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COMMUNICATIONS

from the
International
Brecht Society

Vol. 22 No. 1



**INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY
COMMUNICATIONS**

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Since I already had to select carefully in this issue, I wish to keep my own remarks as brief as possible. I therefore only want to point out that the two photos on the front and back cover refer to Marna King's review of *Drums in the Night* at the Schauspielhaus Kiel on pp. 30-33. Page 33 of this issue explains the scenes the photos refer to.

As always, I am looking forward to your submissions for the coming (November) issue of *Communications*. However, I am moving the deadline up two weeks, compared to earlier years, since I discovered that realistically it takes about two months to guide an issue from the first gathering of all materials to the final print. Therefore, please write to me by September 1!

Vera Stegmann

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Members of the International Brecht Society:

As a member of ATHE, I have heard about the important work of the International Brecht Society. In that regard, I wonder whether you might be interested in a project currently underway in England and Germany: the co-production (sponsored by the Open University, the BBC and Good Company Theatre, with approval of Barbara Brecht, the Brecht Estate and the Berliner Ensemble) of a play about Brecht's life and work, *I, Bertolt Brecht*.

The play has been devised by Sue Pomeroy of Good Company and has toured very successfully for several years now, in the UK, the newly united Germany (by special invitation from the Berliner Ensemble). The play will soon tour in India as well. *I, Bertolt Brecht* is a teaching play which combines instruction with entertainment. Described as a drama documentary, it features poems, songs and scenes from Brecht's work presented in a dynamic style which puts the writer into a social and historical context, and explains his theories on theatre. The show appeals to general and specialist audiences. Most importantly, it offers an educational tool which provides a 'way in' to Brecht's life and work.

Because *I, Bertolt Brecht* is effective both as a drama production and as an educational resource, it has been selected for the second year running as the central part of the drama programme at the Open University's 'Literature in the Modern World' summer school. The Open University has met the costs of making this live drama

performance available to students of this course. But as it is such an important resource, we think it is important to record the production on video, to provide an archived resource for students and scholars at many institutions, world wide.

Such a video could be made available in Europe and the United States as well as in the UK, on its own or as part of a larger study pack. We plan to make the video available as part of a multi-media study pack for students in secondary schools, colleges, drama schools, polytechnics and universities. Whatever form such a pack of packs might eventually take, however, the video will be the first and most important component. It is production of the video which is our primary concern. Toward this end, we hope to secure funding through co-sponsorship for a video of *I, Bertolt Brecht*.

Production of the video is planned for October/November 1992. Though the total costs of making such a video would come to more than £50,000, most of the financial outlay has already been covered by the Open University and the BBC Open University Production Centre. However, we need to secure a balance of £10,000 cash in order to complete the project.

We very much hope that the International Brecht Society will consider joining us in co-sponsorship of this important and innovative educational arts project. Any sum which could be offered would take the project that much further towards realization. We would also be most grateful for any advice on other possible sources of support.

Lisbeth Goodman

Lecturer in Literature

(for the Open University and the OU BBC)

Berliner Ensemble in the 90's: Brecht's Old House Is Divided

By JOHN ROCKWELL

Special to The New York Times

BERLIN — Grim and totalitarian East Berlin produced the most innovative, exciting theater in Germany, East or West. The East Germans subsidized the arts lavishly for propagandistic purposes. But that couldn't explain the stream of brilliant stage directors, many of whom immigrated to the West, who emerged from East Berlin in the 1950's and 60's.

The source and center of that theatrical energy was Bertolt Brecht and the theater company he founded in 1949, the Berliner Ensemble. Young directors and actors flocked to Brecht and to perhaps naive notions of leftist idealism. The theater remained a source of East German artistic vitality even after his death in 1956.

So the removal of Brecht's heirs from control of the Berliner Ensemble and the privatization of this former stronghold of Communist ideology have become potent symbols of cultural life in the new Berlin. The change became official in mid-January, and the first production from the five-director collective that is running the theater was Shakespeare's "Pericles."

While interesting and honorable, the staging, by a 74-year-old former Brecht disciple named Peter Palitzsch, is not at the forefront of contemporary directorial innovation.

Brecht's heirs and heirs apparent run his theater group collectively.

Ruth Berghaus, another Brecht disciple with close personal and professional ties to this theater, and a widely admired director for more than two decades, could make that claim.

But Miss Berghaus was driven from the directorship of the ensemble in 1977 by Brecht's daughter, Barbara Brecht-Schall. While Miss Berghaus, now 65 years old, has given no indication that she harbors the slightest ambition to return to the ensemble, she remains part of the tangled familial and personal relations that define this dynamic drama. And her radical post-Brechtian style of direction, seen this year in two fascinating opera productions in Frankfurt and Berlin, shows one way Brechtian traditions might be revitalized.

Miss Berghaus's departure came shortly after the death of Brecht's widow, Helene Weigel, who was Mrs. Brecht-Schall's mother. Miss Weigel was a powerful theatrical force in her own right, an actress who defined Brecht's "Mother Courage" for all who saw her in it. Her death appar-

ently cost Miss Berghaus, who was herself married to Paul Dessau, Brecht's last regular composer, a measure of protection. She was forced from the company because, by all accounts, Mrs. Brecht-Schall found her style a too-radical reinterpretation of Brecht's plays and theories. (Mrs. Brecht-Schall was reportedly in a hospital and unable to comment for this article.)

By general consensus, the problem with the Berliner Ensemble in the 1980's was threefold. First, it was overstuffed, given the Communists' commitment to full employment no matter how useless. Although the new ensemble is technically private, it receives a \$16 million annual subsidy from the Berlin city government. Even so, personnel has been pared by some 40 people, Mr. Palitzsch said, although Mrs. Brecht-Schall has asserted the figure to be in the hundreds. The current ensemble includes Ekkehard Schall, Mrs. Brecht-Schall's husband and a long-admired Brecht actor who played Antiochus in "Pericles," which ended its run on Jan. 31.

Second, the theater's directors allowed the Brecht style to ossify, refusing, like Cosima Wagner at Bayreuth, to permit innovation in violation of the Master's supposed wishes. Even Mrs. Brecht-Schall conceded, in an interview with *The Independent* of London, that the 80's saw some "ter-

Continued on Page B5

New York Times
2-8-93

The Berliner Ensemble: Brecht's House Is Divided

Continued from Page B1

rich productions."

Third, the theater's upper echelons grew uncomfortably close to the repressive Erich Honecker regime, a closeness that proved embarrassing after the Berlin wall came down in 1989.

Not that all of the new directors of the theater, or Miss Berghaus, have necessarily recanted their own leftist idealism. The current co-owners are well-known veteran directors, several of whom worked at the theater before emigrating West: Mr. Palitzsch, Peter Zadek, Matthias Langhoff, Fritz Marquardt and Heiner Müller, who also happens to be one of Germany's best playwrights.

Mr. Müller is among several former East German intellectuals facing charges that they collaborated

center, and with lobbies still decorated with posters, stage models and memorabilia of Brecht productions.

Mr. Müller said that Mrs. Brecht-Schall, who handles her father's rights in Europe, has not yet allowed the Berliner Ensemble access to any Brecht plays that the new team hoped to produce (including their original choice for the reopening, "The Threepenny Opera," which has been granted to another Berlin theater).

Before 1989, the ensemble had exclusive rights to Brecht for East Berlin. Now the plays are up for grabs, although only one year at a time, with renewals possible, which Mr. Palitzsch said was untenable. Mr. Müller, eager not to burn all bridges with Mrs. Brecht-Schall, stressed her sincere loyalty to Brecht: her conviction that she was serving his best interests. But that seems questionable.

By now, however, Brecht has probably transcended the control of any heir. His influence has been so pervasive that no one director or company can claim primacy as his disciple. Mr. Palitzsch says Miss Berghaus — who declined to be interviewed for this article, pleading absorption in her latest production, Weber's "Freischütz" for the Zurich Opera — had tried to save Brechtian style by expanding upon it.

Certainly Brecht's "epic theater," meaning sweeping pageants built of socially concerned vignettes, and his "alienation effect," the disruption of hypnotic expectations and the juxtaposition of a piece and its production, can be seen in all her work. But it has been infused with a fantastical symbolism that made her popular all over Germany long before the wall came down and that clearly offended Mrs. Brecht-Schall and the Brecht literalists.

The two latest Berghaus productions — both operas, whose super-realistic realm has increasingly attracted her — indicate one way Brecht might be renewed. (Both have finished their runs for this season.)

Her staging of Debussy's "Pelléas et Mélisande" at a longtime haunt, the Berlin State Opera, reunited her with the conductor Michael Gielen, with whom she regularly collaborated when he ran the Frankfurt Opera in the 1950's. Abetted by his superbly dramatic pacing and command of orchestral texture, the production played out in décor and lighting by Hartmut Meyer that evoked the pastels and geometric forms of such painters as Kandinsky, Feininger and Moholy-Nagy.

Strauss With a Difference

For Miss Berghaus, though, this was a surprisingly faithful rendering of Debussy and Maurice Maeterlinck, the playwright, despite a few characteristic eccentricities. More striking (if not necessarily more compelling) was her treatment of a score seemingly far removed from her usual hard-edged social commentary.

In Richard Strauss's "Rosenkavalier" in Frankfurt, her penchant to

counterpoint conventional interpretations — and conservatives might argue, the explicit wishes of the creators — could be seen at its most piquant. The final duet, that candy-sweet hymn to young love, can stand for the whole.

As Faninal and the Feldmarschall, (opulently sung by Deborah Polaski) ascended a staircase, Octavian (Ildiko Komlosi) and Sophie (Pia-Marie Nilsson) sat at a table like some bored and embittered old mar-

ried couple at breakfast, crooning their childlike song while determinedly avoiding each other, staring vacantly into space.

The image was both chilling and powerfully strange. It made one think, hard, instead of basking sentimentally. And in so doing, it served to validate Brechtian dramaturgy in ways that both the old and the new Berliner Ensemble have not yet come close to achieving.

The top East German theatrical troupe seeks a role.

with the East German secret police. The charges in his case are vaguer than most, and Mr. Müller denies all but the most casual and inevitable police contacts.

But if the ensemble had problems in the 80's, it has new difficulties now, and chief among them is a lack of clear artistic vision. Part of the trouble is the inherent unworkability of a five-member directorate. "It's an adventure, a big adventure," Mr. Palitzsch said optimistically in an interview.

For Mr. Müller, the major difficulty is the one facing most intellectuals in the former Eastern bloc: what to do with their newfound freedom. "At the moment, the theater can only react, but it has no future if it only reacts," he said in the interview. "We're looking for a constructive idea. Before, we could live with the idea that the theater was freedom: when the curtain went up, no one could control what happened. Now our great burden is that we can do anything and say anything."

As far as repertory is concerned, German critics have complained about the choice of "Pelléas," which is probably only partly by Shakespeare and counts among his weakest efforts. Mr. Palitzsch said he was attracted by "the hero who isn't one, who has continually to begin again from square one."

But what has caused the most comment is that this company, housed in the very theater that saw the first performance of "The Threepenny Opera" in 1928, has no plans to perform any Brecht at all (apart from a fragment completed by Mr. Müller). And this in a theater located on Bertolt-Brecht-Platz, with a benign-looking statue of the playwright at its

Tui Memorandum: Brecht and the *New York Times*

Bertolt Brecht, Marxist, director, and arguably the 20th century's greatest playwright, continues to pose problems for the *New York Times*. Unlike the lesser known Left, Brecht simply cannot be dismissed. Brecht and his theater, *The Berliner Ensemble*, have made world theater history. Located in East Berlin, the *Ensemble* has undergone a number of changes since German re-unification. Cuts in personnel, squabbling, and a new directorship headed by some of the most famous names in German theater, are but a few of the modulations at the theater over the last year. Long a lynch-pin of the East German (GDR) cultural apparatus, the Ensemble's new role and its legacy are now the subjects of the *New York Times* attention. How then does Capitalism's "newspaper of record" handle the questions of those who were, prominently, on the other side? Enter John Rockwell and his article of Monday, Feb. 8, (93): "Berliner Ensemble in the 90's: Brecht's Old House is Divided." Rockwell begins by noting that the former East German state subsidized the arts lavishly, but for "propagandistic purposes."

Capitalism, forced to borrow its progressive agenda from Socialism, must stigmatize the benefits which Socialist societies offer their members. East German theaters like Brecht's were legendary for their quality and affordability. They also played to large and enthusiastic Western audiences. Rockwell now moves to a *Times*-honored position: those drawn to Brecht--perhaps have naive notions of leftist idealism. *Times* style straw leftists are forever exhibiting school boy "idealism" or "totalitarian" tendencies. Leftist schizophrenia is a fixed feature at the *Times*, where "moderation" and "rationality" remain on guard. To his credit, Rockwell does not go on to suggest that those looking for work in America's theaters do so with 'naive notions of Capitalist idealism.' In fact, Brecht held that the "naive" was a category essential to the making of Art.

Having located Left "naivete", the *Times* fingers the *Ensemble* as "once a stronghold of Communist ideology", now risen again as a "potent cultural symbol." How did it happen? The answer is summed up in the new code word for Capitalism in Eastern Europe, "privatization."

Ironically, Rockwell's "stronghold of Communist ideology" was under almost constant attack (East and West) from its inception. No mention here of Brecht's on-going battles with the official Marxists of his day; his support for East German dissidents like the jailed Wolfgang Harich, the friends lost to Soviet purges, or his poem about Stalin which begins "honored murderer of the People." By 1953, four years after it was founded, Brecht was commenting privately that his productions at the Ensemble were no longer even being reviewed in time for people to see them.

The *Times* now turns to Brecht "disciple" Peter Palitzsch, a widely respected West German director who is "no longer at the forefront of directorial innovation." Apparently the directorship at the Ensemble thought so, they'd just picked Palitzsch to

open their first production at the reorganized theater (Shakespeare's *Pericles*).

As foil to Palitzsch, Rockwell devotes seven paragraphs to Ruth Berghaus, a director who has had no association with the Berliner Ensemble since breaking bitterly with the theater over a decade earlier. Why Ms. Berghaus? Because her most recent production served to "validate Brechtian dramaturgy in ways that both the old and the new *Berliner Ensemble* have not yet come close to achieving."

The *Ensemble* under Brecht, and later his wife Helene Weigel, set a standard for Brecht productions unmatched anywhere in the world. A standard upon which Ms. Berghaus clearly draws. Perhaps sensing the *Times* well established agenda, Ms. Berghaus declined to be interviewed.

The *Times* correspondent makes no mention of Germany's increasingly McCarthyite atmosphere, except to note that Heiner Müller, one of the *Ensemble's* directors and a major German playwright, has been charged with informing for the Stasi, the former East German secret police. In making no reference to the well co-ordinated press attacks on East German intellectuals with Socialist tendencies, Rockwell helps hang Mr. Müller out to dry, though he does concede that Müller denies the charges. The attacks on Müller and many, many others have helped produce an atmosphere of violence and extremism which has touched the Brecht family personally. The Brecht Weigel graves were desecrated with anti-Semitic graffiti following re-unification. The *Times* makes no mention of the incident.

The *Times* is also careful to note that Müller, like "most intellectuals in the former Eastern bloc," can't quite figure out what to do with his "newfound freedom." Müller laments: "Now our great burden is that we can do anything and say anything." Mr. Müller, an ironist privately and professionally, fails to refer Mr. Rockwell to Brecht's anti-Capitalist satire *Mahagonny*, the tale of a city where "anything is allowed" and "one may do anything at all."

Despite Müller's assertions to the contrary, Rockwell finds Brecht's daughter Barbara Brecht-Schall's actions "questionable." Mrs. Schall was the highly controversial head of the *Ensemble* prior to re-unification. Apparently hospitalized, Mrs. Schall was unavailable to answer the charges. It was Brecht's idea, with people like Karl Kraus and Walter Benjamin, that a whole class of intellectuals (Brecht called them Tuis) served as Capitalism's keepers of the Flame. Their task, Brecht said, was to distort, re-work, and marginalize the histories of those who challenged Capital. Brecht's play on the subject is called the Congress of Whitewashers. Should the newly constituted *Ensemble* ever perform the work, let it be noted that the *Times* and Mr. Rockwell would make a great opening act.

Warren Leming
Chicago

OFFICERS' REPORTS

Presidential Report

The major - indeed the only - item I have for this Presidential Report is a brief account of the Colloquium organized principally by John Willett (in conjunction with Bernard Dort) which took place in Bourges in October. Supported by the French Ministry of Culture, the twin cities of Bourges and Augsburg and the I.T.I., and under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture, this Colloquium was part of the events organized to celebrate the twinning of Augsburg and Bourges and also the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Maison de la Culture in Bourges. The Bourges Centre was, in fact, the first of the Maison de la Culture to be set up in France at Malraux' instigation under the de Gaulle government. Positioned around the Colloquium, which was given the general title "Brecht Today - The Contemporary Relevance of Brecht" was a series of performances of plays, cabaret evenings, and recitals.

John Willett and the staff of the Maison de la Culture had organized invitations for participants from over twenty countries, who included scholars, theatre directors, performers, critics, and translators. The structure of the three-day Colloquium was kept relatively informal, following the horseshoe- rather than round-table format, with the various participants being alternately cajoled, nudged or provoked by John Willett as an ever genial and generous Chairman to respond to a variety of topics encompassing theatre practice, aspects of the poetry, Brecht's composers, Brecht and Stanislavsky and future paths for Brecht. Unlike some events which take the title Colloquium and turn into a series of disconnected monologues, this particular one provided a forum for exchange, debate, disagreement, and humour - following a molified version of Brecht's epigram in *The Messingkauf Dialogues*: "A conference that cannot be laughed in is a conference to be laughed at."

With its emphasis on the participants' background and expertise in theatre and performance practice, the Conference was a valuable corollary to the IBS Symposium in Augsburg, especially in respect of the views articulated by the participants from the former Iron Curtain and Third World countries. I was unable to see all the performances staged over the fortnight, being directly involved in one as accompanist for Robyn Archer in a selection of songs performed as part of an afternoon session devoted to Brecht's poetry and his composers, and relating these to broader cabaret traditions. The major production linked to the Colloquium was a version of *The Bread Shop*, a fragment staged as a co-production by Théâtre de la Planchette, Maison de la Culture de Bourges, Atelier Théâtre National avec le soutien du Jeune Théâtre National et de l'A.N.P.E. Spectacle, and directed by Pierre Etienne Heymann. This production was not without its

problematic post-modern aspects, managing to combine some of the most disparate theatre styles, ranging from a quasi-materialistic version of the opening to *A Chorus Line* through agit-prop and "Absurdist Lehrstück" conventions. The piece itself, while central in Brecht's oeuvre, remains problematic and, at least in this version, somewhat incoherent.

Among a number of issues raised during the Colloquium, the question of future directions at the Berliner Ensemble provoked some emphatic divergence of opinion. While Ernst Schumacher sought to foreshadow a motion expressing the participants' wish that Brecht's work be made a central pillar of future programming at the Ensemble, a sizeable majority of the participants, particularly those with practical theatre involvement, felt it entirely inappropriate to seek to establish a repertoire plan for any theatre company - least of all one which, according to the time of the year, seems to consist of two, four or even six artistic directors.

The Maison de la Culture is now hoping to make the proceedings of the Colloquium available to a wider audience, and the latest news is that the Editions de l'Arche are interested in publishing it.

Michael Morley
Flinders University/South Australia

Vice-President's Report

Despite a hiccup in the 1992 MLA sessions we continue to fulfill our basic MLA and ATHE conference in Philadelphia this summer and at least one panel already for the forthcoming MLA convention. And we have one panel in the works and one tentative for MLA 1994.

Being able to plan this far out makes it much easier for us not only to meet both ATHE and MLA deadlines but also to engage in "extras" that both organizations take as signs of healthy activity. You will see one of these extras later in the issue: a Call for Papers for one of the 1993 MLA sessions. (The other will be on "Brecht's Collaborator, Margaritte Steffin.") We were able to organize this call quickly enough after the 1992 MLA ended on 30 December to have it printed in the Spring 1993 *MLA Newsletter*. But we just made the 6 January 1993 deadline. The need to plan at least six-months in advance in order to avoid this kind of scrambling may soon become more relevant: This year the MLA began requiring each Division to advertise a Call for Papers for at least one of its sessions, and the Delegate Assembly discussed extending this requirement to Allied Organizations. A vote was delayed this year, but we might well find ourselves confronted with the requirement in 1994.

I will therefore repeat what I ask every time I report: If you have any ideas--however tentative--for either a paper or a panel for either MLA or ATHE, please contact me. And I direct this request most specifically to MLA members. The latest statistical print-out from the ATHE credits us with 185 ATHE members who have indicated us as one of their interest groups. Now, not all these people are paying IBS dues. But they're a good deal more active than those of you who are MLA members only. For example, small numbers of them show up for our business meeting. In contrast, 1992 was the second year running that no one showed up for our business meeting at MLA. If no one shows up in 1993, I'll stop scheduling the meetings.

John Rouse
Tulane University

IBS Financial Report

August 31, 1992

Balance \$ 8,598.07

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BLZ 300 702 00

Balance 2.093,09 DM

February 28, 1993

Receipts	\$ 6025.79
Disbursements	\$ 4441.14
Balance	\$ 10,182.72

Receipts	95,18 DM
Disbursements	196,11 DM
Balance	1.992,16 DM

Ward Lewis
University of Georgia

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Elisabeth Hauptmann: Brecht's Silent Collaborator (Dissertation Abstract)

This study deals with Elisabeth Hauptmann's contributions to Brecht's work. Handwritten and typed material from the "Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv" and from the "Elisabeth-Hauptmann-Archiv" in Berlin as well as the Brecht Collection at Harvard documents Hauptmann's collaboration in Brecht's works in the 1920's and 1930's. Documentation exists as well of their correspondence during their years in exile, and of their adaptations for Brecht's Berliner Ensemble. Hauptmann's most obvious contributions to the Brecht oeuvre are discussed: for example, her work on *Mann ist Mann*, documented in the introduction by Brecht, and her translation of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* which became *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Less well-known is her interest in things oriental which resulted in translations of Chinese poems, published in Brecht's name, for which Hauptmann's original translations exist in her papers.

