

Instructive Ambiguities:

**Brecht and Müller's
Experiments
with Lehrstücke**

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• Introduction •

Though a critical glut of material exists on many aspects of Brecht's oeuvre in many languages, Brecht's "Lehrstücke"¹ of the late 1920's and early 1930's seem to have escaped the widespread notice of theatre critics and theorists writing in English. Since the early 1970's, however, much fascinating material has been published in German, mostly thanks to the work of Reiner Steinweg. The following thesis, as a work in English, will not merely translate the German research, but will attempt to make an original contribution to the ongoing study of the Lehrstück by examining the philosophically interesting underpinnings of the Lehrstück as didactic art.

In order to examine and describe the entitrary structure undergirding the specific, historical practices of the Lehrstück, this study will be comprised of five related but distinct chapters.

The first chapter will be largely a theoretic meditation which seeks a fruitful approach to the philosophical questions raised by didactic art. The chapter will begin with an examination of various texts by G.W.F. Hegel, Georg Lukács and Theodor Adorno in order to reconstruct their understandings of the interrelation of Form and Content. The applicability of Form and Content to didactic art will then be reconsidered and a concept of interlaced artworks will be briefly elaborated, a notion which will provide better insights into didactic art works.

¹ I choose to leave the word "Lehrstück" untranslated throughout this thesis, since it functions as an analytically precise term for Brecht, and the project of this thesis is to unpack more fully what "Lehrstück" means. Elizabeth Wright notes a couple of bad translations, i.e. "didactic plays," "propagandist plays," and remarks on a couple of better translations, i.e. "learning plays," "teaching plays," then states that she too prefers to use the word "Lehrstück" untranslated (Wright, The Post Modern Brecht, 11-12.)

Chapters two, three and four will focus on Bertolt Brecht in an effort to distinguish and relate the Lehrstück and his particular contribution to its historical realization. In chapter two, Brecht's oeuvre excluding the Lehrstücke will be sketched in order to locate the Lehrstücke in the overall narrative of Brecht's career. In chapter three, the Lehrstück itself will be examined, first by looking at Brecht's writings about the Lehrstück, the Lehrstück-theorie, and then by examining particular Lehrstücke and non-Lehrstücke written at the same time. A relatively close reading of one of Brecht's Lehrstücke, The Measures Taken (Die Maßnahme) will stand as the focal point of this third chapter. Finally, in chapter four, a key word for the Lehrstücke, "Einverständnis," will be analyzed for its resonances with Brecht's Lehrstücke and within Brecht's work as a whole. These three chapters will answer three related questions: WHERE are the Lehrstücke in Brecht's oeuvre? WHAT are the Lehrstücke? and HOW is Brecht in the Lehrstück?

Since Brecht is not the only 20th Century playwright to work with and seriously reflect upon the Lehrstück, chapter five will examine Heiner Müller's contribution and criticisms of the Lehrstück. This chapter will briefly trace Müller's career and concerns and conclude with a reading of Mausier, the last of Müller's works designated as a Lehrstück. The point of this fifth chapter will be to distinguish which of Müller's innovations are criticisms of the Lehrstück and which are variations on the Lehrstück structure.

The thesis will conclude with a list of observations about the preceding chapters which highlights the comprehensive, philosophical insights to be learned from the Lehrstück.

An ever-present danger in philosophical reflection is that its encyclopedic comprehensiveness, which is the glory of theorizing, lapses into

a totalizing suppression of detail and of that which is non-identical with theory. When such rationalism occurs, the objects of theory are taken as essentially theoretical constructs. At the other extreme, to forsake the search for structural regularities in effect posits a nominalist world of radically incommensurable phenomena. To avoid both risks, the Lehrstück must be examined in such a way as to grasp its character both as a human construction and as a phenomenon subject to various conditions. I have chosen largely to avoid high-flying theoretical abstractions and remain close to the historical lives of the humans whose work is studied in order not to distort the delicate tissue of historical meaning as the embracing conditions are abstracted.

In addition to a careful and close relationship to the materials studied, I have also chosen to employ marginal "glosses" as a stylistic reminder that the objects of analytical scrutiny object to such scrutiny.² These occasional glosses appear in addition to the standard academic citations in the footnotes. This vocal margin will problematize and round out the necessarily schematic analysis by standing in tension with, parallel to or in corroboration of the central text.

*The marginal
gloss is my
response to
Adorno's
paratactical
aphorism.*

² I am indebted to Lawrence Lipking's article on "The Marginal Gloss" in *Critical Inquiry* (Vol. 3 #4, 1977, pp. 609-656) for suggesting the rich plenitude of possibilities for marginalia.

aus **AN DIE NACH GEBORENEN**

Bertolt Brecht

*Ihr, die ihr auftauchen werdet aus der Flut
In der wir untergegangen sind,
Gedenkt
Wenn ihr von unsern Schwächen sprecht
Auch der finsternen Zeit
Der ihr entronnen seid.*

*Gingen wir doch, öfter als die Schuhe die Länder wechselnd
Durch die Kreise der Klassen, verzweifelt
Wenn da nur Unrecht war und keine Empörung.*

*Dabei wissen wir ja:
Auch der Hass gegen die Niedrigkeit
Verzerrt die Züge.
Auch der Zorn über das Unrecht
Macht die Stimme heiser. Ach, wir
Die wir den Boden bereiten wollten für Freundlichkeit
Konnten selber nicht freundlich sein.*

*Ihr aber, wenn es so weit sein wird
Dass der Mensch dem Mensch ein Helfer ist,
Gedenkt unsrer
Mit Nachsicht.*

from *TO POSTERITY*

Translated by H. R. Hays

*You, who shall emerge from the flood
In which we are sinking,
Think—
When you speak of our weaknesses,
Also of the dark time
That brought them forth.*

*For we went, changing our country more often than our shoes,
In the class war, despairing
When there was only injustice and no resistance.*

*For we knew only too well;
Even the hatred of squalor
Makes the brow stern.
Even anger against injustice
Makes the voice grow harsh. Alas, we
Who wished to lay the foundations of kindness
Could not ourselves be kind.*

*But you, when at last it comes to pass
That man can help his fellow man,
Do not judge us
Too harshly.*

I. Form / Content

Before the Lehrstück can be examined directly, one categorical obstacle must be addressed: the general accusation that all didactic art over-burdens its artistic Form with Content. If any art that instructs, by definition, lapses into a propaganda that is antithetical to art, all specific attempts necessarily fail. While the doctrine of Form and Content may be valid and useful for analyzing art-as-such, I contend that a proper evaluation of didactic artworks, such as Lehrstücke, requires different categories. In this chapter, I will critically bracket and evaluate the doctrine of Form and Content. First, I will briefly sketch three figures in the heritage of Form/Content, from Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of Fine Art down to Georg Lukács' plea for Realist portrayal, and Theodor Adorno's defense of Samuel Beckett. Second, I will re-assess the relative value of the pair of terms and finally conclude by suggesting perhaps a more fruitful schema for examining the systematic questions raised by "heteronomous" artworks like the Lehrstück.

Even if didactic art is possible per se, and even if the Lehrstück is a sound didactic artform, Brecht or Müller's particular Lehrstücke might still stand justly charged with preachiness.

A danger of misrepresentation threatens: Form and Content, the preoccupations of this chapter, are not the primary concerns of any of these three thinkers. The least that can be said is that the terms operate to confound understanding of non-autonomous art.

• G. W. F. Hegel and the Doctrine of Form and Content •

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) looms as an important though sometimes ambiguous influence over the discussion of artistic Form and Content as held within German Marxism. Hegel exerts this shadowy gravity for a couple reasons: First, Hegel's Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik, a posthumous collection of notes from his lectures given between 1818-1831, has proven itself a generally important document for the larger heritage of scholarly aesthetics. Hegel's investigation of "aesthetics" presented in those lectures diverted the ontological focus of Kant's Kritik der Urtheilskraft (1790) to examine human artistic practices and artifacts;¹ that aesthetics is still often dealt with as "the philosophy of fine art" attests to Hegel's abiding clout. The broader Hegelian legacy has also undeniably contributed much to the development of Marxism in general, but this substantial influence has not been direct or unmediated. The three thinkers examined here, Hegel, Lukács and Adorno, at least seem to share an intrinsic pattern for relating their categories, despite distinct differences in the overall thrust of their projects and the specific character of the categories related. This common philosophical structure posits a taut harmony between contradictory elements, between concepts that can be distinguished yet not made rigorously distinct. This "dialectical" motif conditions how all three use and discuss Form and Content.

