.

Das Geld verschärft das Mißverhältnis von Sein und Schein. Der hektische Tanz um das Goldene Kalb "Geld" endet menschenmörderisch. Keiner nimmt den Widerspruch im Getriebe wahr. Erst, wenn alles Geld aufgebraucht ist, wird Gericht, in Anlehnung an das Jüngste Gericht, über das irreal Treiben des Anstifters zum exzessiven Leben gehalten. Es erinnert an den Zusammenbruch der Börse, als Gericht über materielle Trugbilder. Alle, die mitgemacht haben, kehren sich ab von Paul Ackermann, weil er als der Unruhestifter eines ordentlichen Lebens erscheint. Verständlich, daß er, der kein Geld mehr hat, für seine Freunde uninteressant wird. Es besteht keine Verbindung, geschweige Bindung, aneinander. Jeder denkt in der Katastrophe an sich.

Die Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* erscheint als eine statische Bildergeschichte, die mit dem Ende des Geldes in sich zusammenfällt und keine neue Perspektive eröffnet. Alles läuft nach dem biblischen Schema von Sodom und Gommora ab: ausschweifende Unterhaltungsindustrie an deren Ende der Tod und der Untergang stehen.

Auf dem Höhepunkt des Geschehens, der die Tragik Paul Ackermanns offenbart, wird der Maßstab deutlich -- die antike Diatribe, die christliche Zweiwegelehre -- mit der Brecht und Weill dem Vergnügungsleben der Großstadt den Spiegel vorhalten, denn sie gehen den Weg in die Hölle und nicht in den Himmel. Unterstrichen wird dies durch die religiösen Namen und durch das Verhandeln der Tugend. Ja, Brecht scheint den negativen Lebensweg aus der Zweiwegelehre in *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*

aufzuzeigen. Es sind die Stationen in die Hölle, die nicht aufgehalten werden können, weil die Akteure nicht aus der Eigendynamik dieses Weges aussteigen können oder wollen. Sie sind Gefangene des Systems.

Mit dem Zuschauer verhandelt Brecht die Frage nach dem Glück und der Menschlichkeit. Ist wirklich "Hic habes felicitas" das Glück, die Menschlichkeit und die Freundlichkeit? Er zeigt auch, daß die religiösen Rituale das irrationale Treiben nicht aufhalten können, sondern nur verwendet werden, um den Unruhestifter zu verurteilen.

Gerade durch die christliche Grundstruktur der Zweigelehre, gewinnt die Oper *Mahagonny* ihren Gehalt und auch ihre existentielle Betroffenheit. Das Gespräch mit den Zuschauer kann beginnen.

München, Germany

*Von 1957-59 war Wolf Biermann Regieassistent am Berliner Ensemble.
1960 machte er die Bekanntschaft mit Hanns Eisler, der ihn unterstützte und förderte.*

HERR BRECHT

Wolf Biermann

Drei Jahre nach seinem Tode
ging Herr Brecht
vom Hugenotten-Friedhof
die Friedrichstraße entlang,
zu seinem Theater.

Auf dem Wege traf er
einen dicken Mann
zwei dicke Frauen
einen Jungen.
Was, dachte er,
das sind doch die Fleißigen
vom Brechtarchiv.
Was, dachte er,
seid ihr immer noch nicht fertig
mit dem Ramsch?

Und er lächelte
unverschämt-bescheiden und
war zufrieden.

ÜBER DAS BRECHT HAUS

Inge Gellert

Im Gedächtnis an Brecht und durch sein Werk wurde das Brecht-Zentrum der DDR eine Stätte lebendiger Begegnungen.

Unser Programm umfaßt Lesungen, Aktionen, Werkstätten, Ausstellungen, Environments, die in indirekter oder direkter Korrespondenz zum Brechtschen Schaffen stehen. Von der vormaligen Brecht-Rezeption im engeren Sinne sind wir dazu übergegangen, ihn als Anreger und Auführer zu verstehen, wobei seine Texte und Vorschläge zum Kunstgebrauch einen integrierenden Ausgangspunkt bilden können. So ist die Diskussion und Produktion von Brecht aus mit ihm weiter als Kunstimpuls konzeptioneller Schwerpunkt.

Dreigroschenheft 3/2003. 40-41



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 Zusammenstellung für *Communications*

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