Her reticence in matters of credit served to obfuscate her importance to Brecht as muse, translator and fellow writer. This examination of her contributions sheds light on Brecht's productive process and fills a lacuna in secondary literature concerning Brecht's collaboration with his life-long partner. In the process this examination also attempts to adjust the image the literary world has of Bertolt Brecht's accomplishments. John Willett writes, "As we come to learn more and more about the still expanding nebula called 'Brecht,' we see what a vital part of it Hauptmann was in one way and another, and how easy it is to get him wrong if we fail to allow for her role as a writer, communicator and person" (Willett, *The Brecht Yearbook* 12, 136).

Paula Hanssen
Alfred, New York

Reprint: *The Brecht Yearbook*

Volume 14

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The Other Brecht II / Der andere Brecht II

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Volume 18 (1993)

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Eine Sammelbesprechung

Communications

Volume 18 of the *The Brecht Yearbook / Das Brecht-Jahrbuch* will be ready for distribution from the University of Wisconsin Press in April 1993 (ISBN 0-9263206-5-X, \$20.95). Under the title "The Other Brecht II / Der andere Brecht II," it completes the publication of selected proceedings from the 8th IBS Symposium convened in Augsburg (Germany) in December 1991.

Volume 19 of the Yearbook (Spring 1994) will focus on the recently published writings of Margarete Steffin, edited by Inge Gellert under the title *Konfute versteht nichts von Frauen* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991). It will also include Steffin's as yet unpublished children's play "Geisteranna." Contributions on Steffin and on other topics related to Brecht and to contemporary theater practice should be sent to the Managing Editor by October 1993 to be considered for Volume 19:

Marc Silberman
Department of German
818 Van Hise Hall
University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI 53706

Current members of the International Brecht Society receive *The Brecht Yearbook* automatically. It can also be ordered directly:

The University of Wisconsin Press
114 N. Murray St.
Madison, WI 53715-1199
MC & Visa (608) 262-8782 Fax (608) 262-7560

UW Press stocks some back volumes as well (volumes 3-10, 5-17). Orders for *The Brecht Yearbook* from Europe, Africa and the Middle East can be made directly through London:

Eurospan University Press Group
3 Henrietta Street
Covent Garden
London, England WCE2 8LU
Phone (71) 240-0856 Fax (71) 379-0609

The IBS is currently soliciting nominations for the next Managing Editor of the Yearbook. Please contact any of the IBS officers or members of the Yearbook's editorial board with suggestions or self-nominations.

NEWS FROM BERLIN

Sale of Brecht's Literary Estate

The city of Berlin will purchase Bertolt Brecht's literary estate for eleven million marks and give it as a permanent loan to the archive of the future academy of the arts of Berlin-Brandenburg. The negotiations between the Brecht heirs and the senate of Berlin were completed around December 10, 1992. The Brecht heirs who are living in Berlin - Hanne Hiob and Barbara Brecht-Schall - had originally asked for 40 million marks; but experts calculated a value of 10.5 million marks; and the Brecht heirs agreed to the sum of 11 million under the condition that they do not have to pay any taxes on the earnings they acquired through this sale. Berlin's senator of culture, Ulrich Roloff-Momin, who announced the results of the negotiations to the public, would not disclose whether he had agreed to the Brecht heirs' wish: The "Steuergeheimnis" (tax secret) does not oblige officials to make this part of the negotiations public.

Immediately after Brecht's death in 1956, Helene Weigel had procured that the author's literary estate will be assured a safe place and become open to the public. Every page was photocopied and kept (the originals are now stored in the safe of a bank underneath the Alexanderplatz). In total, the literary estate consists of 200 000 leaves which are organized in 2200 folders. Among them are also many letters to Brecht as well as newspaper clips collected by Brecht. Herta Ramthun, who unfortunately died recently, had listed the contents of the estate in great detail in a *Bestandsverzeichnis des literarischen Nachlasses*, which consists of four volumes.

Together with Brecht's original documents, the senate also acquired the films in Brecht's house, among them such important film documents like the 1931 performance of *A Man's a Man* at the Staatliches Schauspielhaus in Berlin (with Peter Lorre), or *Galileo* at the Coronet Theatre in Beverly Hills (Charles Laughton's version). Furthermore, the estate includes a collection of several thousand photos which the heirs had bought, dated, and organized with the help of researchers; and finally, the senate also bought Brecht's voluminous home library which visitors have been able to admire (and use) in Brecht's and Weigel's house in Chausseestraße 125.

Name Change at the Brecht Zentrum

"The *Brecht Zentrum Berlin* has to change its name. In the future, this literary meeting place will take on the name *Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus* (Literary Forum in the Brecht House)." This excerpt from a news release by the German press agency *dpa* covers the previous logo on publications by the former Brecht Zentrum.

Pointing to a law which preserves the rights of prominent personalities, the Brecht heirs have prohibited a further use of Brecht's name in conjunction with the *Literary Forum*. They did not disclose any specific reasons, but Inge Gellert, the director of the *Literary Forum in the Brecht House*, was told by Brecht's daughter, Barbara Brecht-Schall, that only she (Barbara) was responsible for Brecht.

The name change occurred in the course of conceptual changes at the *Brecht Center of the GDR*, after it was taken over by the senate of culture as the fourth literary house in Berlin. While research and reception of Brecht was the central focus of the institute during GDR times, the *Literary Forum* has broadened its scope and now seeks to support contemporary literature and arts in general, taking Brecht's work as a point of departure.

Wessis in Weimar

On February 10, 1993, Brecht would have turned 95 years old; and on that day the *Berliner Ensemble* premiered Rolf Hochhuth's drama *Wessis in Weimar: Scenes from an Occupied Land* under the direction of Einar Schleef. The drama, highly political in content, had already ignited controversy in Germany: Hochhuth claims to "explain", not "justify" the 1991 killing of Detlev Rohwedder, president of the Treuhand agency which is charged with privatizing businesses formerly owned by the East German state. Indeed, the first, expository scene shows the murder of the Treuhand chair Rohwedder, and the play unfolds from there, showing the conflict between the capitalist westerners intent on expanding business and the helpless easterners who are being taken over. The political conflict that the play centers on was accompanied by an aesthetic one between the playwright Rolf Hochhuth and the director producing the play, Einar Schleef. Hochhuth, who is known for his documentary dramas and his realistic style, had agreed to let a symbolist direct his play; and so it happened at the performance that the author found his play torn apart, that he only recognized six of the ten scenes he wrote (much of the remainder being chanted by choruses of nudes), and only partially, that the key expository scene about Rohwedder which he placed at the beginning in his written text takes place at some point in the middle of a four hour performance, thus completely confusing the audience, according to the author. For a while, the fear prevailed that Hochhuth would file a suit and try to stop the February 10 premiere of his play at the *Berliner Ensemble*, but this did not happen. Hochhuth, however, regards the performance of his play at the traditionally conservative and privately supported *Ernst-Deutsch-Theater* in Hamburg, which opened on February 25 and is much more faithful to the original text than the version in Berlin, as the authentic premiere of his play.

Vera Stegmann
Lehigh University

Brechtzentrum Berlin

O - 104

Seestraße 125

„Das Brecht-Zentrum Berlin muß seinen Namen ändern. Die Eltern Bertolt Brechts (1898 - 1956) haben die Entscheidung unterschlagen, den Namen weiterhin zu verwenden, weil sie ihre Interessen an einer ordnungsgemäßen Bewertung des Brecht-Namens nicht gewahrt sehen. Teile der Berliner Senatverwaltung für Kultur... Jmt Der literarische Treffpunkt werde künftig den Namen Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus führen.“
(Aus einer opz-Mitteilung Januar 1993)

April '93

Sa., 24.4.

20.00 Uhr

Die ungewollte Moderne

Ein Gespräch mit Wolfgang Engler zu den Mißverständnissen und Pannen des deutsch-deutschen Einigungsprozesses. Stehen dahinter schwer aufzulösende Fehlwahrnehmungen der ostdeutschen Kultur? Glaubt man im Westen, sämtliche Verhaltenseigenschaften der Ostler umstandslos mit dem System, das sie hervorbrachte, identifizieren zu können? Fehlt es an Sensibilität, zwischen herrschaftskonformen Verhaltensweisen und solchen zu unterscheiden, die gegen den Herrschaftsmechanismus durchgesetzt und behauptet wurden? Gegen Fehlwahrnehmungen, gegen die ihnen entsprechenden Strategien der Abwicklung bzw. nostalgischen Beschwörung von DDR-Kultur, richtet sich der Begriff der "ungewollten Moderne".

Di., 27.4.

20.00 Uhr

lieblos im streit

Teresa Ruiz Rosas (Peru) liest "Szorke Dalur, verwirrter Schriftsteller", eine Geschichte, eine Begegnung, die geprägt ist von einem gallebitteren Nachgeschmack.

Ewa-Maria Slaska liest "Ariel" aus dem Roman "Da reitet der Herr".

Petra Krömer improvisiert dazu auf dem Klavier.
Moderation Barbara Hoyer.

Mi., 28.4.

20.00 Uhr

Berliner Alptraum

Klaus Schlesinger liest aus "Leben im Winter" und "Fliegender Wechsel - Eine persönliche Chronik" sowie neue Texte. Es handelt sich um Arbeiten, die nach Schlesingers "langen Reise von Deutschland nach Deutschland" entstanden.

Communications

Do., 29.4.

20.00 Uhr

Die wirtschaftliche Inanspruchnahme des Denkens

Die "Etats généraux de la culture" laden zu einer Debatte ein. Beteiligt sein werden:

Nicole Bary (Leiterin der Zeitschrift "LITTERall", Frankreich), Heinrich Finck (Theologieprofessor, Deutschland), Nedim Gürsel (Schriftsteller, Türkei), Cornelius Hertling (Architekt, Deutschland), Bernhard Noël (Schriftsteller, Frankreich), Jack Ralite (Koordinator der Generalstände der Kultur, Frankreich) und Klaus Schlesinger (Schriftsteller, Deutschland).

Das System mit dem Köder ist die
Erfingung, die der Wirtschaftsmacht er-
laubt, die Gedankenfreiheit anzugreifen.

obituaries

Our member Gerhard Bohner, dancer and choreographer, died on July 13th, a short time after his 56th birthday, in Berlin. During the last years of his career Bohner refined individualism into the most perfect art form. He can be considered the symbolic figure of the other, the free dance in post-war Germany. After engagements as a dancer in Mannheim and Frankfurt a.M. Bohner came to the *Deutsche Oper* in Berlin, where he became one of the best character dancers in Tatjana Gorsky's company and remained so for ten years. His own choreography of 'Tortures of Beatrice Cenci' at the Berlin Academy of Arts started his soloist career in 1971. From 1972 to 1975 he was the director of the Darmstadt dance theatre, afterwards he managed the dance theatre in Bremen together with Reinhild Hofmann for three years. A result of his studies of Bauhaus traditions was his reconstruction of Oskar Schlemmer's 'Triadic Ballet', with which he toured around the world. Like no other contemporary choreographer Gerhard Bohner succeeded to create a balance of form and contents, of reason and emotion, and this is why his works,

especially his soloist works, moved the audiences so much.

The theatre sculptor Eduard Fischer died in Berlin at the age of 76. When Brecht engaged him for the *Berliner Ensemble* in 1951, he developed the profession of theatre sculptor from his two occupations as stage technician and moulder. For productions by Brecht, Besson and Langhoff at the *Deutsches Theater* and the *Berliner Ensemble*, but also for theatres in Austria, Scandinavia, France and the United States Fischer created his sculptures and masks. One of his last works was the costume of the eagle in Luc Bondy's production of Botho Strauß' 'Schlußchor' at the Berlin *Schaubühne*. The Berlin *Panoptikum* honours him with an exhibition beginning on November 14th.

At the age of seventy Käthe Rülicke died in Berlin on September 7th. Käthe Rülicke was a close acquaintance of Brecht's and the most important chronicler of his practical theatre work. Originally a scholar of German, she became a dramaturg at the *Berliner Ensemble* with Peter Palitzsch and Claus Hubalek in the early fifties. She contributed much to the first big

publication about the *Berliner Ensemble*: 'Theaterarbeit' (published in 1952) and summarized her practical experience in her doctoral thesis 'Die Dramaturgische Methode Brechts' (1966).

A few days before his seventy-third birthday, Wolf Kaiser, one of the great actors of the post-war era in Germany, has set an end to his life. He had worked in Frankfurt a.M., Munich and Leipzig, and was, from 1950 to 1970, a member of the *Berliner Ensemble*, where one of his most notable triumphs was the part of Mackie Messer in Erich Engel's 1960 production of Brecht's 'Threepenny Opera'. He had many parts in plays by Brecht, like that of Père Joseph in 'The Days of the Commune', the military chaplain in 'Mother Courage', Pope Urban in 'Live of Galilei' and Giri in 'Arturo Ui'. Later he joined the GDR television and also starred in various DEFA feature films.

IMPULSE

2nd issue

V-IX, 1992 p.16

Ein Aufbruch, noch kein Durchbruch im BE

Peter Palitzsch eröffnet mit der „Pericles“-Inszenierung eine neue Ära am Schiffbauerdamm

„Das Thema der Kunst ist, daß die Welt aus den Fugen ist.“ So Bertolt Brecht, programmatisch zitiert auf der Titelseite des Programmheftes zu Shakespeares „Pericles“, mit der am Sonntag der Brecht-Schüler Peter Palitzsch als Regisseur die neue Ära des Berliner Ensembles eröffnete. Das bisherige Symbol des Berliner Ensembles, die Friedenstaube von Picasso auf dem Vorhang, findet sich als Wappentier auf dem Schild eines Herkules wieder, der mit geschwungenem Schwert einen lockköpfigen Mars niederhält: eine Skizze Picassos aus dem Jahr 1964, nun auf schmaler weißer Leinwand entrollt. Wort- wie Bildzitat deuten an, daß Tradition gewahrt, wenn auch neu gefaßt werden soll.

Thematisch möchte es verwundern, daß Palitzsch sich ausreichend für „Pericles“ entschied. Umstritten ist, ob Shakespeare der Verfasser oder nur der Endfasser des um 1608 aufgeführten Stückes ist. Es ist eine Vorstufe der „Romanzen“, mit denen sich Shakespeare wenig später verabschiedete. Es spiegelt auf märchenhafte Weise Aufstürzen, Zerstörungen, Verstärkungen des real existierenden Feudalismus, seines Welt-, seines Menschenbildes wider: Chaos, das so zerstörerisch wie schöpferisch ist. Es vereint Fürstenspiegel und Moralität, ist konsequent „episches“, erzähltes Theater. Die Fabel eine Geschichte abenteuerlicher Ereignisse: Fürst Pericles flieht vor König Antiochus, dessen Blutschande er durchschaut hat, steigt wieder auf, fällt wieder ab, verliert Frau und Tochter und kriegt sie im

tieftsten Elend wieder – die „Gerechtigkeit des Himmels“ ist schon auf Erden erfahrbar. Zu schön, um wahr zu sein, oder?

Aber die Struktur des Stücks, geprägt durch die Raum und Zeit überspringende Erzählung Gowers, fordert tatsächlich heraus, gewohnte Verkehrsformen der Bühne zu durchbrechen. Es hat seine Logik, wenn Bühnen- und Kostümgestalter Karl Kneidl in der Inszenierung im Berliner Ensemble die



König Antiochus (Ekkehard Schall) lebt in Blutschande mit seiner Tochter (Katharina Felice). Foto: Faguth

Trennung von Bühne und Zuschauerraum aufhebt, den Rundhorizont der Bühne ausbauen ließ, gegenüber der Bühne eine Tribüne als Spielplatz aufbaut und die Zuschauer auf Hockern oder im Stehen im „Pit“, den Kultur „Adel“ in Logen und Rang platzieren läßt. Die Besetzung der „vierten Wand“ erzwingt Beschränkung auf Andeutungen, ermöglicht schnittartige Wechsel, erzwingt Imagination. Zeitbezogenheit wird nicht nur an der modernen Diktion der Übersetzung durch Holger Teschke, sondern vor allem in einer Zeitvermischung der Kostüme deutlich. Die Gegenspieler Pericles' auf „Königsebene“ assoziieren die „Exoten“ der Dritten Welt, während „die Macher“, die auch noch aus Liebe Geschäft machen, sehr hiesig, heute sind. Sehr delikat, andeutend, gestisch, die Musik von Friedrich Schenker, vorgeführt vor der nackten Brandmauer der Bühne.

Die Spielweise, die dieser „offenen“ Bühne entspricht, ist „kurz und bündig“, bestimmt durch schnelle „black outs“, uferf jedoch auch aus (so zum Beispiel in der zeremoniellen Hüstung der Ritter, die um die schöne Thaisa fechten wollen, oder in der Bordellzene, in die Tochter Marina wieder ihren Willen gerät). Diese „epische“ Struktur käme schlüssiger und zügiger zur Geltung, gäbe Volker Spengler dem Erzähler Gower weniger verschwommene Abklärtheit, sondern mehr scharfe Aufklärtheit (um die Teschke in seiner Neufassung geradezu beflissen bemüht ist).

So recht Gelegenheit, seiner Figur Profil zu geben, bekommt nur Her-

mann Beyer als Pericles: Ein Edelmann ohne Arg, der zum Leiden und Schmerzensmann wird, nicht ohne Komik, zum Schluß im Elend leider durch bemühte Transvestierung unnötig lächerlich gemacht.

Seine Gegenspieler, der böse Antiochus (Ekkehard Schall), und seine Mit-Spieler, König Cleon (Stefan Liess) und König Simonides (Jürgen Watzke) bleiben mehr episodisch. Während Petra Cammin der Königstochter Thaisa, die Pericles Frau wird, saftige Weiblichkeit verleiht, hält Annette Dausgardi die aus der Verbindung hervorgegangene Marina als Tugendboldin allzusehr in Sprödigkeit, während Gabriela Maria Schmeide als böse Stiefmutter Dionysa ohne richtiges Theatertalent verbleibt. Die begrenzten Höhepunkte von Schauspielkunst wurden über weite Strecken durch puren Dilettantismus geschnallert.

Alles in Allem: Rekonstruiertes „episches Theater“ in einer verformten Umgebung, mehr augenfällig als sinnfällige. Das Publikum wurde keiner Bewußtseinspaltung ausgesetzt, schöner Schein und böses Sein gerieten nicht zur Herausforderung. In der Durchbrechung gewohnter Verkehrsformen erinnerte es an den Stuch aus Galileis Zeiten, auf dem ein Mann seinen Kopf durch die Planckschen und bösen Weltall streckt, aber doch mit seinen Beinen fest auf dem Boden der Tradition verbleibt. Ein Aufbruch, aber noch kein Durchbruch in das „Theater des (post-) wissenschaftlichen Zeitalters“ am Berliner Ensemble. Ernst Schumacher

BERLINER ZEITUNG
JANUARY 12, 1993

COLOMBIAN BRECHT SOCIETY



Activities of the Brecht Society for Colombian Theatre

The society is interested in receiving materials in Spanish or in other languages on the following subjects: essays on various aspects of Brecht's aesthetic production; experiences with his work and his theories, as well as studies on his dramaturgy. In particular the Colombian Brecht Society is also interested in the montage of his works and Latin American theatre on which Brecht has exercised an enormous influence.

If we, the IBS, hold any texts on the above mentioned subjects in our archives or personal libraries, the Colombian Brecht Society would very gratefully like to receive copies for their archive to assist in their research. The Society publishes a journal, *Interruptus*, and their members are active both in performance and research. Please send the materials, as well as any further inquiries, to:

Fernando Duque Mesa
Editor S.B.B.
Apartados Aéreos 47347
Santafe de Bogotá
COLOMBIA, S.A.

UPCOMING EVENTS / CALLS FOR PAPERS

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE SESSION

ASSOCIATION FOR THEATER IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Philadelphia, August 4-7, 1993

VARIETIES OF EPIC DRAMA

Chair: Ralf Remshardt, Denison University

"Conquering the South Pole and other Places in Germany: Manfred Karge's Plays"

Janelle Reinelt, California State University-Sacramento

"Is the English Epic Over?"

Ilona Koren-Deutsch, Northwestern University

"The Epic Drama of Scottish Nationalism"

May Joseph, New York University

"Brecht, Transculturation, and Postcolonial Theater: The Work of Safdar Hashmi"

CALL FOR PAPERS - ATHE 1994

(July 27-30, Chicago)

Proposals are solicited in the general areas of Weimar theater and cabaret. We are particularly interested in papers discussing Weimar cabaret, cabaret in the GDR, or post-wall cabaret in either the "old" or the "new" Bundesländern. Proposals discussing political, gay, or lesbian cabaret or theater in either of the three periods will be especially welcome. Depending on their quantity and range, proposals selected could be organized into two cabaret panels, one Weimar and one cabaret panel, or some other logical combination. 1-2 page abstracts by 1 June to John Rouse who will forward them to the panel organizers. Those chosen as presenters will need to be listed on the ATHE membership rolls by 1 November 1993.

CALL FOR PAPERS

THE EUROPEAN LEGACY: TOWARD NEW PARADIGMS

Fourth Conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas (ISSEI)

22-27 August, 1994

Karl-Franzens-Universität, Graz, Austria

Herewith I announce a workshop/symposium on THEATRE AS A TRANSCULTURAL EVENT, which I will lead in the frame of the Fourth Conference of the ISSEI in August 1994 at the university of Graz, Austria.