Hegel employed the doctrine of Form and Content in his aesthetics to describe the structural character of artworks; hence, due to his progress-fixated monism, Form and Content proved important for art historiography and theory of art genres. Most important for this investigation is

¹ "The beauty of art is beauty born of the spirit and born again, and the higher the spirit

that Hegel described the essential typical character that artworks exhibit as the sensuous Form of a ideal Content.² Form and Content are thus described as a conjoined pair where the presence of one requires and implies its conjugate.³ If Form is the sensuous wineskin, the spiritual wine that fills it is invisible, imperceptible, a wind, a *Geist*. Since Form and Content are to cohere perfectly, an implicit criteria for criticism seems established:⁴ artworks can be less than perfect by being over-extended in either Form or Content.⁵

Hegel's "Form" is sensuously perceptible, hence his use of the term differs radically from Aristotle's Formal cause which is distinguished from a material, a final and an efficient cause.

Art, as Hegel understands it, is far from a superfluous luxury. Art-producing humanity responds to a "non-contingent but absolute need for art." (Hegel, 30). Hence, artworks with their dialectical internal structure, are not an

and its productions stand above nature and its phenomena, the higher too is the beauty of art above that of nature." in G. W. F. Hegel, "Introduction" in Lectures on the Philosophy of Fine Art. Trans. T.M. Knox. (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1975), 2.

² "It has already been said that the content of art is the Idea, while its form is the configuration of sensuous material. Now art has to harmonize these two sides and bring them into a free reconciled totality." Hegel, 70.

³ "According to this view [Hirt's theory of the characteristic which Hegel mostly upholds against attacks by Meyer], to sum up, we have characterized as the elements of the beautiful something inward, a content, and something outward which signifies that content; the inner shines in the outer and makes itself known through the outer, since the outer points away from itself to the inner." Hegel, 20.

⁴ "Only in the highest art are Idea and presentation truly in conformity with one another, in the sense that the shape given to the Idea is in itself the absolutely true shape, because the content of the Idea which that shape expresses is itself the true and genuine content." Hegel, 75.

⁵ "But according to the principle of 'the characteristic' nothing is to enter the work of art except what belongs to the appearance and essentially to the expression of this content alone; nothing is to be otiose or superfluous." Hegel, 18.

hermetic system in themselves, detached from the historical sweep of reality.⁶ For Hegel, the central spring of culture, and hence history, is the progressive self-realization of an Absolute Spirit through human self-realization.⁷ The dual nature of artworks present the inner and outer aspects of reality which must be synthesized and released to enrich the further swellings and manifestations of Absolute Spirit. Art is not the only means nor even the best way to that realization.⁸ Ultimately, this synthesis is the task of the philosopher. Hence Hegel founds the legitimacy of aesthetics as the philosophy of fine art, giving it pride of place even above that of art itself. Art has a only relative autonomy as art because, in its fullness, the dialectic structure of artworks dissolves and empties back into the progressively raising self-consciousness of the Absolute Spirit. At least potentially, as this Spirit gains more perfect self-realization, other formal wineskins bloat up with spiritual *Geist*, only to be sucked dry by later aestheticians, world without end. The play of Form and Content allows Hegel both to distinguish the nature of art as well as to situate it within the wider sweep of history.

⁶ "The universal need for art, that is to say, is man's rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self." Hegel, 31.

⁷ "Man does this [practical cultivating activity] in order, as a free subject, to strip the external world of its inflexible foreignness and to enjoy in the shape of things only an external realization of himself." Hegel, 31.

⁸ "But while on the one hand we give this high position to art, it is on the other hand just as necessary to remember that neither in content nor in form is art the highest and absolute mode of bringing to our minds the true interests of the spirit." Hegel, 9.

Form and Content appear also in Hegel's discussion of the development of art and provide Hegel a key to explain historical movements within the arts and to laud equally their disparate virtues. For Hegel, this development falls into three distinct stages: symbolic, classical and romantic. These stages seem to be formally artistic periods⁹ yet since they correspond to stages in the development of religion as progressive attempts to understand the Absolute, the content of art seems to develop as well.¹⁰ The most primitive artistic stage, the symbolic, corresponds with Eastern pantheism, for Hegel. At this stage, a universal and divine content is dealt with but since this content remains abstract, it can only be symbolized, not represented in symbolic art, because this content remains extrinsic with respect to the artistic form.¹¹ Though a sublimely spiritual content dominates, the artistic form remains unconquered because it is either not grappled with or because it takes a bizarre and distorted shape.¹² In the classical stage, a more advanced art-form, Form and Content reach a unity.¹³ However, the peculiar content expressible by classical art is restricted to that which can be sensuously conveyed.¹⁴ The range of content crouches to fit within the forms of the phenomenal world, hence the content remains those aspects of the Spirit that are concrete, finite, particular, external. The most spiritual form for Hegel, discovered in the classical stage, is the human form.¹⁵

In the highest stage of "Christian" romantic art, Form and Content regain their oppositional relation first grasped in the symbolic stage¹⁶ but at a higher level. In the romantic stage, for Hegel, the infinite, universal, spiritual Content transcends the

⁹ Hegel calls them "art-forms" almost as interchangeable with stage.

¹⁰ "These forms find their origin in the different ways of grasping the Idea as content, whereby a difference in the configuration in which the Idea appears is conditioned. Thus the forms of art are nothing but the different relations of meaning and shape, relations which proceed from the Idea itself and therefore provide the true basis for the division in this sphere." Hegel, 75.

¹¹ "... natural objects have in them an aspect according to which they are capable of representing a universal meaning. But since a complete correspondence is not yet possible, this relation can concern only an abstract characteristic, as when, for example, in a lion strength is meant." Hegel, 76.

¹² [This "early artistic pantheism of the East"] "... ascribes absolute meaning to even the most worthless objects, and, on the other, violently coerces the phenomena to express its view of the world whereby it becomes bizarre, grotesque, and tasteless, or turns the infinite but abstract freedom of the substance disdainfully against all phenomena as being null and evanescent." Hegel, 77.

¹³ "The classical art-form ... is the free and adequate embodiment of the Idea in the shape peculiarly appropriate to the Idea itself in its essential nature." Hegel, 77.

¹⁴ "... in classical art the peculiarity of the content consists in its being itself the concrete Idea, and as such the concretely spiritual, for it is the spiritual alone which is the truly inner. Consequently, to suit such a content we must try to find out what in nature belongs to the spiritual in and for itself." Hegel, 78.

¹⁵ "This shape, which the Idea as spiritual — indeed as individually determinate spirituality—assumes when it is to proceed out into a temporal manifestation, is the human form." Hegel, 78.

¹⁶ "The romantic form of art conceals again the completed unification of the Idea and its reality and reverts, even if in a higher way, to that difference and opposition of the two sides which in symbolic art remained unconquered." Hegel, 79.

finite, particular sensuousness of Form and hence can at last represent the full range of the spiritual,¹⁷ the "free concrete spirituality, which is to be manifested as spirituality to the spiritually inward" (Hegel, 80). Romantic art is so expressive of the Absolute, which requires an emphasis on inwardness to be grasped fully as Spirit, that romantic art almost seems to be too good for Hegel to call it art!¹⁸ As we have seen, the doctrine of Form and Content, as a pair of opposed yet correlated terms, allows Hegel to dove-tail his art historiography neatly into his description of the typical structure of artworks.

Hegel uses the doctrine of Form and Content in a third way, as an almost tacit undergirding to his theory of art-genres. In Hegel, Form is related to the external, particular and sensuous aspects of reality while Content is the inner, universal and spiritual. Architecture, especially the sacrally opened up space that is temple architecture, manipulates the external formal world¹⁹ so as to symbolize the spiritual which it can only negatively imply.²⁰ Sculpture, in

Since Hegel's progressivism allows no firm stopping points, one could argue, in Hegelian fashion that the symbolic and classical periods are not entirely and forever past and outmoded. Rather, since the Absolute continues through the same two types of imbalances to further self-knowledge, these periods continue as poles of a continuum between which art will forever oscillate.