The aim of the conference is to assess the conceptual framework that Europeans have evolved during the last four centuries, and through which Europeans and non-Europeans have grasped the nature of physical, mental, human and social reality. Areas of interest include Group interactions aesthetics; Alternative Theatre; European aesthetic in relation to theatrical practice and to varying psycho-social concepts of the self; Brecht, Brook, LaMama and the Third World; "cross-pollination theatre"; "theatron" contra "forum". But I ask you for additional suggestions of themes too.

As chairman, I invite you as a potential participant to write to me straightaway, if you are interested in presenting a paper and what topic you would like to choose. After that I will communicate again with you. Then abstracts of 150-200 words should reach me by November 30, 1993. Completed papers - not to exceed 300 words or ten double-spaced pages including notes - should be here by March 15, 1994. The length of time for presentation of papers is about 15 minutes. Please respond as soon as possible!

Heinz-Uwe Haus
Berlin

Conference Chairs:

Professor Dr. Walter Hölbling
Department of American Studies
Karl-Franzens-Universität
A-8010 Graz / AUSTRIA

Professor Dr. Ezra Talmor
Department of Philosophy
Haifa University Mount Carmel
Haifa 31999 / ISRAEL

Workshop Chair:

Dr. Heinz-Uwe Haus
Pasteurstraße 28
D-1055 Berlin
GERMANY

Tel./Fax:
49/30/4299501

It is a privilege for an author to see three states disappear in a lifetime. The Weimar Republic, the fascist state and the GDR. It is unlikely that I shall witness the disappearance of the Federal Republic of Germany.
Heiner Müller (1992)

CALL FOR PAPERS

Offers of papers are invited to The 1994 Sydney German Studies Symposium on the work of Heiner Müller to be held at the Goethe Institute
Sydney, Australia, 22 - 24th July 1994.

The symposium will take place at the Goethe Institute/German Cultural Centre, 90 Ocean Road, Woollahra. A performance space (for workshops, performances, etc.) is available at the Centre for Performance Studies on the campus of the nearby University of Sydney. The proceedings of the symposium will be in English. As with previous conferences organised by the Department of German Studies, it is planned that a conference volume of selected papers will be published after the symposium.

Contributions will normally be of either 20 or 40 minutes' duration. Please send enquiries and/or the registration form provided overleaf (including offers of papers with titles and abstracts) by 1 July 1993 to:

Dr. Gerhard Fischer, Head
Department of German Studies
University of New South Wales
P.O. Box 1, Kensington, NSW 2033
Sydney, Australia

Tel.: (61-2) 697-2325
FAX: (61-2) 662-2392
E: G.Fischer@unsw.EDU.AU

CONFERENCE REPORTS

"Brecht Aujourd'hui" - ein Boxer ohne Gegner...

Mit einer Schweigeminute zum Andenken an den wenige Tage zuvor verstorbenen Pariser Theatermann und Theaterhistoriker Denis Bablet wurde in Bourges am 22. Oktober 1992 ein internationales Kolloquium unter dem Titel "Brecht Aujourd'hui / Brecht heute" eröffnet. Drei Tage diskutierten über vierzig Theater- und Fernsehregisseure, Wissenschaftler, Übersetzer, Verlagsleute und unterschiedlichste Theaterfunktionäre aus 24 Ländern in der französischen Partnerstadt Augsburgs. Eingeladen hatte das "Maison de la Culture" in Bourges, organisatorisch und finanziell unterstützt durch das Internationale Theaterinstitut in Paris und die UNESCO. Im Zentrum stand die Frage der zeitgenössischen Rezeption Brechts vor und nach der weltweiten Erosion des Sozialismus. Inwieweit verändern die neuen politischen Verhältnisse das Verständnis eines Dramatikers, der in den Aufführungstatistiken der meisten europäischen Staaten gleich hinter Shakespeare und Moliere rangiert? Welche Chancen hat engagiertes, politisches Theater heute noch neben der unaufhörlich wachsenden Präsenz der Medien?

Als 1989 am *National Theatre* in London *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* erfolgreich in Szene gesetzt wurde, erregte sich die bürgerliche Presse außerordentlich darüber, daß ein "marxistischer Autor" in dieser Zeit überhaupt mit öffentlichen Mitteln gespielt würde. Der einleitende Bericht von Tagungsleiter John Willett (England) scheint symptomatisch für die Brecht-Rezeption seit einigen Jahren: die Teilnehmer berichteten zunächst von ihren unterschiedlichen Erfahrungen, in der Vergangenheit unter verschiedenen politischen Systemen mit Brechts Werk zu arbeiten. Galt er in Kuba vor 1965 als "ugly character and dangerous communist" (Roberto Blanco), so hatte er in dieser Zeit die skandinavischen Bühnen längst erobert (Ralf Langbacka). In Spanien, das über eine sehr starke, eigene Theatertradition verfügt, spielt Brecht bis heute kaum eine Rolle, während Theaterleute aus Ländern der dritten Welt einhellig den enormen Einfluß seiner Stücke - die offene Form, die integrale Bedeutung der Songs und der Musik und natürlich den politischen Gestus - sowohl auf die Dramatik selbst als auch auf die Theaterarbeit in diesen Ländern betonten. Die gute Verfügbarkeit seiner literarischen wie theoretischen Texte in nahezu allen Ländern der Erde - der Regisseur Kabir Chowdhury (Bangladesh) berichtete von den seit langem durch das Goethe-Institut unterstützten Übertragungen in Bengali - und die beeindruckende Präsenz auf den Bühnen unterstreichen die nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg stetig wachsende Bedeutung Brechts.

Unwiderrspochen führte Peteris Petersohns eindrucksvoller Bericht über Lettland und seine zusammenfassende These, Brechts Rolle sei in der Vergangenheit stets gewesen, ein Dichter des Widerstands zu sein, zum Kern des Problems: engagiertes,

politisches Theater, für das Brecht bereits als Klassiker entsteht, hat nach 1989 seine Bedeutung und sein traditionelles Selbstverständnis im wesentlichen verloren. Jan Klossowicz aus Polen sagte, er stünde in seinem Land da "wie ein Boxer ohne Gegner". Und Susan Engel von der Londoner Royal-Shakespeare-Company brachte den Unterschied der Brecht Rezeption in den westlichen Ländern und denen des Ostblocks auf den Punkt, wenn sie Brechts Stücke für sich selbst als "bitter-sweet cake, but never bread and butter" bezeichnete. Bei aller Sorge um die Zukunft des engagierten Theaters war die Stimmung doch optimistisch: daß es nicht der wunderbar eingängigen *Dreigroschenoper* vorbehalten bleiben sollte, seinen Ruhm zukünftig zu bestimmen wünschte sich Brecht selbst am Ende seines Lebens. Der Ostberliner Germanist Ernst Schumacher wiederholte diesen Wunsch. In einer die Teilnehmer amüsierenden oder irritierenden Weise verband er ihn mit der Forderung nach Rückbesinnung auf die sozialistische Tradition von Theater, für die Brecht einzig einstehe, und die durch die "Rekapitalisierung der ehemaligen DDR" nun gänzlich abzubrechen drohe. Schumacher unterstützte seine These mit dem vermeintlichen Niedergang des *Berliner Ensembles*, an dem für die kommende Spielzeit keine Brecht-Inszenierung vorgesehen sei. Seine Vision vom Untergang der Kultur erregte einiges Unverständnis, ja unverhüllten Mißmut (Lucian Giurchescu, Rumänien, und Stuart Hood, England), auch deswegen, weil Schumacher die 24,5 Mio. DM erwähnte, die dem BE und seinem nunmehr fünfköpfigen Leitungsgremium für das nächste Jahr zur Verfügung stehen.

Es wurde am Ende der dreitägigen Veranstaltung eine Petition verabschiedet, die auf das alte Problem der allzu rigide gehandhabten Vergabe der Aufführungsrechte einerseits und die ebenso strengen Verpflichtungen auf die Einhaltung bestimmter Aufführungspraktiken andererseits hinweisen soll. Die Teilnehmer sprachen sich einstimmig dafür aus, daß die Rechteinhaber an Brechts Stücken, ebenso wie die an der Musik von Weill, Eisler und Dessau, eine liberalere, den landesspezifischen Gegebenheiten wie den jeweiligen Aufführungsmöglichkeiten gemäße Rechtevergabe praktizieren sollten. Vorschriften der Erben bedeuteten eine unnötige Bescheidung der Arbeitsmöglichkeiten und gerade keine Werkpflege. Es bleibt anzumerken, daß die Arbeitsatmosphäre dieser multilingualen wie multikulturellen Veranstaltung außerordentlich angenehm und entspannt war; nicht zuletzt trugen Robyn Archer und Michael Morley (beide Australien) mit einem musikalischen Querschnitt durch Brecht-Vertonungen dazu bei. Die hervorragende Organisation, z.B. die englisch/französischen Simultanübersetzungen während der Arbeitssitzungen, fand den Beifall aller TeilnehmerInnen.

Günter Berg
Frankfurt a. M.

Modern Language Association
New York City, December 27-30, 1992

BRECHT - BENJAMIN

Chair: John Rouse, Tulane University

Volker Kaiser, University of Virginia

"Precision and Mystery: Benjamin's Commentary on Brecht's Poetry"

Lorenz Jäger, Jüdische Volkshochschule, Frankfurt/Main

"Benjamin Reading *Mann ist Mann*"

Roswitha Mueller, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

"The Implosion of Meaning: Baudrillard and the Media Tradition of Brecht and Benjamin"

Carrie L. Asman, University of California-Davis

"Benjamin's Concept of Gesture in the Age of Re-theatricalization"

BRECHT - BENJAMIN: CHAIR'S REPORT

This session was originally scheduled to be complemented by a session on "Brecht and Media Theory." Unfortunately, illness and other difficulties forced one of this session's and three of the second session's participants to withdraw at the last moment. The second session was canceled. Roswitha Mueller graciously consented to move back to this session, where her paper fit as if it had been scheduled all along. And Lorenz Jäger sprang into the gap--all the way from Frankfurt. Carrie Asman also was not able to attend in person, but sent her paper, which was read by the Chair.

The panel was marked both by the quality of its individual papers and by its range: from a close reading of a text about texts through a reading of a directorial reading to rigorous engagements with both men's media and theater theory. The panel did justice to the complexity of the hyphen in its title.

Although the session was scheduled at 8:30 a.m., the panel enjoyed a full house of about fifty auditors; I will not speculate on which of the two Bs was the bigger draw. Although each panelist remained admirably within the given time limit, there were only five minutes for question. However, this proved time enough to begin a series of discussion that continued into the break between session; the panel and nearly half the

auditors had to be ejected from the room by the incoming panel, after which discussions continued in the corridor.

John Rouse
Tulane University

Precision and Mystery: Benjamin's Commentary on Brecht's Poetry
(Abstract)

The intellectual friendship and proximity between Brecht and Benjamin which was subject to so much criticism (Scholem, Adorno) translates into the institutional setting described by the conflictual relations between author and commentator, poetry and commentary. Drawing upon the distinction Benjamin set up between commentary and criticism, redefining the semiological significance of Brecht's "Gestus" in terms of the poetological functions it assumes as a figure of interruption, and tracing the cryptic assumption of this function by the radical intervention of the commentator into the poetic process, I argued that Benjamin's commentary envisions the commentator as a co-producer of the author. In short, the authority of the commentary partakes in the construction of poetry and of "the author as producer." Thus Benjamin engages in an act of Brecht-canonization and -possibly - a transgression which could explain the conspicuous and contemptuous silence with which Brecht reacted to Benjamin's commentary. I then tried to demonstrate -- via a close reading of the poem "Legende von der Entstehung des Buches Taoteking auf dem Wege des Laotse in die Emigration" -- that Benjamin's intervention into Brecht's poems was always already "licensed" or "prefigured" by (most of) his poems. Above all, the Laotse-poem shows: The precision of the commentary occurs precisely at that point (in time and space) where it is itself cyptonymically inscribed into the mystery of poetic origination, i.e. in the name of the commentator as an indispensable co-producer in the process of poesis.

Volker Kaiser
University of Virginia

Benjamin reading *Mann ist Mann*
(Abstract)

The 1931 performance of *Mann ist Mann* in Berlin directed by Brecht himself, was greeted with mostly negative reaction by audiences and critics: grotesque and aggressive aspects of the comedy were seen as mere "Unfug" and "sinnloses Gelalle" (Alfred Kerr). The only major critic who defended Brecht's experiment was Walter Benjamin; his essay, "Was ist das epische Theater? Eine Studie zu Brecht," written in the spring of 1931, argued for the rationalistic modernity of the play and against the classicist aesthetics of drama. But Benjamin's reading of *Mann ist Mann* also has a surrealistic side. In an experiment with hashish in March 1931 the play's setting--British India--reappears in a series of oriental images ("orientalische Bilder"); among them are elephants and a pagoda, both in fact leitmotifs of Brecht's play. Holding his index-finger ("Zeigefinger") in an upright position for more than an hour, Benjamin literally performs epic theater, as he had defined it in his essay: "Es ist das oberste Gebot dieses Theaters, daß 'der Zeigende' - das ist der Schauspieler als solcher - 'gezeigt werde'." Benjamin's drug-experiment may thus be understood as a quotation of Brecht's model. Benjamin's theoretical interest in gestures, his idea that works of art are shrinking in history, and his preference for literal translations can explain his reading of *Mann ist Mann* in the context of the Weimar avantgarde and its unorthodox views on drama and tradition.

Lorenz Jäger
Jüdische Volkshochschule, Frankfurt/Main

The Implosion of Meaning:
Baudrillard and the Media Tradition of Brecht and Benjamin
(Abstract)

The paper explores the theoretical roots of Baudrillard's recent speculations involving concepts like seduction, simulation and the implosion of meaning. Focussing on questions of media, in particular Baudrillard's essay entitled "Requiem for the Media" the paper shows how Baudrillard's rejection of the media tradition that reaches from Brecht and Benjamin to Enzensberger, rests on a critique of Marxism that Brecht and Benjamin had already dealt with. Furthermore, the paper points out how Baudrillard's critique of semiology, Saussure and Benveniste specifically, is justified by his notion of a form/content split, which he mistakenly contributes to the tradition of Marxism.

Roswitha Mueller
University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee

Benjamin's Concept of Gesture in the Age of Re-theatricalization
(Abstract)

Although Benjamin's interest in gesture was largely responsible for his work on such contradictory authors as Brecht and Kafka, one wonders to what degree that interest was symptomatic of a more general trend during the first decades of this century. This interest in gesture documents a cross-cultural "re-theatricalizing" force affecting not only the dramatic arts, but also the graphic arts (especially in surrealism), language philosophy, and anthropology. The interest in "Techniques of the Body" (Marcel Mauss, 1934) created a common orientation for a most heterogeneous group of artists, writers, ethnographers, dramatists, musicians, and language theorists. They converged in a practice engaged in the rendering of reality, society, or culture through precise observations of body parts and gestures from a detached and distanced perspective.

This paper examines the grounds of this practice with particular reference to Brecht and Benjamin, discusses the impact of touring Japanese theater troupes in the United States and Europe (particularly Sada Jakko's 1928 Moscow performance of *The Maskmaker*) on the perspectives playing across this ground, and considers what the fascination with these performances reveals about the tendency of European thinkers like Benjamin and Brecht to privilege the body and its parts rather than sustain examination of the body as a complex object of multiple cultural inscriptions.

Carrie Asman
University of California-Davis
(Abstract by John Rouse)

Versuch auf der Hölderlinie

Die Brecht-Tage 1993: Auf der Suche nach dem Glück

Ironie beschreibt Goethe in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* als ein Bewußtsein, "womit man seinen Mängeln nachsieht, mit seinen Irrtümern scherzt und ihnen desto mehr Raum und Lauf läßt, weil man sie doch am Ende zu beherrschen glaubt..." Diese heiter-überlegene Charakterisierung eines freien, unbelasteten Verhältnisses zu selbstgewählten Ansprüchen trifft auch auf die Brecht-Tage des Jahres 1993 zu. "Die ewige Suche nach

dem Glück" sollte fortgesetzt werden, nicht mit verbissener Ernsthaftigkeit, programmatischer Strenge und philosophischem Ehrgeiz, sondern durch unvoreingenommene Begegnung, durch den Ausgleich zwischen elitärer Kunst und Kulturbetrieb der Stadtszene. Die Veranstalter, das Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus (bis zum Einspruch der Brecht-Erben das "Brecht-Zentrum Berlin") und das Kulturhaus Tacheles, schlugen also um das kathartische Prinzip der Tragödie einen Haken und wollten gegenwärtigen, bitteren, schlimmen Konflikten in Berlin, in Deutschland und der Welt durch Kommunikation beikommen.

Das Programm war fließend, fast beliebig, hatte keinen aufklärerischen Charakter, sondern begnügte sich mit der Verführung zum Miteinander. Wie die Erfahrung aber zeigt, folgt solcher Verführung leider immer nur eine kleine Gruppe von "Machern" auf den verschiedensten geistig-künstlerischen Gebieten, während es nicht gelingt, Leidenschaft, Phantasie, schöpferischen Drang eines größeren Publikums zu entfesseln. So auch diesmal. Es fand ein Umzug statt von der Chausseestraße (Literaturforum) zur Oranienburger Straße (Kulturhaus Tacheles), mit dem uralten Eisentrecker. Der war mit Kunstschrott und hinten mit einer Video-Anlage zum Mit- und Zugucken beladen, auch "Beifalltonnen" stellte er zur Verfügung - aber am naßkalten Abend des 5. Februar 1993 vernebelte die gewollte karnevalistische Stimmung im Sprühregen, der Traktor zog seinen Weg sehr einsam. Vorher hatte die 1956 geborene, in München lebende Dramatikerin Kerstin Specht gelesen, aus ihrem neuen Stück "Mond auf dem Rücken", einem Text für zwei Personen, der von Lebensvarianten eines alten Mannes und eines jungen Mädchens erzählt. Glücksuche in der Abgeschlossenheit, einsam, und wohl vergeblich. Dem Glück wandten sich dann im Tacheles, der für Kunstzwecke ausgebauten Kaufhausruine mitten im Berliner Zentrum, Damen und Herren der hohen Wissenschaft zu. Fragend, überlegend, berichtend suchten sie Möglichkeiten einzukreisen, sich heute einer so widersprüchlichen philosophischen Kategorie wie dem "Glück" zu stellen. Zum Streit kam es nicht, die Mikrofone gaben im schnell verrauchten, riesigen Raum unter dem ständigen Kommen und Gehen Interessierter Verständliches kaum her. An diesem "offenen" Ort mit dem Bierausschank am Eingang war man wohl dem analytischen, tieflotenden Gespräch gegenüber nun doch nicht allzu aufgeschlossen.

Eher stellte sich eine spannungsvolle Beziehung von Chaos und Ordnung in der Produktion von Kunst her, im unbelasteten Umgang mit Liedern und Songs, in der Vorstellung experimenteller Kompositionen und neuer Opernversuche. Hier wurde auch der Bezug zu Brecht deutlich, aus dem Versuch heraus, dem Miteinander der Kunstgattungen, aus den Ideen der Schöpfer, aus einer umfassenden Material- und Ideensuche also, zu einem Ergebnis zu kommen. Frappierendster Eindruck des Abends waren die "gewürfelten" Kompositionen des Pianisten Thomas Wise. Auf den Tisch fielen, von den Glücksdisputanten geschüttelt, zwei Würfel. Jede Zahl von Eins bis Zwölf war einer Note zugeordnet, und aus den Zufallstönen entstanden auf dem Klavier Blitzkompositionen - intensiv, melodisch gescheit, rhythmisch mitreißend. Dann

hangelten sich Performance und Video-Demonstration (etwa "Trafik Urbanae" über die zwei Geschwindigkeiten West/Ost), Oper und Lied, Song-Darbietung und eine "Text-Musik-Session" mit Tacheles-Chef Jörg Janzer durch die lange Nacht. Man war zusammen, und man war's zufrieden.

Der Lyriker Martin Pohl hinterließ am Abend des nächsten Tages, wieder im Literaturforum, einen Spruch an der weißen Wand: "...aber das Glück, das wir festhalten wollen: 'verweile doch...' gewährt uns höchstens eine Nacht". Pohl gehörte, seit September 1951, zu den ersten Meisterschülern Brechts, er wurde im Februar 1953 von den DDR-Behörden unter (frei erfundenem, auf eine hinterhältige Denunziation gegründetem) Spionage-Verdacht verhaftet und erst im Dezember 1954 aus dem Gefängnis entlassen. Brecht hatte sich rückhaltlos, aber ohne Erfolg für Pohl eingesetzt. Die Lebensgeschichte dieses Mannes, der unter dem Titel "...und nach uns wird kommen: nichts Nennenswertes" Brecht sang und trommelte, verweist darauf, wie konfliktgeladen die Glückssuche auch aus dem Komödiantischen heraus immer bleiben wird.

Letzter Akt der Brecht-Tage 1993 war ein "philosophisch-literarisches Frühstück" am Sonntag, dem 7. Februar. Wieder Videos auf mehreren Geräten, Gespräche, Debatten unter vier oder sechs Augen, freundliches Miteinander. Die Hoffnung auf Improvisation, auf schnelle gegenseitige Verständigung über Wichtiges, auf ein verfolgbares, aus dem Augenblick entstehendes geistiges Programm freilich erfüllte sich nicht. Draußen, ein paar Straßenzüge weiter, im Berliner Ensemble, ging es um wesentliche Entscheidungen. Der Streit zwischen dem Dramatiker Rolf Hochhuth und dem Regisseur Einar Schleef über den Umgang mit dem dramatischen Text *Wessis in Weimar* war heftig entbrannt, die Uraufführung fand unter spektakulären Umständen drei Tage nach den Brecht-Veranstaltungen von Literaturforum und Tacheles statt. Über der "Hölderlinie" von der Chaussee- in die Oranienburger Straße war die Linie zwischen Brecht-Haus und dem von ihm begründeten Theater bei diesen Veranstaltungen seltsam ins Abseits geraten. So vieles forderte zur Auseinandersetzung heraus, zum Nachdenken - etwa über die Verwandlung poetischer Texte durch das Theater, über die Möglichkeiten der Kunst in den dramatischen Zerrissenheiten des gegenwärtigen deutschen Alltags. "Ich bin ein Glücksgott", dichtete Brecht, "sammelnd um mich Ketzer / Auf Glück bedacht in diesem Jammertal. / Ein Agitator, Schmutzaufwirbler, Hetzer / Und damit - macht die Tür zu - illegal." Das Hetzerische, Agitatorische, Schmutzaufwirbelnde und damit Klärende, Weiterweisende nahmem die Brecht-Tage 1993 nicht für sich in Anspruch. Sie setzten auf Freundlichkeit, auf die Vielfalt der Künste, auf das Zusammenbringen der Macher und ihres Kreises. Die Gemeinde blieb, deutlich in ihr Tun verliebt, unter sich.

Christoph Funke
Berlin

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Drums in the Night
Schauspielhaus Kiel, Germany
Directed by Petra Dannenhoefer

Like a noisy Gatling gun which continued to aim its ceaseless fire against whatever crossed its path, Brecht's youthful polemic aimed its sights on his own diseased and deluded society in the years immediately after World War I. Following the 1922 premiere of the play at the Munich Kammerspiele, Herbert Ihering, the prestigious theatre critic who immediately recognized the new theatre landscape Bertolt Brecht had created, wrote,

"... Brecht is impregnated with the horror of this age in his nerves, in his blood. This horror creates a pallid atmosphere, a half-light round men and things... Brecht physically feels the chaos and putrid decay of the times. Hence the unparalleled force of his images. This language can be felt on the tongue, on the palate, in one's ears, in one's spine..."

(Trans. from Esslin's *Brecht: A Choice of Evils*)

The recent production of *Drums in the Night* at the Schauspielhaus Kiel attempts to recapture the visceral qualities Ihering described in his review through the use of visual references evocative of the history of the play and its time. The fetid world of George Grosz and Otto Dix is placed within an expressionistic theatre space similar to that of the original production. Although the images of Grosz and Dix have often been used to concretize the words of Bertolt Brecht, this particular merging of the text and images produces a result more jarring than expected. The raw aggression driving the visualizations of Brecht's text in this production so match the impulses felt in the art of Grosz and Dix that the audience needs not think about the validity of references. Spectators need only watch and absorb the force of the images.

The Expressionist director, Otto Falckenberg, directed the original production. His scenographer, Otto Reigburt, provided Falckenberg with an abstract urban landscape of tilted skyscrapers. These threatening shapes loomed over the characters throughout the drama. Six foot pasteboard screens separated the interior scenes from the painted backdrop. A low hanging red moon symbolized the dangers of the night until Kragler destroyed it before his final exit. The Kiel scenographers, Roswitha Thiel and Alfred Wenke, have created a three dimensional version of that city scape behind an oppressive inner proscenium situated on a diagonal plane. A metal wall prevents escape from the stage left side. See Figure 4 (page 33). At the the beginning of Act I a three-fold flat with angled door and window cutouts drops from the flyloft to signify the Balicke dining

room. For the Picadilly Bar of Act II the three-fold is turned around to reveal padded walls of tufted cheap red plastic. Yellow light fills the space within the door and wind cutouts. Because of the massive three dimensionality of the urban landscape the crushing presense of the city is ever present in four of the five acts. For the basement gin mill in Act IV the top section of the thick inner proscenium lowers, leaving only a low crawl space for entrances into the room. Black rags looking like leftover refuse litter the floor before and during the performance.

The insistent interaction of the strong color in the visual elements continually grates on the consciousness of the audience, especially in Acts I and II. When looking at figure 2 (*front cover*), picture the tension between the primary red on the surfaces of the inner "guillotine" and the metal wall stage left, the vivid blue of the sloping cityscape and the bright greenish walls of the Balicke dining room. Then think about Papa Balicke in a garish gold suit; his wife in lavender and the war profiteer-fiancé Murk in an electric blue jacket with bright yellow-green trousers. Anna in her navy and white schoolgirl image serves as the only relief to the visual cacophony. The palpable tensions in size, scale and color transform the overly familiar Expressionist and "Neue Sachlichkeit" images into a Brechtlike strangeness. A jazz combo located near the proscenium plays intermittent jazz and swing music with an aggressive beat.

Into this pulsating world walks the somnambulant Kragler, the M.I.A. soldier returning home after three brutal years as a P.O.W. in Africa. Brecht depicts the character as a complete outsider now disdainful of the Bourgeois morality and romantic cant to which he once adhered. The Kiel production underlines his alienation by visualizing him in a theatrical style set apart from those around him. Kragler is described by those in the Picadilly Bar as a walking corpse already dead and rotting, and so he is. Kragler is realistically covered in a patina of grime. He re-enters the world of his past a figure of filth; his outer self, a threadbare echo from a previous lifetime. Throughout the play Kragler clutches a Spanish blanket he picked up on his escape route. This weathered item helps to suggest to the audience a type of romantic adventurer who had earlier fought in hopeless idealistic causes, causes such as the Spanish Civil War of 1936. Refer to figure 3 (*page 33*) for the general effect of the image. Unfortunately, the production photographs were taken before the Kragler costume was theatrically "aged," so one must imagine the final effect of the image juxtaposed to the artificial theatrical universe around him.

The photographs demonstrate the effectiveness of Dannenhoefer's use of a choreographed form of movement which economizes gesture and defines physical Gestus. This resulted in a broad non-realistic playing style for all actors including Kragler. See figure 1 (*back cover*).

As is common in the contemporary German stage, aesthetic moments or scenes are at times pushed to expressionistic excess to make motivation or commentary clearer. In Act I Brecht suggests a psychological abuse of Anna by her tyrannical father.

Dannenhoefer chooses to costume Anna in a compliant schoolgirl image and seat her on her father's lap for these moments. Soon after the father/daughter exchange, Murk and Anna are left alone to settle the matter of their engagement. Murk sits across Anna's lap, driving home his will by thrusting his groin into hers in a repeated hammering motion. In the same act Dannenhoefer directs the eating scene as a comedy grotesque. The family attacks its food and drink so greedily the scene invites the audience to compare the behavior of the family to that of the animal kingdom. The vignette becomes a gruesome commentary on the destructive nature of Burgher appetites following World War I. See figure 2 (*front cover*).

In Act III the characters finally enter the threatening urban landscape. The city barely tolerates the invasion. Its behemoth-like shapes totally dwarf the importance of the figures as they enter its territory. Although the action is visually exciting, the words and movements of the characters now seem self-conscious. Momentum comes to a standstill as one vignette follows another. The nature of the criticism is diffused by the melodramatic, even operatic staging of the last three acts. One is unsure whether the critical eye has shifted in order to mock Expressionist staging, the love story between Anna and Kragler and the revolutionary fervor of the Spartacus revolution as Brecht had intended, or whether the production is mocking Brecht's youthful writing. One suspects all of the above.

Act IV which is located in the gin mill misfires completely. The production's historical referents have disappeared. In the place of the Expressionist landscape and the Grosz/Dix figures are confusing references to more contemporary social problems concerning the homeless and disillusioned. The staging of a pseudo-hippy freedom dance comes immediately to mind. Ill-defined lackluster staging completes the break in style.

In Act V the audience is re-awakened with exuberant stage action. Revolutionaries from the gin mill suddenly spill over the metal wall to enter the urban landscape. Kragler descends the sloping building with mountain climbing gear while others appear in the door and window openings. See figure 4 (*page 33*). Anna is placed in real physical danger as Kragler hurls rocks at her. The metal wall behind her clangs with each blow. Kragler then buries her under the rags at first in rage then in protection of Anna as the other derelicts turn on her. Finally the hapless revolutionaries vanish and the exhausted couple leaves the city street together. Kragler has chosen to sleep in a big white bed with his pregnant bourgeois wife beside him. Brecht's text and the Kiel production leave the issues of the drama unsolved. I left the theatre feeling I had been splendidly entertained and intellectually teased. Should I wish to sort out the jumble of explosive images I carried out of the theatre with me I was free to do so. If not, fine; the choice was mine.

Marna King
University of Wisconsin/Madison

Information for Caption for Figures 1-4:

- | | | |
|-----------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Figure 1. | Anna and Murk, Act I | (back cover) |
| Figure 2. | The Engagement Dinner, Act I | (front cover) |
| Figure 3. | Anna and Kragler, Act II | |
| Figure 4. | The Urban Landscape, Act V | |

Figure 3:



Figure 4:



Webster/Brecht/Auden/Hays: *The Duchess of Malfi*
Directed and designed by Judith Dolan
Stanford University, November 1992

The central image behind Judith Dolan's powerful *Duchess of Malfi* was taken from Magritte's *A Courtesan's Palace*: a woman's torso in a frame, in this case a series of ornately gilt baroque frames. This image, from the poster and program, was echoed in Dolan's production by a huge glass case, mounted high on a concrete wall, containing an elaborately dressed female mannequin. Dolan's Stanford Drama Department production used the Brecht adaptation to address specifically feminist concerns about male attempts to control women's sexuality. The greater prominence of the Duchess in Brecht's version, relative to her brothers and the intrigues of the court, allowed Dolan to highlight this problem effectively. But the production was by no means limited to this one perspective: it synthesized many aspects of Webster, Brecht, and Dolan's contemporary agenda into a rich and splendidly theatrical performance.

Brecht's adaptation of *The Duchess of Malfi*, written in collaboration with W.H. Auden and H.R. Hays, has rarely been performed in America since its ill-fated 1946 Broadway premiere (there was a student production at the University of San Diego in 1976). Dolan designed as well as directed the production, which was marked by great theatrical flair. The play was performed on the stage of the cavernous Memorial Auditorium at Stanford, with spectators seated onstage in pews. The whole auditorium was part of the world of the performance: the audience entered down the orchestra aisles while sinister guards clanked metal bars together, searchlights swept the seats, and neo-Baroque synthesizer music throbbed and crashed through the smoky air. The principal set was a low-tech metal construction of platforms and stairs, vaguely Elizabethan in structure, presided over by the imprisoned mannequin flanked by huge abstract canvasses in the style of Beuys or Kiefer, one suggesting a tilting crucifix. A curtain was partially lowered behind the audience, leaving space for entrances and lights from the auditorium, as the actors progressed on in grotesque, masquelike grandeur. The sense-bombarding theatrics of the opening were dazzling but unbrechtian in that the audience was wholly drawn into the experience: the effect was like wandering into a rock video or an Italian Renaissance dance club.

Costumes were mostly Jacobean, with modern elements: the guards, effectively, wore motorcycle leathers and black-visored helmets. The Duchess wore an imprisoning black-and-gold dress for her first interview with her brothers, played formally and publicly on an upper platform. Her monstrous farthingale was subsequently removed by her waiting-women to reveal a scarlet petticoat for her seduction of Antonio. This scene, played as reversed-gender sexual harassment, rather hung fire; Krista Hoeppner's otherwise fine Duchess seemed mannered and forced. But the Brecht adaptation was well-suited to the strengths of Dolan's cast. Ferdinand and the Cardinal, arguably the

main characters of Webster's play, were relegated to supporting roles. while the strongest performances came from the doomed trio of the Duchess, Antonio, and Cariola (Lee Newman), complemented by Volker Schachenmayr's vulpine Bosola.

As Antonio, Ray O'Neal anchored the production with a superb performance firmly fixed in social reality yet at ease with the play's poetic idiom. As in the American Conservatory Theater's production of Webster's play, Dolan cast a white Duchess and a black Antonio. Using race as an index of class in period plays remains a complicated and problematic strategy, but the centrality and richness of O'Neal's performance, ably supported by Scott Smith's martial Delio, dispelled any fears of condescension. Dolan's use of race created a powerful image at the end, when the Duchess' child--in this case a little daughter, Taliah Jones-- was heralded by Delio as heir to the Duchy. Corseted and gowned like her mother, hemmed in by white waiting-women, she was a clear but fragile image of Brecht's "new shoot from a hundred-year-old tree/ Whose trunk too long hath twined upon itself."

While following the general outlines of Brecht's adaptation, Dolan in some cases restored passages from Webster that Brecht had cut or altered. Ferdinand's disquisition to the Duchess on "Reputation, Love and Death" was effectively reintroduced to their bedroom confrontation, and Bosola regained (from Antonio) his fine and characteristic simile comparing the Arragonian brethren to "plum trees, that grow crooked over standing pools," where "none but crows, pies, and caterpillars feed on them." Bosola also got back the self-referential line about how Antonio was killed "In a mist...Such a mistake as I have often seen/ In a play" (though this line lost impact, as Brecht's Bosola kills Antonio outright rather than accidentally). Bosola's final speech was further filled out by Flamineo's lines from *The White Devil*:

I am i' the way to study a long silence:
To prate were idle. I remember nothing.
There's nothing of so infinite vexation
As man's own thoughts.

These additions returned to Bosola some of the visionary, tragic dignity which Brecht strips from him.

Dolan eliminated Brecht's most dramatic and controversial alteration: his beginning with a version of the opening scene of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, in which Giovanni/Ferdinand reveals his desire for his sister to his confessor. However, she used the alternate version of Brecht's II.5, incorporating the Cardinal's "What are whores" speech from *The White Devil* into the Duchess' excommunication. This scene was played very powerfully with the Cardinal and the Duchess both facing forward speaking into microphones, the former aloft on the platform in full regalia, the latter isolated below in a green spotlight. The conversation of the two pilgrims which frames this scene

served as a vivid reminder of how much of his dramaturgy Brecht drew from the Renaissance theater. It is one of the most Brechtian scenes in the play in the way it has ordinary people commenting on the actions of the great, but it is largely Webster's scene: Brecht merely heightens the irony that is already there. Dolan carried the irony further by making the pilgrims women, one black, one white, who are nevertheless unable to see that they are oppressed by the same values by which they condemn the Duchess: "Who would have thought/ so great a lady would have matched herself/ Unto so mean a person?"

In some cases Dolan made the adaptation more Brechtian. She gave Delio two speeches from Brecht's *Edward II*: a graphic oath of vengeance delivered over the body of Antonio, and Mortimer's meditation on the wheel of fortune, delivered to the Duchess' daughter at the end. Dolan invented a presenter figure, "The Woman," who was reassigned various lines to comment on the end of scenes. She mostly took over Bosola's speeches of warning and cynicism, but was rather oddly given Cariola's "I woe her [the Duchess] much pity." A more pitiless figure than Alys Shanti's Woman would be difficult to imagine: wearing grotesque gothic makeup, a skeletal dress, and short modern slicked-back hair, she presided over the Duchess' destruction with vogueing hauteur, irony and glee. Presumably she was intended to highlight the feminist aspects of Dolan's interpretation, but her relation to the events of the play was never very clear. Her formidable presence was often an irritating intrusion, but provided a few strong theatrical moments and some of the better verse-speaking of the production.

Overall, Brecht's version of the play proved vivid, streamlined and immensely stage-worthy. The fact that it was originally written in English, using much of Webster's language and tested on W.H. Auden's ear, gives it a much livelier verbal texture than the back-and-forth translations of Brecht's other adaptations of English plays. Occasionally the additions stood out rather painfully, as when the banished Duchess tells Antonio, in Webster's words,

The birds that live i' the field
On the wild benefit of nature, live
Happier than we; for they may choose their mates,
And carol their sweet pleasures to the spring:

and then goes on,

Dear Antonio, I've dragged you into this
And I am sorry.

The clanking bathos of this line was evident in performance, but such moments were few. The sharp and penetrating clarity of Brecht's adaptation, heightened by Dolan's use of

racial and gender politics and her vivid theatrical sensibility, made the production gripping and effective. The scale of Dolan's conception provided a telling instance of how adequately-funded theater can work. For the Stanford Drama Department, under threat of closure from budget cuts, to produce a grand and opulent version of a rarely-performed adaptation of a little-known four-hundred-year-old masterpiece was quite a gamble, but it paid off: the production was a sellout success.

James Norris Loehlin
Stanford University

In the Jungle of the Cities
The Public Theater, New York
16 November 1991

In the Jungle of the Cities has often been viewed as a play which reveals Brecht's aesthetics in transition between expressionism and epic theater, techniques that would later serve his Marxism. Within this critical and historical framework, the play becomes a curiosity, a work-in-progress that reveals something of the two influences that are generally assumed to have shaped Brecht's career. *In the Jungle of the Cities's* fragmentation and inconsistency are thus comfortably resolved by treating them as expressions of dramaturgical uncertainty; its harsh creepiness is tamed by formalist criticism.

Nonetheless, the play's seeming ambivalence toward its two tendencies produces some of Brecht's most interesting effects. The play opens with a prologue redolent of Brecht's later descriptions of how audiences should view his plays:

You will witness an inexplicable wrestling match between two men and observe the downfall of a family... Don't worry your heads about the motives for the fight, keep your minds on the stakes. Judge impartially the technique of the contenders, and be prepared to concentrate on the finish.

(Tr. Gerhard Nellhaus)

Although this statement prepares us for a play designed to elicit our analysis, what follows is not Marxist dialectic.

The joint Mabou Mines/Via Theater production, under the direction of Anne Bogart, heightens the play's oddness and incongruity. The stage space itself is flattened to the depth of a forecurtain apron by a full-width wall with wide center doors. Most of the play's action takes place in this flat strip of stage, emphasizing the refusal of depth - of environment, of character, of psychology - that forces our attention onto the production's unsettling vividness of surface. Bogart's production puts Brecht's critique of capitalism and his version of American Capitalist Gothic into formal conflict, allowing the play its theatrical edge.

On one hand, Bogart's production points up Brecht's initial comment on audience response by inserting comments from his later theoretical writings throughout the play, giving these lines to Ruth Maleczech and making her both a commentator on the action and the character Mae Garga (George's mother) within the plot. In addition, the production incorporates into its action two unscripted laborers who repeatedly carry antique items - from books to lamps - to the all-purpose loading dock set (designed by Donald Eastman), check them in, and then haul them into the warehouse interior. In this way, the juggling balls of epic theater technique and Marxist critique of capitalism are kept in the air throughout the play, even when the action itself becomes too peculiar to be reduced to strict formalist or political resolutions.

Perhaps most unusual is that, on the other hand, the production also accentuates many of the play's excesses of characterization and of plot. For example, Brecht's notes indicate that Shlink, the Malay lumber dealer, might have his face painted bright yellow to distinguish him; however, this production paints the face of Pat Manky bright yellow and yet retains Manky's insulting references to Shlink's yellow skin. Another character's face is painted bright green (perhaps drawing from the cut scene featuring Shlink and the minor character "the Green Man") while doing nothing to rationalize this colored skin. The effect of these misplaced colored faces is usually in the visual frame, and when one isn't, other oddities of costume have a similar effect - as in the case of Worm's brightly colored gangster suits.

Characterization is also pushed to, and sometimes over, the brink of campiness. Shlink, played by Frederick Neumann, has a contorted stance and walk and habit of pawing, licking and sniffing at an undefined, round fetish object that he carries with him throughout much of the play. His speech is an unholy mixture of upper crust hauteur and lasciviousness. George Garga the working-class combatant of Shlink, is played by Marlo Arrambide as a parody of the expressionist victim. He speaks his lines with a fierce intensity, with a visionary distractedness, as though he has become the repository of Brecht's fascination with Rimbaud's "A Season in Hell." The contrast between the style of the two lead performances is only a small part of the wide variation in styles. John Garga, George's father, is played by Raul Aranas as a cartoon caricature of a New York tenement father replete with an overstuffed belly and cotton-stuffed cheeks to give him a Brandoesque mumble. Terry O'Reilly, as Manky the sailor, approaches the manic intensity of a Weimar cabaret performer in his movement and diction. Fanni Green, as

George's sister Mary, sometimes draws on stereotypes from realistic Black American playwriting to present the dutiful but spunky servant. The sharp details of this production's styles of characterization prevent the audience from unifying the hallucinatory expressionism of the play's plot under one comforting psychological or political perspective.

Productions like this one that scrap approaches that have made Brecht familiar, and thereby made his harshest pieces somehow less unsettling, are difficult to evaluate. It seems clear that for Brecht's least clearly positioned plays like *In the Jungle of the Cities* to become interesting in their own right, directors need to explore alternative ways of making them strange. Audiences and critics don't have a set of categories for this kind of wildly theatrical performance of Brecht, but Bogart's work with Mabou Mines initiates a new set of possibilities without giving formally or politically satisfying resolutions.

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(Review published in *Theatre Journal* 44.4, December 1992, p. 526-27.)

LITTLE DICTATORS *Hitler Wasn't The Only One*

If you're tired of the usual Christmas fare being put on by other theaters this time of year, there is an alternative worth seeing. *Theater Outlet's Arturo Ui*. Adapted for the *Outlet* "theater in the round" and directed by George Miller, *Arturo Ui* combines the clowns of the circus with the "clowns" who have plagued 20th century history from World War II to present.

The play opens with the usual circus-fare. Clown/actor Debbie Herman going through the expected antics people see under the big-top. Then the lights go down and the mood changes. Stephen Schrader, playing Bertolt Brecht, is seen sleeping on stage, blanket pulled overhead, when he's suddenly awakened by a nightmare. After a few yells and screams, he refocuses himself, places a derby of top of his head and lights up his cigar. A moment later, you know why this is called "alternative" theater and not mainstream.