¹⁷ "The new content, thus won, corresponded to it, but is freed from this immediate existence which must be set down as negative, overcome, and reflected into the spiritual unity." Hegel, 80.

¹⁸ "In this way, romantic art is the self-transcendence of art but within its own sphere and in the form of art itself." Hegel, 80.

¹⁹ "[Architecture's] task consists in so manipulating external inorganic nature that, as an external world conformable to art, it becomes cognate to spirit." Hegel, 83-4.

²⁰ "For [architecture's] limitation lies precisely in retaining the spiritual, as something inner, over against its own external forms and thus pointing to what has soul only as to something distinct from these." Hegel, 84.

contrast, can positively depict an aspect of the divine spirit as a bodily form. Hegel's theory internally corroborates itself as these genres tend to match up with historiographic periods that share the same basic pattern of Form and Content. Architecture corresponds to the symbolic stage, and sculpture to the classical stage.

In the romantic stage, Hegel describes the symbolic temple with its classical sculpture adorning its niches now populated with a congregation. From this community another trio of genres emerge to particularize the romantic ideal: painting, music and poetry. These three progress in the degree of inwardness and lack of sensuous externality which each possesses; the most spiritual material comes to be the human voice, used in poetry. Hegel's encyclopedia of the arts, like his history of art, is hierarchically arranged and progressively unfolded and the principle of division, though perhaps not as explicitly stated in other sections, bears strong resonances to the doctrine of Form and Content.

A. C Bradley notes that later in Hegel's Aesthetics, poetry blossoms into a trio of epic, lyric and dramatic poetry, the same genres legitimated differently by Aristotle. Drama, as the pinnacle of the progress of genres, reached its zenith in the "Romantic" Shakespeare.

As we have seen, Hegel refers to Form and Content when accounting for the typical structure of artworks, the history of art and the genres of art. These three uses of the doctrine, as well as their resonances with other terms in Hegel's aesthetics, contribute an overall unity and elegance to his theory. This same integrality that commended Hegel's system to his Idealist contemporaries, frightens me and my "post-modern" contemporaries with its possibilities for totalizing oppression and suppression of individuality and detail. The trick for us who write after Hegel, yet would not take after him, is to look for comprehensive traits in the phenomena we study in order to fructify

our participation in the phenomena, while not allowing such abstractions to constrain or take precedence over the phenomena themselves. Hegel divorced his study of Beauty-as-such, ironically though it is focused on artistic practice, from all subsequent practical artistic ramifications²¹ and might hence deserve the epithet "rationalist." Any aesthetic theory that wishes to escape the simplistic elegance of logocentrism might do worse than critically re-examine the doctrine of Form and Content.

²¹ "The philosophy of art has no concern with prescriptions for artists; on the contrary, it has to determine what the beautiful is as such, and how it has displayed itself in reality, in works of art, without wishing to provide rules for their production." Hegel, 18.

• Georg Lukács and the plea for Realism •

Georg Lukács (1885-1971) furnishes a particularly convenient figure for this discussion, due to both his almost official voice within an era of Marxist aesthetics and the impact that Hegel's thought had on him personally.²² In this section I will sketch the aesthetic positions that Lukács seems to hold during the 30's and which undergird in particular the articles "Reportage or Portrayal (1932),"²³ "Realism in the Balance (1938)"²⁴ and to some extent his book, The Historical Novel (1937). The three comprehensive areas used to discuss Hegel's Aesthetics are best examined in reverse order for Lukács. Hence, in this section I will look into Lukács' position on art genres, historiography or Realism as an historical tendency and culminate in his understanding of Realism as a structural norm for artworks. Form and Content will emerge as a central concern in Lukács' fundamental preoccupation with Realism.

Lukács has been cast as a theory-mongering lackey to Stalin's terror.²⁵ Lukács' career is an intricate trail of publication, harsh official criticism, judicious self-critique²⁶ and intellectual exile,²⁷ a snaky path to be traced with caution.

²² Michael Löwy writes that around the years 1912-14, Ernst Bloch commended Hegel to the young Lukács: Ironically, Lukács suggested the Christian mystics, including Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky, to schoolmate Bloch (Cited in prefatory "Presentation I" in Adorno, Aesthetics and Politics, 9). Adorno, for one, seems to think that Lukács was never able to shake his idealism and that it is in evidence in his work of the 30's and even later: In reviewing Realism in our Time (1958) Adorno wrote: "Lukács... uses a restricted set of instruments, all of Hegelian origin." Notes to Literature, I, 221-2.

²³ The essay "Reportage or Portrayal" cited appears in Essays on Realism, 45-75.

²⁴ The essay "Realism in the Balance" cited appears in Aesthetics and Politics, 28-59.

²⁵ David Pike, for instance, uses categories from Czesław Miłosz' The Captive Mind to question Lukács' very capacity for honesty and a truthful grasp of reality after having his brain scrambled by Stalinist doctrines and scare tactics. Lukács and Brecht.

²⁶ Lukács described public recantations as if they were completely an external, objective behaviour with no personal cost attached: "When I have seen mistakes or false directions in my life, I have always been willing to admit them—it has cost me nothing to do so,

The positions Lukács holds during the 1930's correspond quite consistently with a period of official communist policy called the Popular Front (1935).²⁸ The overall mandate of this policy was to protect the project of the Enlightenment from the contemporary corruption of irrationalism. Irrationalism was seen to account for both cultural modernism and, most importantly, fascism. The artistic flowering of the Popular Front policy was the doctrine of Socialist Realism, which Lukács fully embraced. Lukács advanced this doctrine throughout the 1930's and the rest of his life through various works.²⁹ "Realism" functions in all three areas I will examine and, in the last area, I will show it to be a particular understanding of Form and Content.

Lukács' explicit work along these lines anticipated the official acceptance of the Popular Front by at least two years.

Unlike Hegel, whose Introduction can be considered a work in the "Philosophy of Fine Art," Lukács' work during the 30's, offers at best a

and then turn to something else." Quoted in Livingstone's "Introduction" to Lukács, Essays on Realism, 20.

²⁷ Susan Sontag suggests that Lukács was exiled not only several times geographically, but also suffered an exile in his subject matter as he looked back with nostalgia, beyond his own time, to the great realistic novel of the 19th century. In "The Literary Criticism of Georg Lukács," Against Interpretation, 85.

²⁸ Lukács writes: "The Popular Front means a struggle for a genuine popular culture, a manifold relationship to every aspect of the life of one's own people as it has developed in its own individual way in the course of history. It means finding the guidelines and slogans which can emerge out of this life of the people and rouse progressive forces to new, politically effective activity." In "Realism in the Balance," Aesthetics and Politics, 57.

²⁹ Though Eric Bentley in his The Brecht Memoir notes that "... long time slave of Stalin, Georg Lukács ... probably did more than any other critic to empty the word Realism of meaning." (34).

critical poetics.³⁰ Lukács tries to make claims about the other arts,³¹ yet he is clearly most grounded when discussing literature and, in particular, the novel.³² Lukács' essays are not precisely literary criticism either, though they take the work of particular authors as their point of departure. Lukács, rather, uses these works as an occasion to diagnose and criticize larger systematic social problems. Lukács' focus on essential trends more than on particular appearances³³ might best be understood as the residue of Hegel's universalism and idealism infecting the proper scope of literary theory or cultural studies, rather than philosophical aesthetics.³⁴

³⁰ Ernst Bloch, for instance, notes that in Lukács' polemic against Expressionism as a cultural tendency, there is no mention of Expressionist painters or musicians. In "Discussing Expressionism," Aesthetics and Politics, 18.

³¹ An instance of Lukács' broader aesthetic claims is: "A good photomontage has the same sort of effect as a good joke." in "Realism in the Balance," Aesthetics and Politics, 43.

³² After an early link with the drama, and such books as The Soul and the Forms (1910), The Metaphysics of Tragedy (1911), and a two-volume The History and Development of Modern Drama (1911), Lukács wrote his most enduring aesthetic work on the novel: his pre-communist The Theory of the Novel (1914) and The Historical Novel (1937). Theodor Adorno, not generally a fan of Lukács, wrote: "Through the depth and élan of its conception as well as the density and intensity of its presentation, extraordinary for its time, The Theory of the Novel in particular established a standard for philosophical aesthetics that still holds today." In "Extorted Reconciliation" in Notes to Literature, Volume One, 216.

³³ For the logocentric Lukács, these essentials are best grasped through theoretical statements: "For I do not accept the view that the theoretical descriptions of artistic movements are unimportant—even when they make statements that are theoretically false. It is at such moments that they let the cat out of the bag and reveal the otherwise carefully concealed 'secrets' of the movement." In "Realism in the Balance," Aesthetics and Politics, 30.

³⁴ Ernst Bloch, for one, pointed out that: "[Lukács'] material is second-hand from the outset; it is literature on Expressionism, which he then proceeds to use as a basis for literary, theoretical and critical judgements. No doubt Lukács' purpose is to explore the 'social base of the movement and the ideological premisses arising from that base.' But it thereby suffers from the methodological limitation that it produces only a concept of concepts, an essay on essays and even lesser pieces." In "Discussing Expressionism," Aesthetics and Politics, 19.

Genre distinctions are a standard task for critical poetics and Lukács' work in this direction appears in his 1937 book, The Historical Novel.³⁵ Unlike lyric poetry,³⁶ which can only grasp the subjective aspects of reality, the drama and the novel both depict the objective, external reality.³⁷ In the book's second chapter, "Historical Novel and Historical Drama,"³⁸ Lukács examines the respective abilities of drama and the novel to portray History, which is the Content of true art.³⁹ On the basis of its ability for historical Realism, Lukács suggests the novel as the pinnacle of literature. Realism, hence, functions as Lukács' principle of division between the genres.

*Frederick Jameson suggests that fuzzy genre distinctions may have been a significant yet unrecognized factor in the Brecht / Lukács debates.*⁴⁰

³⁵ "One has thus to return to the basic differences of form between the drama and novel, uncovering their source in life itself, in order to comprehend the differences of both genres in their relationship to history." The Historical Novel, 90.

³⁶ Adorno notes Lukács' insensitivity to the nuance of the lyric poem: "[Lukács'] ability to appreciate lyric poetry may also be doubted." In "Reconciliation under Duress," Aesthetics and Politics, 70.

³⁷ "Both tragedy and great epic—epic and novel— present the objective outer world; they present the inner life of man only insofar as his feelings and thoughts manifest themselves in deeds and actions, in a visible interaction with objective, outer reality. This is the decisive dividing line between epic and drama on the one hand and lyric on the other." The Historical Novel, 90.

³⁸ The chapter cited appears in The Historical Novel, 89-170.

³⁹ "The driving forces of life are represented in drama only insofar as they lead to these central conflicts, insofar as they are motive forces of these actual collisions. In epic, on the other hand, life appears in all its breadth and wealth." The Historical Novel, 107.

⁴⁰ Jameson's remarks appear in "Notes in Conclusion" to Aesthetics and Politics, 197.

"History and development" is one of Lukács' fixations; the phrase pops up throughout his writings. A few notes on Marxist social theory will assist a discussion of Lukács' literary historiography. Just as the doctrine of Form and Content was the workhorse of Hegel's aesthetics, the doctrine of Base and Superstructure is essential to the critical philosophy of Marx, Engels and their followers. The Base consists of the concrete economic means of production during a period. All else in a culture reflects these relations and is, hence, a part of the Superstructure overlaying this concrete Base. This schema of Base and Superstructure results in a perspective on the arts that both differs from and coincides with Hegel. For instance, instead of an Hegelian *Geistes-geschichte*, a history of the driving Spirit that leaves its trace as culture, one of whose components is art, Marxists write histories of ideologies which, as parts of the Superstructure, flesh out the bones of the concrete economic formations. Neither perspective has much room for an actual history of art as such, only at best a chronicle of the traces that history leaves on art. Like any good Marxist of the time, Lukács accepted this Base/Superstructure arrangement⁴¹ and appeals to this societal totality regularly in his defense of Realism.

The Super-structure, Marxists have come to realize, is not necessarily a simple reflection of the Base: Lukács himself dismisses such a simplistic relationship as crude economism. He and various other thinkers have argued for the possibility of and rationale behind the existence of phenomena in the Superstructure that anticipate change in the Base.

⁴¹ Though Lukács' grasp of totality sounds historicistic, it was not itself historically mutable. When Bloch suggested, on good Marxist ground, that the nature of the dynamic may have changed since Marx described it, Lukács allows no room for "development." At the level of Base and Superstructure, change only occurs quantitatively, not qualitatively. "It goes without saying that our quotation from Marx has to be understood historically—in other words, economic reality as a totality is itself subject to historical change. But these changes consist largely in the way in which all the various aspects of the economy are expanded and

Lukács' broad understanding of Realism functions on one level as an historical tendency. Lukács examines in The Historical Novel the new flowering of History as an artistic subject that has occurred since Sir Walter Scott.⁴² This tendency can be traced through the great realist novels of the 19th century (like Tolstoi) to the great realists of his day (like Thomas Mann). Beyond this specific band of historical literature, Realism means, for Lukács, art that keeps Form and Content, subject and object, in living tension and is hence almost synonymous with great literature. Lukács tries to sweep up the classics of the past (Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe) as Realists in the sense that they contribute to art's progressively comprehensive depictions of total reality.

Lukács also uses Realism in its historiographic sense to criticize past and present trends. On either side of the Realist trend, for Lukács, less than realistic works fail to keep alive this dialectic of Form and Content, of subject and object.⁴³ Expressionism, for instance, falls short of the Realist norm even though it criticized capitalist society because reference was made only to an isolated frame of reference, an individual's reified subjectivity; hence the critique lost touch with the over-arching objective relations that impinge on and overrule subjectivity. For Lukács, then, the Expressionist's social critiques were at best only "romantic anti-capitalism."

intensified, so that the 'totality' becomes ever more closely-knit and substantial." In "Realism in the Balance," Aesthetics and Politics, 31.

⁴² Lukács's project in The Historical Novel is "...a theoretical examination of the interaction between the historical spirit and the great writers of literature which portray the totality of history." 13.

⁴³ "[The 'reportage novelists'] want the objective to be purely objective, the content pure content, without any dialectical interaction with the subjective and formal factors, and in this way they fail to grasp and give adequate expression to both the objective and the content too." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 49.

Trends that fail to establish a living relationship of Form and Content cause mechanical overreactions in other trends that are no better, no more realistic than their stimuli.⁴⁴ The psychological novel of the 19th century (like Dostoyevsky) for instance, constrained its Content to the subjective fixations of individual characters. Lukács believes that the failures of this movement inspired the formalistic experimentation of the "reportage novel" in his own time.⁴⁵ Unlike Hegel, for whom all antitheses led to better syntheses, for Lukács, certain strands of literary history cannot be progressively synthesized but must be rigorously criticized lest culture as a whole lapse into its bourgeois, or worse, irrational/fascist tendencies. Hence, Lukács' literary historiography understandably spills over into his literary criticism.

Brecht accuses Lukács of a "formalism" that forces literary history to stop at the Realism of the 19th century, just short of Modernism. In that sense, Lukács actually seems reminiscent of Aristotle in holding that entities develop only until they actualize the latent perfection of their nature. Could it be that the Aristotle against whom Brecht so vehemently kicks his theoretical heels is not the long-dead ancient Greek but the contemporary Hungarian?

⁴⁴ "This mechanical and one-sided exaggeration of the content [of the reportage novelists] leads to an experimentation in form." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 49.

⁴⁵ "Dissatisfaction with the content of the psychological novel, which had become vacuous, provoked a justified opposition to its form. And yet this opposition did not go deeply enough into either the question of content, or that of world outlook." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 46.