Termed a "de-construction" by Miller, *Arturo Ui* is a cabaret-like piece featuring five actors playing multiple roles, both real and fictional characters. Joining Herman and Brecht, are Ryan Neff as Ringmaster/Actor, Peter Schmidt as Hitler/Ui/Actor, and Gillian Celestino as Circus Performers/Actors. Included with the actors is old video footage of Hitler, Senator Joe McCarthy, plus an ear, eyes and lips. The latter combines Miller's penchant for experimental video theater interfacing with live actors.

Miller has adapted the play from Bertolt Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, which tells a story of a gangster and his rise to power in the 1930's. Ui was modeled after Al Capone, and Brecht meant the piece to be a metaphor for the rise of Hitler in pre-war Germany. Miller's adaption takes the metaphor several characters further and includes McCarthy, Pat Buchanan, Jesse Helms, and Ross Perot. While taking swipes at the power hungry dictators, a few more blows are thrown at the National Endowment for the Arts and it's "censorship" committee.

As Brecht, Stephen Schrader is wonderful. His deep commanding voice sets the tone for the play from the very beginning, and his comic timing is nearly perfect. Ryan Neff is at his best as the temperamental actor who is upstaged by a "commoner." His energy level is only dimmed by the intensity level of Peter Schmidt's Hitler and Ui. Who is given the more dramatic, if not charismatic, roles to perform? The two almost come to blows until director Brecht "freezes" the action between these two feuding actors.

After intermission, the pace of the play quickens several heartbeats, and allows Gillian Celestino a few shining moments to interject her sometimes whorish, sometimes nunish characters. Both believable and both refreshing, as most of her lines came in the second and third acts. Debbie Herman was delightful throughout, as her clowning around swiftly moved the scenes from era-to-era.

The set was designed by Ken Frack, who used a bare to the rafters approach, but enough to convince the audience you're under the bigtop. Lights were designed by G. Fred Becker. *Arturo Ui* was co-directed by Cheri Guilbault. And costumes designed by Kate Scuffle.

For laughs, drama sights and sound, *Theater Outlet* has once again outperformed their budget and space. *Arturo Ui* combines age old entertainment with the politics of yesterday and today. And you'd be surprised to discover just how close they stand together.

Charles J. Clark
Allentown, PA

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Brecht's Revised Version of Genesis 1 and 2: A Subtext of the *Caucasian Chalk Circle*

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Brecht's opening scene of the *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, the "Struggle for the Valley", has very real political connotations for a person living in the embattled Pacific Northwest, where logging interests are fighting conservationists about old growth timber stands, and irrigation-dependent farmers are pitching their water claims against Indian fishing rights and against ecological concerns for the protection of the last fish runs. Attempts to come to a constructive, future-directed solution through open discussion so far have failed in our part of the country. Maybe a major production of Brecht's *Chalk Circle* in the Pacific Northwest could provide some guidance as we approach the year 2000!

Beyond the political issue of land use, Betty Nance Weber has pointed to the play's much wider ramifications in her monograph, *Brecht's "Kreidekreis", ein Revolutionsstück*. Her title has a double meaning: Brecht's *Chalk Circle*, a revolutionary play and a play about revolution.¹ Weber focuses on the latter, showing in admirable detail how Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* can be read as his carefully veiled effort to dig out the socialist tradition from under the weight of official Stalinist historiography (*ibid.*, 106-109). While it is the main thrust of Weber's study to trace in the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* Brecht's hidden attempt at re-evaluating the history of the Russian revolution, she also briefly touches upon the political content of Brecht's late master works in general, wondering out loud whether it is not precisely in those works that the playwright, grown wise by experience, has rendered his most provocative thoughts garbed in rather innocent fables (*ibid.*, 13-14 & 106-109).

The purpose of this paper is to examine one such highly provocative, revolutionary thought that underlies Brecht's last major stage work on the feminist premise that the personal is the political.

Many of the play's antecedents reach back to Brecht's early beginnings as a playwright. The personae and the plot grew with him over a period of 25 years. Judge Azdak with his great zest for life, is a politicized and matured Baal, Simon a regenerated Kragler and Grusha a transcended Anna Balicke.² Inspired by his friend Klabund's successful adaptation of the Chinese original, Brecht first used the chalk circle test as a sardonic parody in the "Elephant Calf" interlude of *A Man's a Man* (1924-26).³ After he had studied and embraced Marxism and after experimenting for a few years with

overtly political didactic theater, Brecht chose to leave Germany as soon as Hitler came to power. Once a refugee, he had to disguise his political convictions to a great extent. In his 1935 treatise "Five Difficulties in Writing the Truth" ("Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit"), Brecht ably explained how to go about this: it takes *courage* to write the truth, although it is being repressed everywhere; *good sense* to recognize it, although it is being covered up everywhere; *art* to make it operative as a weapon; *judgment* to select those in whose hands it is most effective; *shrewdness* to disseminate it among these people.⁴ The resulting great stage works, including *Life of Galileo*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Good Person of Szechwan*, and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, were to be a synthesis of his early, flamboyant, anarchistic dramas and his later sparse, didactic plays.

Brecht took up the chalk circle idea again in his Danish exile. Fragments of a planned "Odenser Chalk Circle" of 1938 show already some of the elements of the later *Caucasian Chalk Circle*.⁵ Subsequently, early 1940 in Sweden, shortly after finishing his epic anti-war play *Mother Courage and Her Children*, set in the Thirty Years' War, Brecht wrote a prose story located in his native town of Augsburg during that same bloody period. He entitled it the "Augsburg Chalk Circle" and devised the plot in such a way as to reverse the Biblical judgment passed by King Solomon as well as that passed in the original Chinese play, as Brecht knew it from Klabund.⁶ In the two traditional stories, the judge can tell the rightful, biological mother from the imposter, because the former evinces concern for the life and well-being of the child, while the latter is ruthlessly possessive. Brecht, however, emphasizes the blood mother's lack of motherly concern, her selfishness and ulterior motives for claiming possession of the child, while he endows the servant girl, Anna, with loving kindness, resourcefulness and endurance. Here, like in the later *Caucasian Chalk Circle* of 1944-45, the compassionate servant saves the life of her masters' child at great personal cost. She agrees to a *pro forma* marriage with an older and presumably dying man in order to protect "her" little boy. Again parallel to the later play, a plebeian judge uses the chalk circle test to decide in the interest of the child that he should be brought up by the "right" mother, the humane servant, who after sacrificing so much for the little boy and after investing so much loving care and hope in him, would rather lose him than harm him in the chalk circle tug-of-war.⁷

In the "Augsburg Chalk Circle," Brecht tells the reader next to nothing about the background of judge Ignaz Dollinger, whom he named for an independently minded 19th century professor of Church History and Canon Law.⁸ In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Brecht devotes the long and colorful fifth scene to the development of Azdak during the two years Grusha and the child spend in the remote mountains, showing in a series of vignettes, how the roguish town clerk and poacher evolves into a subversive and at the same time messianic poor people's judge. Suvin points out that Azdak's name echoes that of Mazdak, a communist Zoroastrian leader of a sixth century plebeian revolt

in Iran.⁹ His seditious Persian song underscores this connection.

While both judges, Dollinger and Azdak, award the contested little boy to the woman who has proven her motherly, nurturing qualities against all odds and who is most apt to make the best person out of him, it is interesting to note, that Dollinger speaks consistently of "the right mother," while Azdak refers to "the true mother," which implies an ontological quality that includes "right" but goes beyond it.

In both cases, Brecht not only reverses the adjudication decision of the traditional examples, but he also proposes a new "Holy Family," with clear Biblical overtones. Both plots include escape episodes, reminiscent of the Biblical flight to Egypt, and in the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* it is on Easter Sunday, the day of the resurrection, that Grusha rescues "the noble child," the symbol of hope for the future. To underscore the Biblical connotation, Brecht gives Grusha's *pro forma* husband in the mountain village the name Yussup, i.e. Joseph. In creating a renewed "Holy Family" in which the virgin-mother-with-child is not the blood mother, Brecht has no need to call upon the Holy Spirit. His new family is based upon humane and life-fostering qualities, much in the enlightened spirit of Lessing's wise Nathan.¹⁰ To these qualities Brecht adds his won communal orientation by stressing the mother's unrelenting efforts to instill social values in the child, notably in the trial scene (228-229) and in the lyrics associated with Grusha, e.g., when she sings her little comforting song to Michael during the snow storm in the mountains:

The son of the tiger
Brings the foals their feed
The snake-child milk
To mothers in need (182)

and again later on, when the Singer reveals her thoughts in response to Azdak's question: "Don't you want him to be rich? No, she does not want Michael to "wear shoes of gold" so that he may trample on "the weak and old" and she fears "the power to do ill" needs "wears out the will" to do good (233-234).

Spiritually, the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* reaches farther than the "Augsburg Chalk Circle." Besides the evocation of a new "Holy Family," there are two challenging Biblical connotations in the *Chalk Circle* play that have no equivalent in the earlier prose version.

Hence, what may first seem just a lark on the part of the Ironshirts, soon reveals a deeper meaning: after having thrown the judge's robe over Azdak's tattered garments, these rough soldiers place a wicker on his head, upon which Brecht has them exclaim: "Behold the judge!" paraphrasing the words of Pontius Pilate when he perceived Christ with the purple robe and the crown of thorns.¹¹ Subsequently, as scene five unfolds, with Azdak at work as a traveling judge, his messianic function in the play, which

permeates his robust earthiness, becomes more and more evident. The commentary of the Singer and his Musicians underscores the fact that Azdak's unusual judgeship prefigures the Biblical *dies irae*. Suvin speaks very appropriately of "the sacrament of a new Law," when he quotes their verses from the Bentley translation:

And he broke the rules to save them.
Broken law like bread he gave them,
Brought them to the shore upon his crooked back.¹²

If it had not been during Azdak's brief judgeship, that "Golden Age that was almost just," as Brecht had it towards the end of the final scene of the play (256), little Michael would not have remained in Grusha's, the servant girl's, continued care. Obviously, Grusha's productive motherhood can only prevail in an advanced, socially oriented society or, short of that, during a chaotic quasi-messianic interregnum between the reigns of the usual power cliques.

All through his work, Brecht had scorned the patriarchal bourgeois family, with its stress on "siring" and on contractually legalized sex relations, and with its property-oriented basis, witness the many sardonic wedding scenes in his plays and his sarcastic sonnet "On Kant's Definition of Marriage in the *Metaphysic of Ethics*" of 1938.¹³ Consequently, all of his famous strong woman personae for the stage were single, from the widow Begbik of *A Man is a Man*, via his St. Joan, Pelegea Vlassova and Teresa Carrar to Mother Courage and Shen Te. Grusha is the culmination of all that is good and strong in his most positive woman figures. Brecht endowed her with robustness and resilience, endurance and self-reliance and a down-to-earth, wholesome sense of humor, all of which she needs as a single mother if little Michael and she herself are to survive.¹⁴ Her motherliness grows in proportion to the effort she expends to save the child, to bring him up against all odds and to teach him to be kind and useful.

Enters the Simon figure and with it the second new and challenging Biblical connotation underlying the *Caucasian Chalk Circle*. It goes all the way back to the Original Family of the opening chapters of Genesis.

In the play, the Chalk Circle tale centering on the child, with his mother-by-adoption and the judge's adjudication, is surrounded by an inner and an outer frame. The outer frame, which is formed by the *kolkhoz* story, anchors the play to Brecht's political concerns of the mid nineteen-forties. The inner frame is formed by the Grusha-Simon plot.

Since Brecht had written the play for the American stage, this love story may originally have been conceived as a concession to Broadway.¹⁵ Yet, it turned out to be anything but peripheral to the original chalk circle center. When the inner chalk circle story develops, Grusha is a woman in love and a fiancée, and that is of immense importance. The Singer already makes this connection, when he relates the words

Grusha hears quite distinctly in her heart of hearts before she decides to pick up the abandoned child: "Don't you know, woman, that she who does not listen to a cry for help/ But passes by shutting her ears, will never hear/ The gentle call of a lover...?" (164) At the end of the play, Grusha affirms that her new love made her more sensitive to the helplessness of the abandoned child when, turning to Simon, she says: "And now I can tell you: I took him because on that Easter Sunday I got engaged to you. And so it is a child of love" (263).

However, the fact that she is engaged, makes Grusha's situation much more complex than Anna's in the "Augsburg Chalk Circle," since the more she gets attached to little Michael, the more she is pulled away from Simon. When she decides to leave Michael at the doorstep of a farm house, where he will have plenty to eat, she is still determined to return to Nukha to wait there for her sweetheart (174). With a few words, the Musicians sketch her contradictory feelings: her sense of relief seeing that, with a smile, little Michael had "won new parents for himself" and at the same time her sense of loss, "like one robbed" of a "little burden in whom a heart was beating" (175). But when shortly afterwards Grusha realizes that the Ironshirts are after Michael, she gives up her plans, saves him once again and, subsequently adopts him, baptizing him with ice cold glacier water. After the hazardous crossing of the ravine and after their harrowing trek through the mountains, the bonds between Grusha and the child have grown so strong that they take precedence over everything else (179-183). Hence her agreement to get married for Michael's sake--in belief, of course, that this step is a pure formality, since she expects that Yussup, her "man on paper," will die within days (187-190).

It is a double blow for Grusha when her paper-husband turns into a man of flesh and blood just at the moment when she can expect her Simon back (193-196). She holds out against Yussup's connubial demands, realizing that this is unfair to him, at the same time she notices that Simon's image in the stream, where she washes the linen is gradually beginning to fade, and his voice in the murmur of the maple is getting softer and softer (*ibid.*). Being a less superficial and probably less sensuous woman than Brecht's World War I fiancée figure, Anna Balicke, of his early homecoming drama (see above), Grusha still waits for her soldier. However, the similarity of imagery Brecht uses in both plays is striking, indicating once again that the Caucasian Chalk Circle preserves many of Brecht's early literary impulses and motifs, integrated into a matured world view.

When Simon finally returns, there is great joy accompanied by almost equally great bewilderment. The Singer's verses express Grusha's and Simon's state of confusion. But before Grusha can explain her situation to Simon, the Ironshirts take Michael away from her, and at that moment her motherly feelings are much stronger than the concern for her relationship with Simon (197-200). Grusha's priorities are once more underscored when, just before the trial at the court in Nukha, she tells the Cook, referring to Simon: "I can't be bothered with that man just now, if he doesn't understand anything" (224).

Even so, Simon has come to the trial ready to perjure himself on Grusha's behalf. He engages in a verbal battle with Azdak, but eventually it is Grusha who earns Azdak's respect and who convinces him that she has proven herself to be the "true" mother of the child (230-235). Yet, Simon's loyalty to Grusha must have had its impact, for Azdak--pseudo accidentally--divorces Grusha and Yussup, thus clearing the way for a new marriage between Grusha and Simon (236). It is spring once again, time for a new beginning. Their new union, however, is predicated upon Simon's acceptance of Michael as the child of their love, for whom Grusha has struggled and sacrificed so valiantly. Simon takes the boy upon his shoulders as an affirmation of this acceptance. His role in the new family will clearly be a tertiary one, which is emphasized gestically by the fact that Grusha first dances with Michael during Azdak's farewell party.¹⁶

While the inner frame is partly interwoven with the central chalk circle plot through Grusha's longing for Simon during the two years of his absence and through references to the war that keeps him away, the outer *kolkhoz* frame is more remote. It is only tangible through the Singer and his Musicians who present "The Chalk Circle" in order to reinforce the productive settlement between the *kolkhozes*. Then at the end of the inner play the outer frame becomes palpable through Azdak's adjudication of the child and through his parallel decision to award the gubernatorial estates to the city. He stipulates that the ground shall be turned into a garden and playground for the children of Nukha, called "The Garden of Azdak", a latter-day secular Garden of Eden.

Going back to the first script of *kolkhoz* frame as reprinted in Hecht's collection of materials pertaining to Brecht *Caucasian Chalk Circle*,¹⁷ McLean points out an interesting connection between the inner play and both frames.¹⁸ In this early version of the "Struggle for the Valley," written in the first half of 1944, a Young Girl remarks after ten hours of deliberations between the two *kolkhozes* about their conflicting interests: "Now we have discussed Cain and Abel, but we did not yet touch upon Adam and Eve!" While this comment provokes laughter, it also points to the Old Testament connotations Brecht had in mind, when writing the play. They are underscored by the short *ad libitum* epilogue, which was originally meant to close the outer frame. In glancing one last time over the sparse traditional grazing grounds before giving them up, the aged goat herder expresses the expectation, that once the fruit growers start irrigating and planting, he will not recognize his old valley. "God have mercy upon you", he says, "if you do not turn it into a garden", implying that it should become another Garden of Eden.¹⁹ So the inner story and the two frames converge in the celebration of a new beginning, and one can see the Michael-Grusha-Simon triad as a renewed Original Family in a Paradise regained. In the end, "Adam and Eve have been touched upon."

Thus, the case can be made that in the *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Brecht rewrote not only the Biblical tale of wise King Solomon's judgment and offered his variation to the story of the Holy Family. He also played with messianic notions and implicitly revised some crucial parts of Genesis 1 and 2. Paraphrased in modern English, Brecht's

new myth suggests that after the creation of light and dark, of heaven and earth, of land and sea, of flora and fauna, God had created a boy-child. And because the little child needed nurturing, protection and guidance, God gave him a mother. This mother took good care of the child, and taught him kindness toward his fellow creatures, and appreciation for the trees that gave shade and bore fruits, and for the earth he walked, and for the waters that washed him. The motherly woman delighted in seeing the child grow and learn new things every day. Yet, she felt lonesome for a companion. So God gave her a man to love and to have more children with, charging them to take good care of the new Garden of Eden and of the whole Earth, so that "what there is, shall belong to those who are good for it...", as one of the concluding lines of the play reads (237).²⁰

In sum, while reversing the old Chalk Circle legend, Brecht also suggests an alternative to sections of Genesis 1 and 2 with their male oriented bias and their stress upon dominion and subjugation of God's creation. Instead, he proposes a child-centered Original Family and responsible stewardship of the Earth's resources.

The above reading of the play is, of course, not the only one possible. It is, however, one fitting the concerns of the nineteen nineties. Brecht's play becomes significant only by its effect on the spectators, if it motivates them by its aesthetic example to change their own reality.²¹

Director Heinz-Uwe Haus in his PTTP production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* at the University of Delaware, Febr. 21-March 1, 1992 replaced Brecht's kolkhoz scene with a "Prologue" which focuses on the plight of the world's children who are drawn into the violent struggle for land and power by their elders in particular trouble spots. One of these children finds a beautiful old story book of the Chalk Circle, and thus the tale of the bloody coup and of the governor's abandoned child unfolds. With its creative use of masks and many stunning *tableaux vivants*, the production kept up the story book quality all the way through, telling how Grusha, the servant, saved little Michael at tremendous personal risk and spared no effort to nurture and to shelter him and to bring him up. How eventually the governor's wife claimed her son so as to gain title to the gubernatorial estates and how the plebeian judge Azdak could tell that Grusha was the true mother for the boy, sure to raise him to become the kind of self-reliant and helpful person on which the future depends.

Haus's child-centered focus certainly fits well with the above interpretation. But, while for me Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* made immediate sense for the here and now of the Pacific Northwest, Haus somewhat removed the play's "elucidatory historical background."²²

Moreover, in his very dynamic and often stunning production, Haus made some directorial choices, which took away from the personal and hence, I venture, essential core of the play. Three examples will illustrate my point.

In "The Flight to the Northern Mountains", much time and effort was expended in creating ever changing scenery by means of a huge white parachute cloth, which the

actors undulate and shift as Grusha makes her way with little Michael on her back. Sacrificed to this feast for the eye was her crossing the ravine, a true feat of desperate courage, in order to save the life of the child and to preserve her own. This arduous crossing, quite apart from making good theater, stands for the labor pains of giving birth. It is so essential to the play that it should not have been skipped.

On the other hand, Haus's production did justice to the little vignette featuring the miracle-working Saint Banditus and the Old Woman, one of the highlights of "The Judge's Story" (218-220). Judge Azdak was clearly moved by the Old Woman, who stands for all the bereaved in the war-ravaged Grusinia. While he can barely refrain from calling her "Mother Grusinia," he offers her his judge's seat, imploring her, the little mother, to "pass merciful sentence on us, the damned!" Yet, sadly, what Brecht meant to be the sequel to this vignette, went lost in the Delaware production when Grusha is brought before Judge Azdak in the last scene (231-234). As a counterpart to the Old Woman, Grusha's name echoes that of her maligned country. Seeing how the judge asks for and receives bribes from her wealthy opponents, she speaks angrily to him like a mother, chiding a willful son. In her exasperation she passes the kind of unmerciful judgment Azdak rightly feared and expected when addressing the Old Woman in the previous scene, knowing full well what the venal and the greedy and power-hungry deserve. Brecht specifies that Azdak is moved by Grusha's furious condemnation of his ways: He gets up and "begins to beam," approvingly beating time with his little hammer to Grusha's indignant cadences. In the Delaware production, Azdak climbed on his chair and, alas, the cleaner took away much of the intended impact of this sub scene.

Finally, there was a similar loss of impact at the very end of the play. Azdak's farewell party was cut, and with it Brecht's gestically meaningful instruction that Grusha first dance with little Michael rather than with her faithful sweetheart, Simon.

Although Haus's was a fine production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, it seems to me that by understating and even skipping much of the personal, he missed some of the play's great political potential.

Brecht's basic concept is very revolutionary since, as a subtext, it suggests alternatives to several verses of Genesis 1 and 2, revising the Bible's male orientation as well as the notion that mankind shall have unrestrained dominion over all that lives on earth. Instead, Brecht proposes a new Original Family based on the life-fostering bond between mother and child and a truly New World Order, in which people treat their fellow men and women kindly and responsibly and manage global resources wisely. These thoughts quite evidently underlie the Michael-Grusha-Simon tale as well as the outer frame. They tie the whole piece together, and any production in our time will gain in significance if these ideas are given full play.