Realism is perhaps most important for Lukács as a structural norm, hence the linchpin of his literary criticism. Unlike Hegel, Lukács was quite convinced that his theoretical aesthetic work should criticize and redirect artistic praxis. Lukács, who remained in many ways an Enlightenment humanist, was concerned to specify a realm and identity for art so that art could serve a beneficial and critical effect as propaganda, yet that could keep art from becoming a crass tool in the class struggle. The "reportage novels" of Ernst Ottwalt⁴⁶ provided Lukács the occasion to discuss the proper character of art. In his 1932 essay, "Reportage or Portrayal," Lukács describes the proper relation of Form and Content:

For in the materialist dialectic, Content is the overriding moment that ultimately determines Form, in the living dialectical interaction between the two. For all its dialectically necessary activity, autonomy and inherent dynamic, Form is only the essence of the Content become visible, palpable and concrete (Essays in Realism, 59).

Lukács is careful not to privilege Content without qualification lest he blur art's specific character. Lukács guards against this de-differentiation by accenting the organic relation to totality that an artwork must capture.

Instead of "criticize and redirect," Lukács' theory also works to "ostracize and repress" artists. Brecht for instance said of Lukács and other Party Aparatchiks: "Every one of their criticisms contains a threat." 47

The novels of Ottwalt are unknown in English translation. Lukács' arguments equally address Upton Sinclair.

⁴⁶ The specific novel Lukács addresses is Denn sie wissen was sie tun. Ottwalt also wrote the novel Ruhe und Ordnung and served as joint script writer on Brecht's film Kuhle Wampe before disappearing during police interrogation.

⁴⁷ Walter Benjamin quotes Brecht's remarks in "Conversations with Brecht," Aesthetics and Politics, 97.

The crux of the article is Lukács' distinction between the kind of writing that is appropriate for newspapers, reportage, and that which is appropriate for novels, portrayal. Lukács' distinction develops a role of art that differs from the role of science.⁴⁸ Science, which is a broad enough phenomenon to include newspapers, must report the truth and hence is guided by a correspondence to the facts.⁴⁹ Art, however, must portray the complex set of situations and relations behind the facts.⁵⁰ It is the nature of reportage novels that they forsake the proper task of artworks for more immediate effects, a shallow agitation, not true propaganda. Form and Content, in their proper tensions, are expressed in Realism.

⁴⁸ "The methods of depiction that underlie science and art respectively exclude one another, however much their ultimate basis, the reproduction of reality in thought, might be the same and however profitably each of them can and sometimes must use elements of the other — subordinated to its own underlying method and organically inserted into it." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 51.

⁴⁹ "A good reportage is based on thorough and comprehensive study, embraces a large and well-organized body of facts and presents its examples clearly." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 50. And: "In reportage, what matters above all is that the facts adduced agree in every detail with the actual situation." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 51.

⁵⁰ "[The novelist] has to reproduce the overall process (or else a part of it, linked either explicitly or implicitly to the overall process) by disclosing its actual and essential driving forces." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 51-52.

The relationship between these facts and examples, on the one hand, and overall relationships and driving forces, on the other, greatly resembles the way particulars and universals related for Hegel. Like Hegel, Lukács accents the totality,⁵¹ yet for Lukács it is art that accesses this totality, not philosophy. Particulars appear in reportage as examples, illustrations that are totally interchangeable with other typical cases. Individual portraits, however are the building blocks of true portrayal:⁵² they are "accidents" used to express the "necessary."⁵³

Lukács often seems to skirt between a genuinely dialectic understanding of antagonistic yet inseparable realities and merely the obsessive qualifications made by anyone fearing harsh reprisals.

The defense made by Ottwalt of his novels is based on their efficacy, that they have proven themselves effective in educating workers of their true condition under capitalism.⁵⁴ Ottwalt's defense, however, does not hold credence for Lukács.⁵⁵ Lukács resists all attempts to derive the character of

⁵¹ "Any partial truth that is separated from the whole and fixed rigidly on itself, while giving itself out as the whole truth, is necessarily transformed into a distortion of the truth." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 55.

⁵² The concrete totality of literary portrayal deals only with individuals and individual destinies, whose living interactions illuminate, complement and make each other comprehensible, the connection between such individuals being what makes the whole typical." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 50.

⁵³ "Accident does not cease to be accident because necessity finds expression through it, nor does necessity cease to be necessary because it is occasioned by an accident." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 58.

⁵⁴ Ottwalt responded to Lukács' original criticism saying: "The object to be analyzed is not the creative method, but rather the functional significance that a book has in a specific situation, determined by specific economic and political circumstances." As quoted by Lukács in "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 63.

⁵⁵ "Ottwalt omits the link between fact and practice, i.e. the recognition of objectively operating dialectical laws. He ties 'fact' i.e. surface appearance not yet understood as conforming to law, to an immediate reality without the necessary mediation with praxis, which is therefore deformed into mere 'practicism'." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 72.

artworks from their socially useful roles, since this results in a "de-natured" art. Lukács hence argues against all pragmatic definitions of art as well as resulting practices such as agitprop theatre.⁵⁶

Though Lukács does not allow the nature of art to be reduced to its effects, he does not argue that art is socially useless. Art actually has a grand task: to humanize or de-mystify what capitalism has reified by re-establishing the relation of the reified phenomenon to the social totality.⁵⁷ Reification is a concept that Lukács developed earlier in the 1920's.⁵⁸ The concept of reification develops the work of Marx and Engels on commodity fetishism, that under capitalism, certain fragments of the whole attain a sacrosanct status and illegitimately exempt themselves from the process of social transformation. These phenomena which should gain their identity as parts of the whole, become self-legitimizing, rigid and hence regressive. The task of art is to humanize these cultural idols by relating them organically back within the totality of social relations.

Re-relationing is a difficult task since it can err by being too superficial a critique, hence legitimating the reified phenomena by presenting them as inevitable and irreversible, or that its criticisms are too transcendent, hence not connected to the phenomena criticized and hence not substantial. Lukács criticizes Ottwalt's novel for making the injustices depicted seem inevitable,

⁵⁶ " 'Practicism' of this kind, the result of which is a one-sided and exclusive emphasis on agitation, neglect of propaganda and scorn for methodological investigations, runs through Comrade Ottwalt's treatise like a red thread." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 65.

⁵⁷ "Portrayal of the overall process is the precondition for a correct construction. Why is this? Because only portrayal of the overall process can dissolve the fetishism of the economic and social forms of capitalist society, so that these appear as what they actually are, i.e. (class) relations between people." In "Reportage or Portrayal," Essays on Realism, 53.

⁵⁸ Reification is a term already important for Lukács in his famous History and Class Consciousness (1923).

hence, to use an 1980's phrase, readers would not be empowered to change those unjust circumstances. Lukács contrasts Ottwalt's book to a novel that better succeeds with similar subject matter, Tolstoi's last novel, Resurrection. Once again, the perfect living relationship necessary to combat the alienating mechanisms of capitalism can be found, Lukács assures us, in the work of the great Realists.

Georg Lukács was so concerned with explicating a systematic case, he was often slow to realize that he was not entirely alone: his focus on universals blinded him to sympathetic particulars. Adorno notes that Lukács slowly was able to appreciate the "realism" of Kafka only after having been imprisoned in 1956. Only in the 1960's (after Brecht's death) was Lukács able to claim Brecht, especially the late Brecht, as great Realism. Lukács perhaps has most to teach us as a living example of the dangers of transcendent aesthetics.

*An example of
Lukácsian innuendo:
Lukács writes at the
same time and place
as Stalin's purge
trials (Moscow
1936-8).*

• Theodor Adorno and his appreciation of Beckett •

Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), a savvy and nuanced German Marxist and critic of culture, stands as another almost inevitably convenient figure for this study. Adorno is commended for this project by both his deadly and astute criticism of Sartre's "committed" literature, as well as his penetrating insights into Samuel Beckett as true art in the era of the "culture industry." In this section, I will sketch Adorno's positions in the essays "Commitment (1962),"⁵⁹ "Trying to Understand Endgame (1961)"⁶⁰ and to some extent Aesthetic Theory (1969). Adorno's cultural and literary analyses are important in carrying this study across the gulf that is WWII. To cross, however, we must abandon the grand questions learned from Hegel that we posed of Lukács: after Auschwitz and Hiroshima, such exalted projects, even for theoretical aesthetics, make little sense more than repression. Hence, in this section, I will examine these more modest concerns: the condition of autonomous art in the age of High Capitalism, why Beckett is such a good example of autonomous art and how Sartre's "committed" literature is inadequate. As could have been expected, the doctrine of Form and Content, proves itself pernicious enough to survive into this half of the 20th century.

Adorno published the works considered here during the sixties, the era of agitprop and guerilla theatre on both sides of the Wall. Adorno's overarching concern, in his aesthetic theory as elsewhere, is the increasing control surrendered to purposive reason in the age of High Capitalism. Such an instrumental and pragmatic view of reason, and culture in general, understands the practices of

⁵⁹ The edition of "Commitment" cited appears in Notes to Literature, II, 76-94.

life as merely means to ends, a purposivity separable from particular ends sought. Hence Adorno could not back the swelling enthusiasm for political demonstrations, such as propagandistic theatre, and, for this lack of support, he garnered much criticism, especially in his last years.

Adorno writes on Beckett at roughly the same time as Müller experiments with the Lehrstücke (1958-1970).

Art, for Adorno, does not have an eternally essential nature⁶¹ and hence it must constantly face its own mortality, the possibility of its historical demise.⁶² For the moment, though, art has a complex and socially contradictory character.⁶³ True art is both autonomous, obeying an immanent law of form, and it is socially heteronomous, unable to entirely erase from itself the existential facts of the the society that gave it nurture.⁶⁴ True autonomous art must be distinguished from works that only satisfy the tastes of society's marketplace, that is, from the culinary art of the culture industry. Autonomous art, through its contradictory character and mediated antagonism to society, occupies a unique critical niche.⁶⁵ Artistic Form, through the distinctive

⁶⁰ The edition of "Trying to Understand Endgame" cited appears in Notes to Literature, I, 241-275.

⁶¹ "The concept of art balks at being defined for it is a historically changing constellation of moments." Aesthetic Theory, 3.

⁶² "The Hegelian notion of the possible withering away of art is consistent with the historical essence of art as a product of becoming." Aesthetic Theory, 4.

⁶³ "Art is and is not being-for-itself. Without a heteronomous moment, art cannot achieve autonomy." Aesthetic Theory, 9.

⁶⁴ "In art, the criterion of success is twofold: first, works of art must be able to integrate materials and details into their immanent law of form; and second, they must not try to erase the fractures left by the process of integration, preserving instead in the aesthetic whole the traces of those elements which resisted integration." Aesthetic Theory, 10.

⁶⁵ "The unqualified autonomy of works that refrain from adaptation to the market involuntarily becomes an attack. That attack, however, is not an abstract one, not an invariant stance taken by all works of art toward a world that does not forgive them for not completely

aesthetic character of art, is inseparable from Content which by its nature implicates society.⁶⁶

Adorno's criticism of Lukács and socialist realism is instructive. Adorno inverts Lukács' criticism of modern art.⁶⁷ Adorno asserts that by insisting on Socialist Realism, Lukács has extorted a reconciliation from Form and Content, forced a premature atonement of subject and object made under duress rather than their true synthesis.⁶⁸ Further, Lukács' assertion of Content's primacy belies an essential misunderstanding of the necessity of Form in art.⁶⁹ Lukács' legitimation of art at all must be in bad faith: art is best when it is discursive, when it is most like philosophy. Lukács' plea for socialist realism fails, says Adorno, because in such realism, the contested struggle of Form and Content is a fixed fight, prematurely decided in favor of Content.

fitting in. Rather, the work of art's detachment from empirical reality is at the same time mediated by that reality." In "Commitment," Notes to Literature, II, 89.

⁶⁶ "There is no privileged single category, not even the aesthetically central one of form, that defines the essence of art and suffices to judge its product." Aesthetic Theory, 10.

⁶⁷ Susan Sontag, though perhaps responding to tendencies in earlier Adorno, is simply misguided, when, in her criticism of new left thinkers in 1965, she lumps Adorno with Lukács and Benjamin as those who cannot understand avant-garde modernism. In "The Literary Criticism of Georg Lukács," Against Interpretation, 90.

⁶⁸ "What is presented as socialist realism is not, as is claimed, something beyond subjectivism but rather something that lags behinds it, and at the same time the pre-artistic complement of subjectivism." In "Trying to Understand Endgame," Notes to Literature, I, 250.

⁶⁹ "[Lukács] willfully misinterprets the form-constitutive moments of modern art as accidental, contingent additions to an inflated subject, instead of recognizing their objective functions in the aesthetic substance." In "Extorted Reconciliation: On Georg Lukács' Realism in our Time," Notes to Literature, I, 218.

For Adorno, a full and true synthesis of Form and Content, subject and object is found in the moral-less fables of Kafka and in Beckett's anti-drama. Beckett was an important figure for Adorno, as a vital and relevant playwright who had not surrendered to crass politicization nor pandered to jaded palates. Beckett, in Adorno's estimation, had succeeded in transcending and critiquing both sets of expectations.⁷⁰ The particular work of Beckett's that Adorno analyzed in depth was the chilling one-act Endgame (1958).

Adorno intended to dedicate the post-humously published Aesthetic Theory to Beckett.

The doctrine of Form and Content must be subtly employed to grasp Endgame. The play's Content refuses any easily discursive re-statement, but a crude approximation is human meaninglessness. The import of that Content, though, makes ludicrous any such baldly direct paraphrases.⁷¹ So, though Beckett may share affinities with post-War existentialism,⁷² that resemblance is fully mediated by artistic Form.⁷³ Faced with the yawning horror of the absurd even the historically developed forms of theatre gasp for their existence.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ "Between poetic euphemisms and discursive barbarity there is indeed precious little room for true art. It is this small in-between space that is Beckett's terrain." Aesthetic Theory, 47.

⁷¹ "Drama cannot simply take negative meaning, or the absence of meaning, as its content without everything peculiar to it being affected to the point of turning into its opposite." In "Trying to Understand Endgame," Notes to Literature, I, 242.

⁷² "Beckett's oeuvre has many things in common with Parisian existentialism. It is shot through with reminiscences of the categories of absurdity, situation, and decision or the failure to decide, the way medieval ruins permeate Kafka's monstrous house in the suburbs." In "Trying to Understand Endgame," Notes to Literature, I, 241.

⁷³ "Beckett picks up existential philosophy, which had been standing on its head, and puts it back on its feet." In "Trying to Understand Endgame," Notes to Literature, I, 253.

⁷⁴ "[In Endgame] the three Aristotelian unities are preserved, but drama itself has to fight for its life." In "Trying to Understand Endgame," Notes to Literature, I, 259.

Beckett does not invent tricky new devices for his subject matter: such pragmatic ingenuity is forbidden him. Beckett rather parodies existing forms.⁷⁵ The existential horror of Endgame is mediated through and through by artistic Form, hence the piece achieves that enigmatic fluorescence that, for Adorno, is true art.

To best understand the success of Beckett, in Adorno's eyes, contrast can be made to Adorno's estimation of the theatre of Sartre. For Adorno, Sartre the existentialist philosopher works too directly with Sartre the existentialist playwright.⁷⁶ The Content of Sartre's drama is quite easily paraphrased, for instance, "Hell is other people! (No Exit)," thus the Content puts up little struggle with the drama's Form. Worse still is the fact that this epithet is spouted, in perfect tragic anagnorisis, by one of Sartre's characters. All that Sartre has managed, notes Adorno, is to take the familiar old wineskin of the pièce à thèse and fill it with existentialist milk, unaware of how the two might curdle.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ "In its emphatic sense, parody means the use of forms in the era of their impossibility. It demonstrates this impossibility and by doing so alters the forms." In "Trying to Understand Endgame," Notes to Literature, I, 259.

⁷⁶ "The sentence 'Hell is other people,' which concludes one of Sartre's most famous plays, sounds like a quotation from Being and Nothingness." In "Commitment," Notes to Literature, II, 81).

⁷⁷ "The substance of works is not the spirit that was pumped into them; if anything, it is the opposite." In "Commitment," Notes to Literature, II, 93.