Notes

1. Brechts "*Kreidekreis*", ein Revolutionsstück: Eine Interpretation von Betty Nance Weber. Mit Texten aus dem Nachlaß (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978).
2. Baal from Brecht's first full length play *Baal* (1918-20) and the home-coming soldier, Kragler, and his fiancée, Anna Balicke, from Brecht's second play *Drums in the Night* of 1919-20, see Bertolt Brecht, *Collected Plays*, ed. Ralph Manheim and John Willett (New York: Random House, 1971), 1:1-58, resp. 59-106.
3. Klabund, *Der Kreidekreis: Spiel in 5 Akten, nach dem Chinesischen* (Berlin: Spaeth, 1925), an adaptation of Li Hsing-tao's over 500 year old *Chalk Circle*.
4. "Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit," in Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), 18: 222-239.
5. See Weber, op. cit., 18-19. In their "Editorial Note" to *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Willett and Manheim also refer briefly to "The Odenser Chalk Circle" fragments, see Bertolt Brecht, *Collected Plays*, ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (London, England: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1976), 7:310. Page numbers in the text refer to this Willett/Manheim edition of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, trans. James & Tania Stern with W.H. Auden.
6. For Solomon's judgment with the sword, see I Kings 3:16-28.
7. "Augsburg Chalk Circle," in Bertolt Brecht, *Tales from the Calendar*, trans. Yvonne Kapp (London: Methuen, 1966): 11-25.
8. Dollinger was a professor in Munich. He lived from 1799 until 1890. I owe this information to Betty Nance Weber, op. cit., 93.
9. "Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* and Marxist Figuralism: Open Dramaturgy as Open History" in Darko Suvin, *To Brecht and Beyond: Soundings in Modern Dramaturgy* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1984): 166-184.
10. Nathan is the title figure of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's famous enlightenment drama *Nathan der Weise* (1779), who as a Jew in the Arabic Holy Land, lovingly raises a Christian child as if she were his daughter (see *Nathan the Wise: A Dramatic Poem in Five Acts*, trans. Bayard Quincy Morgan [New York: Frederick Ungar, 1955]).

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11. John 19:5.
12. Suvin, op. cit., 174.
13. Bertolt Brecht, *Poems*, ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (London: Methuen, 1976): 312.
14. For a more in-depth treatment of this topic see Laureen Nussbaum, "The Evolution of the Feminine Principle in Brecht's Work: Beyond the Feminist Critique," *German Studies Review*, 8,2 (May 1985): 217-244.
15. see James K. Lyon, *Bertolt Brecht in America* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1980): 123-125.
16. Of course, such a tertiary role gives a man a great deal of freedom to come and go as he sees fit. Moreover, anyone familiar with Brecht's biography realizes that Brecht himself managed to play such a role simultaneously in several "families" both in the mid-twenties and again while working on *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* in the mid-forties (see Klaus Völker, *Brecht: A Biography*, trans. John Nowell [New York: Seabury Press, 1978]: 108 & 304). However, the Simon figure bears so little resemblance to its creator, that these biographical facts, interesting though they are, do not appear relevant to the present interpretation.
17. Werner Hecht, *Materialien zu Brechts "Der kaukasische Kreidekreis"* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966), 48-53. Willett/Manheim give a translation of that version from the Hecht book (324-328).
18. Sammy McLean, "Messianism in Bertolt Brecht's *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* and *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*," *Seminar*, 14,4 (Nov. 1978): 268-84.
19. Hecht, op. cit., 54, my translation (c.f. Willett/Manheim: 324).
20. Note the similarity with the American Indians' precept of people's reverent relation to Mother Earth.
21. Slightly paraphrased from Suvin's essay, op. cit., 182.
22. A term Brecht used in a letter to his publisher, Peter Suhrkamp, referring to the *kolkhoz* scene (see Willett/Manheim: 304).

The Brechtian Unconscious: From *Baal* to Boal¹

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Bertolt Brecht expressed a strong distrust of the unconscious as having a "bad memory," vulnerable to the seductiveness of theatrical illusion (*Brecht on Theater* 94). But this indicates a perverse side to his own stress on alienated reason and Marxist principles. Brecht wished to stimulate dis-ease in spectators already constitutionally alienated (*entfremdet*). The homeopathic alienation of his *Verfremdungseffekt* would create an uncanny awareness, encouraging analysis of social ills beyond the theater's walls, for it would make the "ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected" (143).

Such unveiling, however, also increases the power of what remains uncannily hidden, as Freud saw with the fetishist's awareness, yet repudiation of the mother's (and his own) castration. While Brecht rejects fetishistic belief, its disavowed affect of loss persists within his alienation-effect (A-effect), both theoretically and dramatically. This abject desire not only drives his rationalist revelation of Aristotelian and Ibsenesque perversity; it also retools catharsis towards anti-heroic fate and a new social morality. Thus, the A-effect, in its effort to "show up" the providential costume of tragic fate as the emperor's lacking clothes (87), reflects its own exhibitionism and affective faith. Not only for the sake of Marxist revelation and communion (reaching an extreme in Brecht's *Lehrstücke*), but also with a belief in the power of skepticism to produce new truth, the mourning and melancholia of tragic loss are repressed--into the uncanny Brechtian unconscious.

In 1919 Freud analyzed the term "uncanny" as describing the sense of something too close to home, therefore terrifying, repressed, and repeatedly returning. In effect, the uncanny marks an abject borderland (or stage edge) between the conscious and unconscious. Brecht's parallel definition of his alienation-effect, as making the familiar seem strange, carries a similar, though less conscious (perhaps more uncanny) sense of perverse, even preternatural affect--with its source in hearth and home.

Freud turns to the double (*Doppelgänger*) in literature as a prime example of the uncanny, and relates this figure to his own concept of the superego in real life. "The fact that an agency of this kind exists, which is able to treat the rest of the ego like an object--the fact, that is, that man is capable of self-observation--renders it possible to invest the old idea of a 'double' with a new meaning. . ." (235). Freud connects this uncanny double, in a footnote, to the "two souls [that] dwell in the human breast"--

implicitly referring to Goethe's *Faust*. Two souls within a breast also suggest, as Freudian slip, the uncanny return of the maternal body.² Hence, in the unconscious of Freud's text, paralleling the superego spectator as double to the ego, there is the uncanny, amorphous figure of the id as double. Or, in the terms of psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, beneath the symbolic, patriarchal order, there pulses a semiotic maternal *chora*—the womb of language and one's own personal history.

In 1920, one year after Freud's essay on the uncanny was published, Brecht suffered the death of his mother. "Now my mother has died, yesterday towards the evening, on the First of May. One won't be able to claw her up out again with one's fingernails" (*Poems* 41). However, he was able to encrypt³ his mourning for her in the misogynistic bisexuality of his early pre-Marxist plays. Brecht's picaresque *Baal* magnifies his own real-life escapades with Caspar Neher (as Ekart), and the girlfriends they shared.⁴ The character of Baal, as polymorphously perverse anti-hero, thus depicts an id double, as pagan god, whom Brecht continued to enact as he became a tavern singer like Baal (Esslin 10-11). But there was another double in that play whom Brecht censored after his mother's death.

In the 1922 version of *Baal*, the mother of Brecht's alter-ego is cut from the play. Brecht eliminated one scene where she reprimands her son for his drunkenness and another scene showing her on her deathbed (Collected 356). These changes from the 1919 version, with the death of Brecht's own mother in 1920,⁵ indicate an alienation-effect developing through mourning, with an abject encrypting of the lost maternal body in the unconscious of his drama. For, according to the "Chorale of the Great Baal," Brecht's man-god double has "survived" the ecstasy of intercourse with "that lusty woman Earth."

And when Baal saw corpses all around
Never had he felt less cause for gloom.

. . .

Lots of space inside this woman's womb. (3-4)

The theories of Brazilian director Augusto Boal, like Brecht's, do not admit any fear of uncanny doubles, nor pity for the dead—at least not in Aristotle's sense of tragic catharsis. For the Marxist Boal sees oppression in the effect of Aristotelian tragedy. Through the tragic hero and catharsis of the audience, "the State begins to utilize theater for the political purpose of coercion of the people" (*Oppressed* 33). The villainous State maintains the status quo by purging the people not only of their fear and pity, but also of their desire for social change. And yet, in a 1990 interview, Boal confessed a desire for purgation in his own paratheatrical experiments. "Not the catharsis of the dynamic

factor but the catharsis of the blockage. I want to purge myself of what blocks me" ("Brazil" 60).⁶ Boal's recent theories and performances reveal an "internalized" oppression, hidden in the unconscious minds of spectators in Europe and North America. He would purge the super-ego double, as internal spectator and censor, the "cop in the head" as he calls it (35), by sculpting such a figure onstage. But what is the affective side to this oppressive, internal cop? Does he also have an uncanny, id double—a pitiable and fearful *chora* which remains unconscious in Boal's exorcisms?

Again like Brecht, Boal admits a certain, controlled use of emotional identification—that dangerous drug of Aristotelian illusion—in his consciousness-raising performances (*Theatre* 87-89). While denouncing "culinary" empathy, Brecht encouraged identification with the gestic actor in his distanced playing of character (39-42, 93). The poison of alienated feeling would thus become the homeopathic medicine of thoughtful, critical alienation. Boal would also move the spectator from empathy to sympathy to identification with the oppressed character ("Cop" 38-39)—and even to performance of this fetish figure by an audience member (as "spect-actor").⁷ While Boal insists on "distance" between action and reflection in character (42), he clearly differs in this respect from Brecht's distancing-effect.⁸ For Boal brings the audience physically onstage, to sit down on the dias, as Walter Benjamin saw in Brecht's theater, but without the actor-audience distance and "literarization" of the stage that Brecht prized and fetishized. Thus, the good cop of Brechtian alienation, the superego double incarnated by actor and spectator as separate, A-effected bodies, is purged, too, by Boal. Although he does want to make his oppressed fetish into an observer of herself ("Cop" 42), Boal's theories describe a more hieratic cleansing of the political unconscious: the fictional "transsubstantiation" of an individual's story into the collective, communal body of performative experience, that will hopefully lead, as in Brecht's dream, to real social change (39-41).⁹

Boal defines just two possible reactions to oppression: submission and subversion (38). Using this binary formula, he wants to change submission into subversion, by lighting a fire under the Freudian unconscious, turning the actor into a "pressure cooker" (43). But he misses the fire already present in an unconscious *chora*—the subversive, pre-verbal power of the child's lost symbiosis with the mother, which must be repressed for any symbolic ordering of speech and social action. Kristeva recognizes, even more than Brecht, that a certain degree of distance and submission is necessary for communication and community. Thus, she reverses the projects of Brecht and Boal, yet parallels their ritual stage edges, with the revolutionary power of a *chora* that she finds in the uncanny threshold of certain literary works.¹⁰ Kristeva wants to rediscover (as much as possible) the lost mother and oppressed feminine Other, not just subvert a patriarchal cop in the head. By attacking that melodramatic villain, Boal's revision of tragic catharsis, like Brecht's, actively forgets the *chora* that he also polices—the creative womb of personal loss.

Translating his paratheatrical experiments with Brazilian peasants into psychodramatic theories for well-off Europeans and Americans,¹¹ Boal oversimplifies and melodramatizes our social subjectivity.¹² Much can be learned from his writings and workshops. But his elision of spectator and actor into the "spect-actor" diminishes the distinct role of the audience member, as choral Other to the performer. Watching critically at a distance, the spectator does play along--not as spect-actor, but as representative superego and unconscious potential, mirroring the social mind outside the theater's walls. In a Brechtian-Kristevan sense, the spectator must be there as a distinct element in theatre: double of, not merged with the actor; submitting to, yet subverting the performance. Thus, the transcendent illusion of societal change, which Boal insists upon in the immediacy of performance, can become real in uncanny, incremental ways outside and ahead.

Notes

1. This essay was presented as part of a panel on "Performative Models of the Unconscious" at the National Conference of the Association for Theater in Higher Education, in August of 1992 at the Omni Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia. Augusto Boal was the star speaker at this conference. He also led a workshop in which I participated.
2. Cf. Sprengnether.
3. Cf. Lukacher 88-93 and Derrida.
4. See Hayman 59, 62.
5. Her name was Sophie, like a lover/victim of Brecht's Baal. Cf. Hayman 55-57 on Brecht's guilt for not expressing his love for his mother before her death, and his continued "brooding" after it.
6. Cf. Grotowski 234 and Wiles. See also Boal, *Games* 35, 226.
7. See also Boal, *Games* 17-18, 21, 39, 244-45. Throughout this essay I am referring to Boal's paratheatrical workshops, his "Invisible Theatre" and "Forum Theatre," rather than to his written plays or direction of others' dramas.
8. Cf. *Oppressed* 122, 187-90. See also Capo.
9. See also Boal, *Games* 228-29.
10. See my essay on Brecht and Kristeva in *Essays in Theatre* (forthcoming).
11. Boal has also worked with the poor in Europe (*Games* 33-39). Despite his charity and inventiveness, however, Boal continues to insist on the metanarrative of oppression in all his theatrical work. Thus, in order to play along in Boal's "Forum Theatre," spectators must personally identify with the oppression onstage. They must join as victims or be singled out as villains: "the non-oppressed person . . . is very often in fact the oppressor . . ." (*Games* 241-42).
12. Recently, Boal has become something of a melodramatic hero himself. He has thus attained the "star" status that he once criticized: "Man is the supreme prostitute of the bourgeoisie!" (*Oppressed* 109). Boal's own imprisonment and torture in Brazil in 1971, dramatized in his autobiographical *Torquemada* (and joked about in his 1992 lectures at the Atlanta ATHE Conference), contributes now to his star status in North America. See Albuquerque's and Bissett's essays on *Torquemada*.

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Das Werden zum Dichter Bertolt Brecht in München

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Brecht spürte die Enge seiner Heimatstadt Augsburg, deren Stadtkern bis heute durch die Renaissancebauten eines Elias Holl geprägt ist und der mit einem Kranz von industriellen Vorstädten umgeben ist, die wiederum fremd zur Innenstadt stehen, dessen Bürgertum aus der Vergangenheit lebte und keine geistige Bedeutung mehr hatte. München als Großstadt und Landeshauptstadt, gepägt von einem pulsierenden Kulturleben und von einer Weltoffenheit, übte eine Anziehungskraft auf die Augsburger aus, so daß zu ihrem geflügelten Schlagwort wurde: "Das Schönste an Augsburg ist die D-Zugfahrkarte München". Eine Dreiviertelstunde dauerte die D-Zugfahrt in die Landeshauptstadt, gerade recht für Brecht, weiter sein Standbein im elterlichen Wohnhaus, An der Bleich, in den "Haindlischen Stiftungshäusern" in Augsburg, und sein Spielbein als Student, nach seinem Notabitur 1917, in München zu haben.

München als Großstadt mit ihren Geheimnissen als modernes Babylon reizte Brecht. Er empfand durch die Lektüre der Romane *The Jungle Book* eines Rudyard Kiplings, eines Upton Sinclairs *Jungle* und eines Johannes V. Jensens *Das Rad* die Großstadt als Dschungel, so daß er sich vorkam wie "Mowgli im Dschungel", in Anlehnung an die Hauptgestalt in *The Jungle Books*. Aus der Rückschau notiert er 1926 sein Großstadterlebnis in seinem Notizbuch: "Wie sich der kleine Max die Südsee vorstellt. 1) Idyllisches Leben (das Kochtöpfchen). Das rassige Maorimädchen schön wie die Sonne. 2) Die Tierchen. Bändigung eines Königtigers durch die Macht der Persönlichkeit. Nämlich durch den bloßen Blick."¹ Die Welt des Dschungels wird für ihn zur Metapher für das Leben in der Großstadt.

1917 schrieb sich Brecht an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München, zunächst für alle überraschend als Student der Medizin ein, um seiner kranken Mutter später einmal helfen zu können und als Medizin-Student die Befreiung vom Militärdienst zu erhalten, vor dem er Angst hatte und in Anlehnung an sein dichterisches Vorbild Georg Büchner.² Ein Einblick in den Studienbelegbogen zeigt neben medizinisch-anatomischen Vorlesungen auch literarische bei Christian Janetzky, Arthur Kutscher und Friedrich von der Leyen.³ Brecht sah sich als fleißiger Student, und seinem Schulfreund vom Königlich Bayerischen Realgymnasium Augsburgs, Caspar Neher, schrieb er bald seine Eindrücke über München: "Mit der Kunst ist nicht viel los. Ich bin für die Schließung der Theater - aus künstlerischen Gründen."⁴

Mit seiner individualistischen Kleidung: Nickelbrille, Brechtmütze und

Bürstenschnitt, und mit dem gesunden Selbstbewußtsein, die Welt ausgehändigt zu bekommen, behauptete er sich mit einem kritischen Referat über Hanns Johsts Roman *Der Anfang*, was einen Skandal in Arthur Kutschers literarischem Seminar hervorrief und ihm den Rauswurf einhandelte.⁵ Dieser Vorfall wurde von Freunden Brechts als Bruch mit Kutscher gedeutet, den dieser in seiner Autobiographie aber anders sah und Brechts Gedicht aus seinem Gästebuch vermerkte: "Jeder weiß, es ist keiner zu beneiden,/ Jeder hat sein Kreuz wie es immer war./ Ich selber habe ein Nierenleiden,/ Ich darf nichts trinken seit Tag und Jahr."⁶ In ihren Erinnerungen vermerkte Hedda Kuhn, daß Brecht Johst als einen "Völkischen" bezeichnet habe.

Bereits 1918 setzte sich Brecht anläßlich der Aufführung in den Münchener Kammerspielen mit Hanns Johsts expressionistischer Tragödie *Der Einsame. Ein Menschenuntergang* kontradiktorisch auseinander.⁷ Brecht hat in seinem Theaterstück *Baal* das Bild eines notorischen Augsburger Kneipenhelden namens Josef K. zugrundegelegt und auch als Huldigung für den "Mörder, Straßenräuber und Balladendichter" Francois Villon gesehen. Er hatte damit ein Gegenstück zu dem idealisierten Leben des Dichters Christian Dietrich Grabbe eines Hanns Johst entworfen, das er im Expressionismus sich blähen sah. Brecht ließ sogar Johst seine Entwürfe zu seinem Erstlingswerk *Baal* lesen.⁸ Erst auf Grund weiterer Überarbeitungen seines Werkes betrachtete er den Verweis auf Johsts Stück als einen ziemlich nebensächlichen Aspekt. Brechts *Baal* war voller Vitalismus: "Baal frißt! Baal tanzt! Baal verklärt sich!" Brecht gestaltete sein Drama in Anlehnung an die auf dem Augsburger Plärrer gesehenen Moritaten- und Moritaten-Bilderbogen mit autobiographischen Zügen: denn Baal ist Lyriker, verachtet die Gesellschaft, so daß er Jahrzehnte später sagen konnte: "Ich gebe zu und warne: dem Stück fehlt Weisheit". Die Uraufführung 1923 in Leipzig rief einen Skandal hervor.

Am 25. Juni 1919 ließ sich Brecht exmatrikulieren, als ihm seine Freundin Paula Banholzer, Bi, mitteilte, daß sie ein Kind von ihm erwarte. Der geborene Sohn wurde nach Brechts Dichter-Idol Frank Wedekind benannt, dessen Werke ihm bereits sein Vater 1912 zur Konfirmation geschenkt hatte. Von ihm ließ er sich in seiner lyrischen Entwicklung bestärken, Volkslieder zur Gitarre zu singen, so wie er sie auf dem Augsburger Plärrer hörte und in seinem Heft "Lieder zur Klampfe von Bert Brecht und seinen Freunden" festhielt.⁹ Als Wedekind am 12. 3. 1918 starb, widmete Brecht ihm in der *Augsburger Neuesten Nachrichten* einen Nachruf, in dem er ihn neben "Tolstoi und Strindberg zu den großen Erziehern des neuen Europas" rechnete.¹⁰ Von Wedekind übernahm Brecht die Bänkellieder als Bühnensongs und vor allem dessen Anweisungen für Schauspieler und seine Theatertheorie, die auf harte Diktion und knappe Gestik zurückgeführt wurde. Im *Messingkauf* bekannte sich Brecht nochmals zu Wedekinds Einfluß. Wedekind stieß das Tor zur Dramatik des 20. Jahrhunderts auf, Brecht verschaffte sich Eingang. Brecht und Wedekind mußten sich gegen den literarischen Trend ihrer Zeit abgrenzen; Wedekind gegen den Naturalismus und Brecht gegen den

Expressionismus. Brecht und Wedekind waren als Künstler ein und derselben politisch mißliebigen "Richtung" zuwider und wurden schon vor 1933 als undeutsch verurteilt. Wenn Wedekind und Brecht die Welt und sich geißelten, so erschranken sie doch vor der Vitalität des Lebens.

Frühzeitig wandte sich Brecht kontradiktorisch zur deutschen Klassik Schillers und Goethes, obwohl er ein zweiter Schiller werden wollte, und begann das Schicksal des kleinen Mannes nach der gescheiterten November Revolution 1918/19, die er am Rande als neugieriger Beobachter auf Wahlversammlungen der USPD, bei der Gedenkfeier für Rosa Luxemburg und Karl Liebknecht und beim Trauerzug für den erschossenen Ministerpräsidenten Kurt Eisner miterlebte, zu schildern. Sein Bruder Walter dagegen kämpfte auf Seiten des Freikorps Epps gegen die Roten in München. Brecht gestand 1928: "Ich bekam einen Haufen Arbeit aufgehalst..., verfügte dann aber sehr bald über meine Entlassung. Ich unterschied mich kaum von der überwältigenden Mehrheit der übrigen Soldaten, die selbstverständlich von dem Krieg genug hatten, aber nicht immer imstande waren, politisch zu denken."¹¹ Brecht empfand die Revolution als großes Theater und besang sie.¹² Im Scheitern der Revolution, das er auf menschliche Schwächen zurückführte, sah er einen tragischen Vorgang, den er in seinem Theaterstück *Spartakus*, das nach mehrmaliger Umarbeitung und unter Anraten eines neuen Titels durch Marta Feuchtwanger 1922 als *Trommeln in der Nacht* erschien, aufzeigte. In der Person des heimkehrenden Soldaten Kragler, der gerade rechtzeitig heimkommt, um seine Braut von einem andern geschwängert und seine Heimatstadt Berlin im Chaos der Konterrevolution wiederzufinden, stellte Brecht die Summe seiner politischen Erlebnisse dar. Ihm legte er die Parole in den Mund: "Glottz nicht so romantisch!" Es ist der Aufschrei des enttäuschten Brecht über den schwachen Idealismus seiner Mitmenschen, der sich als ein spöttischer zynischer Zug um seinen Mund legte und seinen Augen eine abwartende, oft listige Starrheit gab. In seinen Liedern und Balladen, die die Situation des Krieges und der Nachkriegszeit zum Thema haben, so "Legende vom toten Soldaten", "Gesang des Soldaten der roten Armee" und "Larrys Ballade von der Mama Armee", ist diese Nüchternheit zu entdecken, die das Gefühl kaschiert und alles aus der Distanz darstellt.

Eine Arbeits- und Ideengemeinschaft verband Brecht mit Neher seit ihrer gemeinsamen Schulzeit auf dem Realgymnasium in Augsburg, die auch in München fortgesetzt wurde, als Neher Student der Kunstakademie war.¹³ Durch Nehers Anregung begann Brecht Künstlerbiographien über Cézanne, El Greco, Briefe von van Gogh u.a. zu lesen.¹⁴ In der alten Pinakothek schätzte er die Gemälde eines Grünewald, Dürer, Tizian, Leonardo, Rubens, Breughel und El Greco und die der modernen Maler Delacroix, Gauguin, van Gogh und Cézanne. Dabei stellte Brecht für sich eine Beziehung zwischen Malerei und Dichtung her, so daß er in seine Tagebücher schrieb, von den Malern die gestische Darstellungsweise gelernt zu haben, und er wollte so wie sie seine literarischen Produkte auf dem Marktplatz unter die Leute bringen.¹⁵ Brecht

wehrte sich, die Kunst in einen exklusiven Raum zu stellen; vielmehr strebte er an, die Kunst ins öffentliche Leben zu stellen, und mit Neher erörterte er die Möglichkeit, künstlerische Projekte auf Zeitungspapier drucken zu lassen.

Aus diesem Grund sprach sich Brecht gegen den Expressionismus wie auch gegen eine falsche Avantgarde aus. "Eure letzte Mode war: eure eigenen Gewohnheiten zu malen. Ich rate euch, die Gewohnheiten derer zu malen, die eure Bilder anschauen müssen".¹⁶ Gegenüber dem expressionistischen Sprachstil des Theaters suchte Brecht nach seinem eigenen und kam zur Erkenntnis, "daß das Wesen der Kunst Einfachheit, Größe und Empfindung ist und das Wesen ihrer Form Kühle."¹⁷ Im Volkstheater auf dem Augsburger Plärrer bei den Bänkel- und Moritatensängern erlebte er dies, weil diese suggestiv auf den Beschauer wirkten. "So entwerfen sie (Brecht und Neher) das Theater ihrer Träume... Das Kaschemmentheater, das 'Rauchtheater'..., die Bretter, die die Dreckwelt bedeuteten, die nach Hunger und Jammer roch, dazu das Gröhlen der Schieber und das Quäken der Jazzband, das Leben - eine Moritat, bestenfalls, nach dieser sauberen Moritat (wörtlich "Mordtat") Krieg und mit der Inflation als der Quittung auf die Revolution, schäbig, billig, schmutzig..."¹⁸ Der Zeit nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg wollten sie einen Spiegel vorhalten; doch sie erkannten, daß die falschen Leute im Theater saßen, die das Geld hatten und über dieser schmutzigen Gesellschaft standen. In Augsburger Vorstadtlökalen sang Brecht seinen Freunden und Arbeitern seine Lieder zur Laute vor.

Für Brecht wurde Neher der Bühnenmaler seiner Werke, an dem er das fahle Licht und das halbe Licht um Mensch und Räume schätzte. Brecht hatte sogar eigens wegen Neher Wort und Bühnenbild aufeinander abgestimmt, so daß die Aufführung von *Im Dickicht der Städte* im Residenztheater um ein halbes Jahr vorschoben werden mußte, weil Neher auf Grund seines Berliner Engagements mit den Bühnenbildern nicht fertig war. Nehers Entwürfe zeigten das epische Kaschemmentheater in der denkbar asketischsten Form.¹⁹ Nehers Brecht Charakterisierung mit Bowlerhut vor dem Himalaya spiegelt dessen innere Spannung von weicher Gefühlshaftigkeit und disziplinierter Härte wider. In Analogie zur barocken Emblematik steht unter der Zeichnung ein in Gymnasiallatein abgefaßtes Gedicht, daß Brecht als "Wasser-Feuer-Mensch" zeigt.

In München fühlte sich Brecht besonders von Karl Valentin, dem Philosophen der Resignation, angezogen, so daß er auf dem Oktoberfest auf der Bühne vor dessen Schaubude mit seinem Bruder Walter mitwirkte. Zwischen Brecht und dem metaphysischen Clown bestand ein stilles Einverständnis. Brecht fühlte sich in seiner Arbeitsmethode durch Valentin bestätigt, jedes Bild zu erproben und jeden Dialog auf Wirksamkeit zu prüfen. Von ihm lernte er die Liebe zum Objekt, das sich Valentins Logik nicht unterwarf und somit den Konflikt heraufbeschwor. Valentin wollte durch seine Theaterszenen nicht belehren, sondern den Zuschauern die "Mißzufriedenheit mit der Schöpfung" zeigen, trotzdem stellte er in seinen Stücken Situationen dar, nicht wie

sie waren, sondern wie er sie sich dachte. Diese unpathetische, leise, verhaltene und distanzierte Art des Spielens mit ihrer paradoxen Komik beeinflusste Brechts Theorie vom epischen Theater mit. Dies gab Brecht unumwunden zu: "Ich habe als Regisseur die Arrangements des Volkskomikers Karl Valentin und die Szenenskizzen Caspar Neher's kopiert, und ich habe mich nie unfrei gefühlt..." Brecht schrieb unter dem Eindruck Valentins *Die Kleinbürgerhochzeit* als Sketch, wie sich eine Familie nach der erfolgten Trauung in der Wohnung des jungen Paares zu einer lieblichen Idylle zusammenfindet und im Verlauf einer halben Stunde die ganze Herrlichkeit angefangen von den Möbeln, der Würde, der Wohlhabenheit und der Jungfräulichkeit, zusammenbricht. Ebenso lassen sich weitere Parallelen zwischen Brechts Spiel im Spiel *Das Elefantenweib*, in seinem Drama *Mann ist Mann* und Valentins *Tingeltangel* finden, wenn der Beginn des Stückes hinausgezögert wird. Dabei kopierte Brecht keineswegs Valentins Humor und Dialogführung. Er konnte sogar dessen Gedanken über die Funktion des Dichters aufnehmen: "Das wichtigste Gesetz für den Dichter ist, daß er innerhalb eines Stoffes die Merkwürdigkeiten herausfindet (die sonst Fehler sind). Auf je mehr Wunder er den Zuschauer hinweist, desto reicher ist sein Werk."²⁰ Valentin sah sich die Premiere *Trommeln in der Nacht* von Bertolt Brecht an. Am Tag nach der Premiere arrangierte Brecht ein Nachtkabarett, *Die rote Zibbe*, in dem Karl Valentin den Conferencier als Taubstummen mimte. Im Programmheft schrieb Brecht über ihn: "Dieser Mensch ist ein durchaus komplizierter, blutiger Witz. Er ist von einer ganz trockenen, innerlichen Komik, bei der man rauchen und trinken kann und unaufhörlich von einem innerlichen Gelächter geschüttelt wird, das nichts besonders Gutartiges hat. Denn es handelt sich um die Trägheit der Materie und um die feinsten Genüsse, die durchaus zu holen sind. Hier wird gezeigt die Unzulänglichkeit aller Dinge, einschließlich uns selber."²¹

Erst die Bekanntschaft mit Lion Feuchtwanger im März 1919 brachte Brecht den gewünschten Erfolg in München. Feuchtwanger berichtete über sie: "Im Gegensatz zu der Mehrzahl der jungen Autoren, die, wenn sie Manuskripte überreichten, auf das blutende Herz hinzuweisen pflegten, aus dem sie ihr Werk herausgerissen hätten, betonte dieser junge Mensch, er habe ein Stück *Spartakus* ausschließlich des Geldverdienstes wegen verfaßt."²² Feuchtwanger bestätigte Brechts Vater die dichterische Zukunft seines Sohnes, so daß dieser ihm weiter einen monatlichen Wechsel zahlte. Feuchtwanger war von der Gestalt und dem Charakter Brechts fasziniert, so daß er ihm 1919 in seinem Drama, das zuerst den Titel *Thomas Brecht* trug und dann in *Thomas Wendt* umgeändert wurde, ein literarisches Denkmal setzte. Er sah in ihm den typischen jungen Menschen, der durch die Kriegszeit aus den Bahnen der bürgerlichen Welt geworfen wurde und das gesellschaftliche Chaos in seiner Gedankenwelt widerspiegelte und nach Orientierung suchte. In der Figur des Ingenieurs Kaspar Pröckl in seinem Roman *Erfolg* zeichnet ihn Feuchtwanger: "Dann stellte er sich mitten in den Raum... überlaut begann er zu dem Geklapper des Banjos seine Balladen aufzusagen. Es enthielten aber diese Balladen Geschehnisse des Alltags und des kleinen Mannes, gesehen

mit der Volkstümlichkeit der großen Stadt,...²³ Die Gestalt Brecht ließ ihn nicht los, so daß er auch dessen Wirkung auf die Frauen beschrieb. "Seltsam eigentlich, daß der junge Pröckl den Frauen gefiel... Der Kerl roch wirklich wie Soldaten auf dem Marsch. Sein eckiger, böartiger Humor war auch nicht gerade das Rechte für Frauen. Es war ein sicherer Geruch von Revolution um ihn."²⁴ Trotzdem erschien Brecht Feuchtwanger als ein zutiefst weicher Mensch, der sich zwang, seine Gefühle zu verbergen, um hart und rational zu erscheinen. Martin Esslin folgerte aus diesem Charakter, weicher Kern rauhe Schale, sogar den Ursprung des "epischen Theaters" bei Brecht: "Schließlich beruht die ganze Theorie seines 'epischen Theaters' auf der Ablehnung des Schicksals der Gestalten auf der Bühne."²⁵ Feuchtwanger, der Brechts Werdegang genau beobachtete, bemerkte Brechts Interesse an Stummfilmen mit ihren Untertiteln, die Brecht als Szenentitel in sein episches Theater einbaute.²⁶

Die dramatischen und lyrischen Arbeiten Brechts gediehen, so das Spartakusdrama, das durch Marta Feuchtwanger später den Titel *Trommeln in der Nacht* erhielt, die Ballade "Jakob Apfelböck", und begonnen wurde mit *Im Dickicht der Städte*. Brecht versuchte, zu einer klaren Tektonik der Sprache vorzustoßen, die von den Wortmischungen ausging, um zu einer präzise konstruierten Aussage zu kommen.

Bereits vor dem Tod seiner Mutter 1920 fuhr Brecht nach Berlin, um neue Möglichkeiten der Aufführung des *Baals* und seiner Drucklegung zu erkunden. Im Sommer 1920 arbeitete er an einem neuen Projekt *Galgei* und notierte: "Mitunter überfällt es mich, daß meine Arbeiten vielleicht zu primitiv und altmodisch seien oder plump und zuwenig kühn. Ich suche herum nach neuen Formen und experimentiere mit meinem Gefühl wie die Jüngsten. Aber dann komme ich doch immer wieder drauf, daß das Wesen der Kunst Einfachheit, Größe und Empfindung ist und das Wesen ihrer Form Kühle."²⁷ Brecht suchte nach einer neuen Ausdrucksweise und notierte sich Wörter und Schilderungen aus der Lektüre anderer Dichter. 1921 veröffentlicht Brecht in der Monatsschrift *Der Neue Merkur* unter dem Titel *Bargan läßt es sein. Eine Filibustiergeschichte von Bertolt Brecht*. Bei einem weiteren Besuch in Berlin lernte Brecht Arnolt Bronnen, Beginn einer intensiven Arbeitsgemeinschaft, kennen, und 1922 versuchte er sich mit der Inszenierung von Bronnens Schauspiel *Vatermord* an der Jungen Bühne in Berlin, was durch die Auseinandersetzung mit den Schauspielern scheiterte. Im Zug nach München schrieb Brecht das melancholische Gedicht "Vom armen B.B."

Durch die Initiative Lion Feuchtwangers wurde im Herbst 1922 *Trommeln in der Nacht* an den Münchner Kammerspielen aufgeführt, bei der Otto Falckenberg Regie führte. Herbert Jhering rezensiert es im *Berliner Börsencourier*: "Das Geniezeichen Brechts ist, daß mit seinen Dramen eine neue künstlerische Totalität da ist,... das Schlimmste an den letzten Jahren sei nicht der Absturz einer Nation, sondern die Tatsache, daß man apokalyptische Ereignisse wie Unannehmlichkeiten des Alltags hingenommen habe... Diese Sprache fühlt man auf der Zunge, am Gaumen, im Ohr, im Rückgrat. Sie läßt Zwischenglieder weg und reißt Perspektiven auf..."²⁸ Das

Revolutionäre der Aufführung war, daß im Zuschauerraum einige Plakate mit Sprüchen wie **JEDER IST DER BESTE IN SEINER HAUT** oder **GLOTZT NICHT SO ROMANTISCH** aufgehängt wurden. Mit diesen Schriftbildern, dem Stummfilm entnommen, wandte sich Brecht vom naturalistischen Theater ab und zeigte sein exemplarisches. Hermann Eßwein unterstrich in seiner Besprechung: "Brecht ist der Mensch und macht keine Literatur... Hier ist das moderne soziale Drama nach seiner naturalistischen... hier der entscheidende Schritt über Hauptmann und die vielen Kleineren hinaus..."²⁹ Jhering wurde, neben Feuchtwanger, der zweite Förderer Brechts und erkannte ihm den Kleist-Preis zu: "Brecht ist Dramatiker, weil seine Sprache zugleich körperlich und räumlich empfunden ist."³⁰ In Alfred Kerr fand Brecht seinen Widersacher: "Brecht nur ein Georg Kaiser, verbessert; mit Safthuberei... Die Sprache wird bei diesem begabten Ragoutkoch ein Sammelsur."³¹ Diese differenzierte Beurteilung Brechts von Kerr und Jhering war durch deren hermeneutisches Vorverständnis bestimmt; denn Kerr stand im Bann des Naturalismus, während Jhering dem Realismus zugetan war.

1923 erfolgte am Münchener Residenztheater durch Regisseur Erich Engel die Inszenierung von Brechts *Im Dickicht der Städte*, dessen Motiv mit dem der Filibustiergeschichte identisch ist; ein Mensch opfert sich und seinen Anhang seiner sexuellen Hörigkeit. Der Kampf zwischen Shlink und Garga endet in der Sinnlosigkeit, weil sie im Kampf gegeneinander keine Gemeinsamkeit finden können. Nazis provozierten einen Theaterskandal.

Trotz der literarischen Bloßstellung durch Feuchtwanger arbeitete Brecht mit ihm zusammen, die erste Teamarbeit Brechts, an der Neuinszenierung von Christopher Marlowes *Edward II* in den Münchner Kammerspielen. Beide suchten nach dem rechten Sprachstil, um die wilden Konflikte in Marlowes Drama zwischen den Menschen als widerspruchsvolle, kampfdurchtobte, gewalttätige zu zeigen: "Ich benötigte gehobene Sprache, aber mir widerstand die ölige Glätte des üblichen fünffüßigen Jambus. Ich brauchte Rhythmus, aber nicht das übliche Geklapper."³² Feuchtwanger bestand darauf, daß die Verse "holpern" müßten. Beide brachten eine Übersetzung fertig, in der Marlowes Drama in gebrochene freie Verse umgeschrieben wurde, in Verse mit "freien, aber unregelmäßigen Rhythmen". Dieser Stil eignete sich, die verschwommene, faulige Welt *Edwards II* auszudrücken. Die Szene, in der König Eduard und Lord Mortimer ihren Haß nicht mehr in Worten auszudrücken vermochten und sich darum durch den wechselweisen Gesang von Straßenliedern tödlich zu verwunden trachteten: "Edys Kebsweib hat einen art auf der Brust,/ bitt für uns, bitt für uns, darum hat der Krieg mit Schottland aufhören gemußt/ bitt für uns, bitt für uns, bitt für uns"- dieser dreifache, keineswegs religiös demütige sondern zischende, aufsässige, vom Londoner Volk aufgenommene, revolutionäre Moritaten-Refrain blieb jung, der ihn hörte, im Gehör und Gedächtnis."³³

Dieser Stil wurde kennzeichnend für Brechts sachlichere, kritischere Weltsicht.

Brecht inszenierte selbst: "Wir wollten eine Aufführung ermöglichen, die mit der Shakespearetradition der deutschen Bühnen brechen sollte, jenem gipsig monumentalen Stil, der den Spießbürgern so teuer ist."³⁴ Er ließ sich von Karl Valentin über die Gestaltung der Soldatenszenen beraten.³⁵ Herbert Jhering bescheinigte ihm: "Sie, lieber Brecht, setzen für Größe Distanz. Das ist ihre theatralische Tat. Dieser Dreh- und Wendepunkt war ihre Aufführung von *Leben Eduards des Zweiten von England* in München. Hier schufen Sie ein Beispiel, wie man das alte Werk von Marlowe als Drama umdichtet, indem man es auskältet, wie man es näherbringt, indem man es entfernt. Sie verkleinerten die Menschen nicht. Sie atomisierten die Figuren nicht. Sie entfernten sie. ... Sie forderten Rechenschaft über die Vorgänge. Sie verlangten einfach Gesten. Sie zwangen zu klarem, kühlem Sprechen. Keine Gefühlsmogelei wurde geduldet. Das ergab den objektiven, den epischen Stil."³⁶

Feuchtwanger stellte Brecht den Engländer als den Entdecker des epischen Theaters vor: "Die Erfindung (des epischen Dramas) besteht darin, daß er auf jede Spannung im Drama verzichtet und daß er die Herstellung von Antithese und Spannung, daß er auf jede Spannung im Drama verzichtet und daß er jeden zweckvoll ersonnenen Aufbau einer Handlung für künstlerisch ansieht... Es kommt, nach Brecht, darauf an, daß der Zuschauer um Gottes willen sich nicht einfühlt. Das Schmarotzenwollen am Schicksal und am Leben eines anderen muß, nach Brecht, dem Zuschauer ausgetrieben werden... Anschauen soll der Zuschauer den Ablauf eines Lebens, seine Schlüsse daraus ziehen, ablehnen, zustimmen, sich interessieren will er, aber um Gottes willen nicht mitfühlen."³⁷

In München erlebte Brecht, daß seine Theateraufführungen von *Im Dickicht der Städte* von Hakenkreuzlern gestört wurden. Er spürte, daß in München die Spannungen aus der November Revolution 1918/19 unterschwellig weiterschwellten. Die "Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei" Adolf Hitlers hielt ihre Kundgebungen und Aufmärsche in aller Öffentlichkeit ab. Brecht, Bronnen und Feuchtwanger erlebten Adolf Hitler, ohne dessen politische Gefährlichkeit zu errahnen und beobachteten dessen spektakuläre Massenauftritte. Ihr Urteil über Hitlers Auftritt im Zirkus Krone-Bau: "Er hat den Vorteil eines Mannes, der das Theater immer nur vom vierten Gang aus gesehen hat." Und er fügte hinzu, daß Hitler den Massen vom Speisezettel aus nahekäme, indem er an die gemeinsamen Erbsen, den Speck, das Erdäpfel-Gulasch appellierte; so ergäbe sich aus dem gemeinsamen Fraß der gemeinsame Rülpsen, in dem sich Tausende zum Schluß von ihrer Erdenqual "befreiten".³⁸ Im *Völkischen Beobachter* wurde *Im Dickicht der Städte* beschrieben: "Im Theater roch es nach Foetor judaicus."³⁹ Im Zuschauerraum fielen Tränengasbomben, so daß das Stück vom Theaterspielplan abgesetzt werden mußte. Den Hitler-Putsch erlebte Brecht nicht selbst, sondern diskutierte darüber mit Freunden bei Lion Feuchtwanger. "Man konnte meinen, wir saßen in einem Provinztheater letzten Ranges und sähen gerade den Aufzug der spanischen Wache im *Egmont*."⁴⁰ Dies bewog Brecht wie auch den Freundeskreis um

Lion Feuchtwanger, München zu verlassen, nachdem Brecht anlässlich des Hitler Putsches von den NSDAP-Leuten auf die schwarze Liste wegen des Liedes "Legende vom toten Soldaten" an die fünfte Stelle gesetzt wurde.⁴¹ In einem Brief an Arnolt Bronnen bezeichnete Brecht sein nationalsozialistisches Erlebnis als *Mahagonny*, "jenen zynisch-dummen Stammtisch-Staat, der aus Anarchie und Alkohol die bis dahin gefährlichste Mixtur für Europas Hexenkessel zusammenbraute."⁴²