In 1949, Sartre offered a rationale for his literary works in his essay "What is Literature?" Here, Sartre defends the practice of "committed" writing basing his defense on the passionate engagement of the artist with his material. Adorno notes that, however well intentioned Sartre was in professing truth through his deeply committed axioms, such discursive communication is antithetical to art,⁷⁸ as well as, ironically, Sartre's message itself. Absurdity, when proclaimed by Sartre, acquires a "doctrinal universality" despite the fact that it swears to "the creed of the irreducibility of individual existence." Adorno concludes that Beckett's work is more successful as art and more disturbing than Sartre's because it actually arouses "the anxiety that existentialism only talks about" ("Commitment," 90).

Adorno's criticisms of Sartre could be read as a true existentialist evicting an academic existentialist from the fold. Adorno's protest against the "jargon of authenticity" re-asserts the true terror of the authentic, the face-to-face encounter with existence.

In another section of the essay "Commitment," Adorno extends his criticisms to Brecht, yet the tightest formulation of Adorno's stinging and precise condemnation can be found in Aesthetic Theory: "Artists who think that the content of their works is what they consciously put into them are naive and rationalistic in the worst sense of the word. Brecht is one of them" (Aesthetic Theory, 40). The majority of Brecht's opus convicts him guilty as charged, yet the theory and practice of the Lehrstücke may, however, as didactic dramas that teach by doing rather than by preaching, exhibit a Content well congealed with Form. To see this, though, the Lehrstücke must be viewed as Lehrstücke, that

⁷⁸ "Art is not a matter of pointing up alternatives but rather of resisting, solely through artistic form, the course of the world, which continues to hold a pistol to the heads of human beings." In "Commitment," Notes to Literature, II, 80.

is, as teaching/learning pieces. Brecht's whole didactic impulse for his art, however, makes Adorno squeamish.

Theodor Adorno was a passionate, candid, and astute truth-teller. His work on literature and art is only a fragment of his whole, wide-scoped oeuvre. His analyses of art cannot be pigeon-holed as aesthetic formalism, though within the aesthetic realm, form has complete sovereignty. Adorno's criticisms of Sartre succeed with deadly accuracy showing how a grasp of the Form/Content doctrine destroys art if it is not applied with a rigorous dialectic. These same criticisms, however, might also suggest an intrinsic liability to the doctrine itself.

• Form and Content Reconsidered •

In the preceding remarks, a philosophical doctrine has been traced through modern aesthetic theory, a doctrine that understands Form and Content as two aspects of artworks which necessarily stand in more-or-less unreconcilable tension with each other. This dialectical understanding of Form and Content has been shown to be at least internally coherent. When considered immanently, the doctrine makes a great deal of sense: artworks, as humanly-crafted aesthetic phenomena, do seem to have a distinctly dual nature. On one hand, artworks capture and convey a nuance, a glimpse of aesthetic knowledge about the world around us. On the other hand, artworks are crafted artifacts or practices requiring talent honed to skill in the manipulation of a medium. Artworks do seem to be both Content and Form, artistic conception and artful craft, aesthetic insight and accomplished technique.

However, not all human aesthetic artifacts and practices are artworks, so defined. Ornamentation, for instance, is an aesthetic enhancement of another kind of artifact or practice, usually of a technical sort. Wallpaper, for instance, is as much an aesthetic phenomenon as a framed woodcut by Barlach: both make the wall on which they hang more visible in an aesthetic way. But it is mistaken to talk about even well-designed wallpaper as if it were an artwork. One could also say: when an observer appreciates the Barlach print, it is not precisely the wall that is examined, but more a fictive universe that happens to be co-extensive with the wall. Ornamentation, though, as human aesthetic endeavor, is not adequately addressed by Form and Content.

A different kind of problem for the comprehensiveness of the Form/Content doctrine is raised by didactic art. To the extent that a didactic artwork is art, and not an aesthetic enhancement, it is fully an aesthetically qualified phenomenon. However, in a didactic artwork, two different kinds of "content" are simultaneously present: the aesthetic nuance and the lesson to be taught. Both must be present in a work for it to be didactic art. Well-styled lesson plans are like wallpaper, an aesthetically enhanced curriculum perhaps, but not properly art. Equally, artworks sometimes bend over backwards in an attempt to make a point, philosophically, politically, confessionally, as if the artist had a bad conscience for doing "only" art. Neither are didactic art per se. The question for theory that is posed by didactic art is to find a character for art that will not preclude art from adopting other societal roles in addition to its role as art. The trick for such a theory would be to account for how an artwork can retain its ambiguous nuance, its glory as art, while picking up another qualifying focus. The doctrine of Form and Content, as it has been traced does not allow such heteronomous roles for art.

• **A Different Schema: Interlaced Artworks** •

I am reminded of a cartoon by Charles Adams that depicts a roomful of pre-Columbian artifacts in an art museum. A man stands in front of one of the statues with his hand in his breast pocket and the other hand clutching a rope which is tied around the neck of a goat. In the corner, one security guard asks another one: "Is it all right if he makes a small sacrifice in front of it?" The humor of this cartoon bubbles up from the juxtaposition of two ways that the statue can be appreciated: as an object for pure aesthetic contemplation and as an artistically accomplished object for worship.

*Who has ever had
time for pure
aesthetic
contemplation?*

Such bifurcated appreciation might possibly stem from the object itself. An object that seems to demand simultaneously two different types of response could be called "interlaced," as if two foci interlace and interpenetrate while each remains wholly itself.⁷⁹ Interlacement,⁸⁰ I believe, is a better concept for understanding didactic art, than is the notion of Form and Content. To justify this

⁷⁹ The pre-Columbian statue is a better example, not of an interlaced artwork, but the imperialist dynamic implicit in re-reading the entire history of human aesthetic activity as if it always has been art-as-such. This re-interpretation allows the ornamented artifacts of "primitive" cultures to be plundered and directly consumed as art. This consumption, though momentarily satisfying for the empire, is destined for indigestion, since the intrinsic character of the artifact will continue to assert itself, toward the realized liberation of its identity. The character of an artifact, I believe, can never be dissolved without remainder into its societal object functions.

⁸⁰ My selection of the term "interlacement" owes a debt to the doctrine of "enkaptic interlacement" of Herman Dooyeweerd. Dooyeweerd explains: "*enkapsis* takes place, when one structure of individuality restrictively *binds* a second structure of a different radical- or genotype, without destroying the peculiar character of the latter (*A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, III, 125f.). However, Dooyeweerd's jargonic formulation offends my ear. Calvin Seerveld has de-jargonized the doctrine with "incapsulated" artworks. "Incapsulation," however, sounds a bit too similar to an Aristotelian form, hence my term "interlaced" artworks.

assertion, the concept of interlacement and in particular, interlaced artworks, will be briefly explained and discussed.

Interlacement is a theory that attempts to describe relations between phenomena that do not relate as parts do to wholes, but rather as wholes operating in the context of larger wholes. A perfectly interlaced phenomenon resembles a non-parasitic symbiosis, where both parties benefit and retain an independent character.

An example of interlacement, used by Hart⁸¹ is the relationship of a molecule to a cell. The molecule is a whole, an integrated chemical "functor," as Hart describes it, and continues to behave chemically even though it is "folded into" a biological structure, a cell. The cell, however, is also a whole which obeys its own biological ordering principles. While the cell is alive, the molecule behaves bio-chemically, and the cell is able to ingest and respond to chemical nutrients. The cell is not the molecule nor the molecule, the cell; rather both cell and molecule exist in an interlaced relationship.

Interlaced art, in the sense of didactic art, is a slightly different matter.⁸² From the perspective of didactic art as art, the work must achieve a coherence of its technical and aesthetic moments described above as Form and Content. These artistic facets are enfolded in an educative project. To this extent, the interlacement of a didactic artwork is similar to that of a cell and its molecules.

⁸¹ Hart discusses what he calls "enkaptic relations" in Understanding our World: An Integral Ontology, 218-221.