Brecht zog es von München weg; denn er hatte bereits seit 1920 immer wieder Abstecher an die Theater nach Berlin gemacht und im expressionistischen Dichter Arnolt Bronnen einen guten Kameraden gefunden. Mit Bronnen beschloß er, eine künstlerische Zusammenarbeit der "Firma Arnolt und Bertolt" zu gründen, mit dem Ziel, Berlin zu erobern. Der Satiriker Karl Kraus bezeichnete das merkwürdige Gespann die beiden "Fasolte" der Literatur. Ein eigenartiges literarisches Gespann waren beide, Bronnen verstand sich als Expressionist, während Brecht bereits an einer "Gebrauchsliteratur" für ein großes Publikum arbeitete. In Berlin trafen sie Stephan Großmann, Ernst Rowohlt, Jakob Tiedtke und einige Filmleute und erfuhren, daß Produzent Richard Oswald und die Zeitschrift *Tagebuch* ein Filmpreisausschreiben veranstalteten. Brecht schlug den Titel *Die zweite Sintflut* vor, während Bronnen den Film *Robinsonade auf Assuncion* wählte.⁴³ Sie gewannen den ersten Preis, und der Film wurde unter dem Titel *Das Tal der Tränen* 1924 gedreht. Leider ist keine Filmtheorie aus dieser Zeit Brechts enthalten, außer einer Tagebuchnotiz, "Filme als Bücher schreiben". Doch Brecht kannte noch keinen rechten Umgang mit dem neuen Medium, darum wandte er sich an Bronnen beim Filmpreisausschreiben: "Es wäre allerdings gut, wenn Du die menschlichen Geschehnisse etwas verwickelter 'gestalten' würdest beim Tippen."⁴⁴ Jahre später hatte Brecht von den neuen Medien gelernt: "Die alten Formen der Übermittlung nämlich bleiben durch neu auftauchende nicht unverändert und nicht neben ihnen bestehen. Der Filmsehende liest Erzählungen anders. Aber auch der Erzählungen schreibt, ist seinerseits ein Filmesehender."⁴⁵

Auffallend ist Brechts großer Freundinnenkreis in seiner Münchener Zeit trotz intensiver Arbeit. Von seiner Augsburger Freundin Paula Banholzer, Bi, hatte er einen Sohn, Frank. Von Marianne Zoff, die er am 3. November 1922 heiratete, hatte er eine Tochter, Hanne Hiob. Trotzdem pflegte er einen intensiven Briefwechsel mit Dora Mannheimer.⁴⁶ Er dachte an seine erste Freundin Bi und ging mit Hedda Kuhn im Englischen Garten spazieren und gestand ihr, daß er sie keineswegs liebte.⁴⁷ Brecht war sich seiner Schwäche gegenüber dem weiblichen Geschlecht bewußt, konnte aber keine intensive Bindung eingehen, nahm aber im Falle eines zu erwartenden Kindes die Verantwortung auf sich. Trotzdem gesteht er: "Mit Kindern kann man, auch wenn sie so erstklassig wie meine Tochter sind, mit Ausnahme von fotografieren wenig anfangen... Sie sind zu weise, und defektlos, um interessant zu sein..."⁴⁸ Seine Schuldgefühle verarbeitete er in seinen Gedichten: "Ballade von der Hanna Cash"; "Von den verführten Mädchen"; "Vom ertrunkenen Mädchen"; "Von der Kindsmörderin Marie

Farrar".⁴⁹ Seine Freundinnen waren zum Teil literarisch begabt, so Hedda Kuhn und Marie-Luise Fleißer. Doch Brecht war so dominant, daß Hedda Kuhn mit dem Schreiben aufhörte.⁵⁰ Brecht widmete ihr ein Gedicht "Von He".⁵¹ Marie-Luise Fleißer, die selbstbewußter und stärker als die anderen Freundinnen Brechts war, konnte sich trotzdem nicht gegenüber Brecht behaupten, sondern schrieb später 1962/63 in der *Avantgarde* die Begegnung auf. "Er verlangte ihr ab, was nicht drin war. Sie spürte, da war was falsch, an ihr mußte es liegen, oder lag es nicht einmal an ihr? Was ihr ganz eigen war, wurde verletzt, gerade das ließ er nicht gelten. Die Atmosphäre strich er heraus, er schien ein für allemal sie zu hassen. Etwas andres sollte sie vorziehen, was seine eigene Einbildung war und ein kühnes Ziel. Die Schrift sollte sie stellen. Sie hätte es gerne für ihn getan. Sie konnte es nicht. Es machte sie unglücklich, sie wußte nicht ein und nicht aus. Es brachte sie ganz durcheinander...⁵² Dennoch gelang es ihm, Marie-Luise Fleißers Theaterstück *Die Fußwaschung* unter verändertem Titel *Fegefeuer in Ingolstadt* in Berlin in der *Jungen Bühne* herauszubringen. Es wurde ein politischer Skandal. Später äußerte sie sich darüber: "Ich war jung, ich habe nicht so politisch gedacht wie der Brecht, ich habe ein Stück über Soldaten und Menschen geschrieben."⁵³ Brecht widmete ihr das Gedicht "Gesang von einer Geliebten."⁵⁴

Brecht spürte, daß München ihm nichts mehr bieten konnte; denn er hatte sein Ziel, ein eigenes Theater, nicht erreicht. Darum war er froh, als ihn Arnolt Bronnen nach Berlin einlud. Hier in Berlin, in einem neuen Arbeitskreis und mit einer neuen Ehefrau, Helene Weigel, gelang Brecht der Durchbruch zum Theaterdramatiker.

Brechts Weg war der seines Jahrhunderts. Für ihn gilt, was Lamartine einst schrieb: "Die Dichter sagen, die Wolken nehmen die Gestalt der Landschaft an, die sie übergreifen, und sie formen sich nach den Tälern, den Feldern, den Bergen, sie bewahren den Abguß und zeigen ihn an den Himmeln. So ist das Bild jener Menschen, deren kollektives Genie sich nach ihrer Epoche gestaltet."

Anmerkungen

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2. *München-Augsburger Abendzeitung* vom 1. Juni 1917.
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Brecht's Poems in Persian: The First Attempt at a Verse Translation

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On Why His Name Should Be Mentioned

"Warum soll mein Name genannt werden?" asked Brecht 55 years ago:

Warum
Soll man nach dem Bäcker fragen, wenn genügend Brot da ist?
[...]
Warum
Soll es eine Vergangenheit geben, wenn es eine
Zukunft gibt?

Now after more than five decades it does not seem very difficult to answer the above questions. His name should be mentioned because the kind of bread he used to bake, with that curious mixture of wisdom and wit, humanism and engagement, natural roughness and professional mastership, is no more to be found in supermarkets of our time, and because the future of which he dreamed seems in our time to be still remoter and harder to realize than in his.

"Gut ist die Vergeßlichkeit!" wrote Brecht some years later:

Die Schwäche des Gedächtnisses verleiht
Den Menschen Stärke.

But when we consider how the neo-Nazis are gaining strength now in Germany day by day through forgetting the past history, we cannot help coming to the conclusion that "forgetfulness", which Brecht praises as a "gift" in the English sense of the word, has in fact a lot in common with the German "Gift" here, and that we had better not forget anything until we have learned what we are allowed to forget and what not. And Brecht is certainly not yet among the things we are allowed to forget. Forgetting him will weaken us still more.

Brecht in Iran: My First Impressions

My acquaintance with the works of Brecht dates back to the early 1960s, when I was still in my teens and used to read, or rather devour, anything that I could find in that small town in eastern Iran, from detective and adventure stories to the works of the great 19th Century novelists as well as contemporary writers (in so far as they had been translated into Persian). At that time I read *Leben des Galilei* and *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*, which had just been translated into Persian - rather good translations (made from French translations with an eye to the German original) and the first serious attempts to introduce Brecht to Iranian intellectuals.¹ A few years after his death Brecht was quite popular in Iran.

As a result, translators began to compete with one another in translating him. A dozen of his plays were translated from different languages, most of them from French and English, and most of them by unqualified people and in a miserable condition. Sometimes two or three translations of the same play, one worse than the other, appeared almost simultaneously (you know that "copyright" has not been introduced in Iran yet). Since the second half of the 1970s, however, a leading Iranian publisher, assisted by more reliable translators who translate directly from German, has begun to publish Brecht's complete works relatively systematically, a huge job which one should not expect to come to an end in the near future. Over a dozen of plays and a good part of Brecht's writings on theatre have been published in this series up to now.

I do not intend to go into details of Brecht's reception in Iran in general, an interesting subject which needs to be researched sometime independently. But it deserves to be mentioned, however briefly, that Brecht's works and theories have so far been as much misunderstood or vulgarly interpreted in Iran as elsewhere, and that is as true of his anti-communist opponents as it is of his fervent marxist advocates. The word »epic«, for instance, is associated almost always with »heroic«, an association which the presumably "militant" theatre of a marxist playwright is expected to justify; and what is understood under »didactic« plays (»Lehrstücke«) is a schoolmasterly attempt to teach the marxist theories of class struggle to the audience, and not, as few are ready to accept

¹ In his article "Der Kampf zweier Kulturen - Zur Situation der Literatur im Iran" (*die tageszeitung*, 27.9.91, p. 16), Ahmad Taheri claims that it was only after the victory of the Islamic Revolution (1979) in Iran and return of the anti-Shah students back to Iran that translations of the works of German writers and thinkers into Persian language began, a claim which shows his lack of knowledge at best: these translations had begun at least about 50 years earlier. This and some other misrepresentations are intended to convince the reader that literature has flourished in Iran after the "Revolution".

even in Germany, to teach just a small group of actors themselves dialectical thinking simply by changing the roles and the like.²

As a poet, and as a translator of Brecht's poetry into Persian, I would like to talk more about his poetry. A number of Brecht's songs from the plays had been translated into Persian together with the plays during the 1960s, as well as a number of his poems which had been translated and published in literary periodicals. The first independent volume of his poetry, however, a collection of 50 poems and songs, did not appear until 1971,³ the same year in which two not very unimportant things happened in my life: I graduated in English literature, and I was arrested by the Shah's notorious SAVAK for the second time and had the luck to be condemned to only three years' imprisonment. I do not remember now if I had already read these 50 poems before my arrest or not, but I did read them during the years of my imprisonment and, to tell the truth, was not much impressed by them as poetry, as it is always the case when you read prose translations of poetry. You are at best impressed by the depth of thoughts and tenderness of feelings, in exactly the same way as an essay could have impressed you.

This might seem to be paradoxical, since the position that Brecht, and by that I mean here Brecht the poet, occupies now in my soul and in my whole life borders in some respects upon mere identity - to the point of indistinguishability. But Brecht the poet was certainly not to be found in the above-mentioned prose translations, and I did not know German. I had to wait until I had read the English translation of some of his poems a few years later. It was apparently in *The Penguin Book of Socialist Verse* that I read for the first time some of his poems in English, among them "Praise of Learning", the Persian translation of which had previously left me unimpressed. By then I had read several of Brecht's most successful plays as well as his *Dreigroschenroman* and *Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner*, and I ranked him already among the world's greatest authors, one whose political views I also shared. The discovery of Brecht the poet, however, made possible through these English translations, added a new dimension to my relation with Brecht: now he was part of me - or I part of him. These translations must have made me aware of three facts, which, when put together, seem to be enough to tempt anyone to translate Brecht's poems. I realized that

- 1) it was possible to translate poetry;
- 2) Brecht was a great poet; and
- 3) his poetry was the nearest possible to my own.

² See the commendable research of Reiner Steinweg (ed.), *Brechts Modell der Lehrstücke*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1976, pp. 164-165 and 437ff.

³ «Man, Bertolt Brecht» (the Persian word «man» means «I» [GB] or «ich» [D]), translated by Behrouz Moshiri and published by Amir-Kabir, Teheran.

It is the third point that needs a few words by way of explanation. Not only did Brecht's mentality and feelings, his particular, sometimes humorous and sometimes sarcastic, way of seeing the things or reacting against them, resemble those of mine, but also the way all these things influenced his style and language. His simple, yet impressive, and rough, yet masterly, use of language, his abhorrence of romantic sentimentalities, gaudy images and jingling rhythms, all these corresponded exactly with my own preferences and, to some extent, practice in poetry.

Translation of Poetry and the Double Difficulty of Simplicity

Theodore Savory finds the translation of poetry to be "almost the only aspect of translation in which a high proportion of the experts show agreement among themselves; but even so," he adds, "they agree only in the opinion that adequate translation of a poem is impossible."⁴ Without claiming to be an expert, I agree too that the translation of a poem, whether in prose or in verse, is never the same as the poem itself. This, however, does not lead me to the conclusion that it should not be attempted. The principles that I find most important in the translation of poetry are as follows:

- 1) Poetry should be translated by poets and in verse if it is to be enjoyed as poetry at all; a prose translation gives us at best some information about a poem's content and a not very faithful idea of its structure and imagery.
- 2) The translation is, therefore, "a new product, the result of new intellectual effort."⁵ It should be a poem written in the translator's own language, with the sole difference that the translation, unlike the translated poem itself, can be continually improved and is never definitive.
- 3) As the most essential principle, a translation should affect the readers or hearers in the same way as the original affects those who read or hear it in the original language.⁶ That includes aesthetic effect as well as what John Willett calls "the

⁴ Theodore Savory, *The Art of Translation*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1957, p. 76.

⁵ Ibid., p. 88.

⁶ Matthew Arnold (in his essay "*On Translating Homer*") demanded still more: "in the same way as the original may be supposed to have affected its first hearers." See: *ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

general gist and flavour"⁷ of the original.

- 4) Finally, I would like to quote the following short passage from Brecht himself, although he refers here to a number of different points, each of which deserves to be discussed separately at more length: *"Gedichte werden bei der Übertragung in eine andere Sprache meist dadurch am stärksten beschädigt, daß man zu viel zu übertragen sucht. Man sollte sich vielleicht mit der Übertragung der Gedanken und der Haltung des Dichters begnügen. Was im Rhythmus des Originals ein Element der Haltung des Schreibenden ist, sollte man zu übertragen suchen, nicht mehr davon. Seine Haltung zur Sprache wird übertragen, auch wenn man, etwa wenn er bestimmte Wörter durch ihre Einreihung in Wortfolgen, wo sie sonst nicht gehört werden, neu faßt, nur eben dieses Tun nachahmt, sich die Gelegenheit dazu aber nicht vom Original vorschreiben läßt."*⁸

Now, if I were asked what I consider as the main difficulty in translating Brecht's poems into Persian, my answer would sound somehow foolish: it is the studied simplicity which characterizes a large body of Brecht's poetry, a kind of poetry for which we use the term »sahl-o momtané« in the traditional Persian prosody, meaning "simple, yet impossible", or, if you allow me to coin such a term, »simpossible«. The whole "poeticity" of such poems, if they possess any such thing in the familiar sense of the word, is lost not only in the prose Persian translations, but also in the few attempts prior to mine to translate a number of them in verse.

The principle that "poetry should be translated by poets" has to be modified here: not any poet can translate successfully the works of another poet. Only the poet who possesses that very rare gift that Brecht himself possessed would be able to translate him with relative success: the gift of being a poet whose art, as Michael Hamburger puts it, lies exactly "in the concealment of art,"⁹ or, to use the term we have just coined, in its »simpossibility«. And, unfortunately, such poets are still almost nonexistent in modern Persian poetry.

⁷ John Willett, *Brecht in Context - Comparative Approaches*, London: Methuen, 1984, p. 243.

⁸ Bertolt Brecht, *Über Lyrik*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1981, p. 107.

⁹ Michael Hamburger, *Art as Second Nature*, Cheshire: Carcanet New Press, 1975, p. 116.

A Few Words about My Own Translations

Before I left Iran towards the end of 1982 I had translated 118 of Brecht's poems, almost all of them in the same year, and left them there for the publication. I hear that after about 10 years our over-considerate publishers are still trying to find out if it is the right moment, politically as well as financially, to publish them in Iran. In 1985, however, some Iranian emigrants helped me publish a few hundred copies in Europe, which has since reached the hands of a small circle of Iranian exiled intelligentsia. I had translated the poems from English and then compared the result with the original German assisted by friends who knew German well.

The book has been published under the title of *»Sorud-ha-ye Setayesh va Ash'ar-e Digar«*, which means *Songs of Praise and Other Poems*, and includes all of Brecht's "songs of praise", which are usually thought to be seven but are in fact twelve. This might be something unprecedented in other languages. The only song of praise in the English edition (Methuen, 1976) is "In Praise of Doubt", and a number of these songs have been translated into English along with the plays, but two of them, "Lob der Vergeßlichkeit" and "Lob des Dolchstoßes", have to my knowledge not been translated into English yet.

It is true that I began to translate Brecht's poems primarily because I had found his poetry so near to my own; this, however, does not mean that my poetry remained unchanged after this acquaintance: friends who follow my poetry have noticed traces of Brecht's influence. And how is it possible at all to remain unimpressed by great poetry? According to Rasul Gamzatov, for instance, who has translated Mayakovsky into the languages of the peoples of Daghestan, "Mayakovsky's innovatory verse inspires the translator to innovation in his own national poetic forms;"¹⁰ and I have observed how the translation of Mayakovsky has similarly influenced the poetry of Esmail Kho'i, who is at the moment the best Iranian Poet living in exile.

Gamzatov speaks also about the double difficulty of squeezing Mayakovsky's rhythms into the old syllabic metre.¹¹ That is the main difficulty in Persian verse translations also. The contemporary Persian poetry can be divided into five main categories as regards rhythm:

¹⁰ Rasul Gamzatov: "In Debt to Mayakovsky", in: *Vladimir Mayakovsky: Innovator*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976, p. 271.

¹¹ Ibid.

- 1) Classical quantitative metre and traditional poetical forms: GHAZAL, QASIDA, RUBAI and the like. This is probably the most restrictive poetry in the world. There are dozens of different, very melodious rhythms (metres), but as soon as the poet chooses one of them for his mono-rhymed poem or rhymed couplets, he has to remain absolutely faithful to it to the end of the poem, writing lines of exactly the same length, and only certain words with certain syllabic structures are allowed to be used in certain parts of each line - no violation of the rule would be tolerated.
- 2) Modern poetry within classical metres, which is generally known as »Nima'i«-poetry after Nima Yushij (1897-1960), the founder of modern Persian poetry. Here also the metres are strictly observed, but the lines can be of unequal length and the poet uses free rhyme or no rhyme at all.
- 3) A variety of the above category, in which violations of metre are also allowed (e.g., the later poetry of Forough Farrokh-zad, Esmail Kho'i, etc.).
- 4) Poetry without rhythm, generally known as »Shamlu'i«-poetry after Ahmad Shamlou, our greatest living modern poet, labelled by him mistakenly as "blank verse" («white poetry»). Although deprived of traditional rhythm based on metres, this poetry does still have a certain kind of melody, partly produced through the use of free or internal rhyme and refrains, which distinguishes it from prose. Shamlou is to this day the only successful poet in this category, and his thousands of imitators have not been able to produce anything worthy of notice.
- 5) Prose-poetry: poetry which does not have this melody either, and which no one is ready to accept as poetry in Iran except the poet himself.

In prose translations of poetry into Persian (5th category), the "poeticity" would be totally lost, and the 4th category, as explained above, is the private domain of a single poet: Shamlou. One might ask: couldn't HE translate Brecht? But Shamlou's stately, predominantly lyrical language, with solid roots in the old Persian prose of about one thousand years ago, is hardly suitable for such a task. Shamlou has indeed translated a lot of poems from French, the most famous among them being those of Lorca. He has also translated the first and last sections of Brecht's poem "An die Nachgeborenen"¹²

¹² Apart from this part-translation by Shamlou (first published in *Khoushé*, 1968), I know of at least three other prose translations by Dr. Mostafa Rahimi (in *Jahan-e Now*), Behrouz Moshiri (see note 3 above) and Dr. Sharaf (in *Negin*) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, none of them worthy of much notice. My verse translation was first published in 1985. I have recently seen a verse translation of only the last section of this poem, made by Fereydoun Moshiri, who is a rather famous contemporary poet. It is, however, a free translation, using the traditional form of monorhymed couplets (QIT'A), which does not

during the 1960s, leaving out the second, probably because his poetical language did not suit that section.

If I were asked to judge my own translations, a judgment which has been shaped after I have seen how readers (a small group yet in number, but some of them leading literary figures) have responded to them, I would say that I find at least about a dozen of them very close to the definitive translation - and that is no small achievement! On the contrary, that alone would be enough to make the publication of these translations in Iran - in the near future, I hope - appear as quite an event in the translation of modern poetry from other languages into Persian.

There are, of course, another dozen of poems the translation of which I do not find satisfactory at all, and dozens of others in which I have since made minor revisions and corrections or which I still find in need of a final polish.

The metre I have used for the translation of almost all of these poems¹³ is the quantitative equivalent of the accentual anapestic metre in English and German prosody. The poet who writes in this metre is allowed to replace the two shorter syllables in each foot with a longer one, a right of which the classical poet made use only very reluctantly but which helps the modern poet to control the rhythm and avoid unnecessary jingle. This metre enables the translator to come as close as possible to a Persian equivalent of the "irregular rhythms" employed by Brecht.

This article was meant to be read at the 8th Symposium of the *International Brecht Society* (December 9-14, 1991 in Augsburg, Germany), which I was unfortunately unable to attend. I intended to read some of the translated poems there aloud and discuss the reason(s) why I had chosen certain rhythms. This section has to be omitted here.

Problems of word choice and the kind of compromises I have had to resort to cannot be covered in this short article either and remain to be dealt with sometime in the future.

suit Brecht's poem, though it is pleasant to read.

¹³ For a few of the poems I have used other metres. Very often I had to experiment with different metres for each poem to find the right one; some of the poems have been translated three times in three different metres. In two cases ("Lob des Kommunismus" and "Lob der Partei") I have published two different versions in two different metres, since I found both versions satisfactory.

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