⁸² Dooyeweerd suggests that even works of art-as-such exhibit an "enkaptic" interlacement. Dooyeweerd's example is that of a marble statue. The statue as chemical (crystallized CaCO_3) is interlaced with the statue as aesthetic *Abbild*. The marble material would continue to behave as marble even if the statue as aesthetic object ceased, though for the moment, the marble exists as artistic material (A New Critique of Theoretical Thought, III, 123-128.)

But "art" and "education" do not exist as entities the way that molecules and cells do; the project of "art" and "education" depend upon human cultivating activity to activate and sustain them.⁸³ Humans establish societal institutions, such as theatres and schools, to manifest their understanding of these non-entitrary wholes such as "art" and "education." Didactic art must jibe with historical human endeavors in art and in education. Some of the problems didactic art must solve become evident when we realize that there is little ground of overlap between the projects of art and education that current theatres and schools seem to imply; theatres (as art institutions) are largely arranged as places where comfortably middle-class people relax after work, an option that is a little more "high-brow" than a television set, and schools (as educational institutions) are set up as locations where enculturation and training are inflicted on children, non-workers who have little say in the matter. Didactic art must not so much mediate the essential contradiction between the nature of "art" and "education," as it must maneuver viably competent works through a system of educational and artistic institutions and in so doing change the way such institutions are understood and hence, run. Didactic artworks, unlike cells, are made not born.

One warning about the misapplication of this theory of interlacement will conclude this sketch. There should be no hierarchical or progressive import given to the classification of aesthetic products into ornamentation, art-as-such and interlaced artworks. Granted, historically speaking, art-as-such arose from ornamentation, gradually discovering its own immanent laws and becoming "auto-nomous" by overfulfilling the demands of aesthetic enhancement. However, ornamentation has not been made obsolete by the rise of art-as-

⁸³ Granted, human culture does not create such normatively guiding mandates as "art" or "education" ex nihilo, but human subject-functioning is a necessary though not sufficient condition for the existence of such cultural projects.

such. Similarly, interlaced artworks perhaps require a differentiated society with relatively distinct societal institutions, but interlaced art does not replace ornamentation nor art-as-such. All things being equal, which historically they never are, there is room in Creation for ornamentation, art-as-such and interlaced artworks. None of these categorical distinctions should imply an a priori validation of a type; nuanced criticism remains an ever-present need to discern and assess the relative successes and impact of cultural phenomena. There can be bad ornamentation, incompetent art and Adorno's stinging criticisms of Brecht suggest that, in attempting to be more than art, interlaced artworks sometimes end up being less than art.

The reasons why Brecht's plays and the *Lehrstück* in particular, seem particularly good examples of 20th century attempts at interlaced art will be explored more fully in the next chapter, but let two examples here suggest the rest. 1) Walter Benjamin, for one, as well as Brecht himself has compared the practice of "epic" theatre to the medieval mystery plays. 2) Brecht also subtitled one of the first collections of his work published in English, "Parables for the Theatre." The parable, in contrast to the fable, and the mystery play, seem two, fertile historical models for interlaced artworks. The theory of interlaced artworks should provide a philosophical ground for approaching the *Lehrstück* and gaining comprehensive insights to its nature, without baptizing Brecht's every didactic utterance as sacrosanct.

II. Brecht

Without the work of Bertolt Brecht, there probably would be no Lehrstücke to examine. Yet the overall object of this examination is not "Brecht's" Lehrstücke, but rather the Lehrstück as such. The danger of reification lurks close to such a project, that is, that the Lehrstück might acquire the status of a pre-existing entity that Brecht only discovered, rather than a crafted artifact, hence an object of human historical responsibility. This potential problem will be headed off by carefully distinguishing and relating the Lehrstücke to Brecht's overall career. In this chapter, Brecht's oeuvre excluding the Lehrstücke will be sketched in order to locate the Lehrstücke in the overall narrative of Brecht's career.

*Without the work of
Brecht's
"collaborators,"
especially Elisabeth
Hauptmann, Kurt
Weill, Paul
Hindemith, there
also might be no
Lehrstücke.*

Where are the Lehrstücke?

The title of this chapter implies a double meaning since the overall effect, that of locating the Lehrstücke in Brecht's oeuvre, will be accomplished by sketching Brecht's career through the points plotted by the particular places where he worked.¹ The areas that Brecht inhabited to be examined are: Augsburg and Munich (1898-1924),² Berlin (1924-1933),³ Scandinavia (1934-1939),⁴ California (1941-1947),⁵ and Berlin (1948-1956). Since Brecht as a playwright concerns this study most, rather than a pure biography of Brecht the man, one work important to each location will be briefly examined, with more emphasis being placed on the works that pre-date the Lehrstücke. The object of this section will be to sketch Brecht's concerns as they irrupt in his career as a playwright.

¹ From a strictly geographical approach, the Lehrstücke are not rigorously distinct since, though most were written in Berlin, some were completed in exile.

² From 1921-1924, Brecht spent an increasingly large amount of time in Berlin.

³ Brecht, his wife Helene Weigel, and two children Stefan and Barbara, left Germany in 1933, traveling through Prague, Vienna, Zürich, a summer in Paris before arriving in Denmark.

⁴ Brecht and entourage left Denmark, passed through Sweden, Finland and a brief stay in Moscow before arriving in California.

⁵ Upon leaving California, Brecht spent time in Switzerland and Vienna, trying to establish residency, writing: "I cannot settle in one part of Germany and thus become dead to the other part." From a letter to Gottfried von Einem, quoted by Ewen, 432.

Augsburg and Munich: Baal

Bertolt Brecht (1896-1956) was born and raised in the small south German city Augsburg. While still living in Augsburg, he wrote most of the poems that were later to appear as Manual of Piety (Hauspostille), a book of irreverent poems modeled on the Protestant breviary. Brecht also wrote drama criticism for the Augsburg *Tageszeitung* and left Socialist organ *Die Augsburger Volkswille*. Brecht won the 1922 Kleist prize,⁶ for his three dramas, Baal, Drums in the Night (Trommeln in die Nacht) and In the Jungle of Cities (Im Dickicht der Städte), a “boxing match” play set in a mythicized American city.⁷ Drums in the Night was perceived as the winning drama, a perception which sparked a Berlin production as well as others and publications of Baal and Drums. The award succeeded in attracting attention to the irrepressible Brecht as a playwright.⁸

Brecht presented Drums to noted man-of-letters Lion Feuchtwanger as if he had written it only for money. When Feuchtwanger noticed true talent in the script, Brecht dismissed the compliment of Drums but suggested that his earlier play, Baal, was really good. In addition to lending early support, Feuchtwanger would later collaborate with Brecht on the strongly adapted version of Marlowe's Edward the Second that Brecht directed at the Munich Kammerspiele in 1924.

⁶ The Kleist Prize was a prestigious award established in 1911. Other winners included Ernst Barlach, Carl Zuckmayer and Anna Seghers.

⁷ Brecht's first play produced, Drums in the Night (written in 1919, premièred in 1922), was not the first play he had written, which was Baal (first draft, 1918). Drums in the Night was originally entitled Spartacus, after the failed revolution of 1917. In later years, Brecht considered not including Drums in his East German Collected Works, because the young revolutionary decides to stay with his unfaithful lover rather than join the coup.

⁸ John Willett writes of Brecht as a story-writer in 1924: “With [Elisabeth Hauptman's] aid, he began submitting short stories to a number of newspapers and magazines, partly perhaps as a means of keeping his name before the reading public, but also as a source of income till his plays should reach the Berlin stage. It was not until 1928 — the year of his prize-winning story “The Monster” — that he scored his enormous and largely unexpected hit with The Three Penny Opera, but if this gave him added reason to circulate his secondary writings

Brecht's Baal (first draft, 1918) responds as a sort of counter-play⁹ to The Lonely One (Der Einsame, 1917) by Hans Johst. Johst, who would soon be a Nazi, based his play on the life of the anti-Semite and rival of Heinrich Heine, Christian Grabbe (1801-1836). In contrast to Johst's idealized, *übermenschliche* hero, Brecht poses Baal, a character just unreservedly licentious, rather than in any self-justifying sense beyond good and evil.

The immorality presented in Baal did not commend it for widespread production: after the 1926 Berlin production, the script was unproduced for almost 40 years.

Baal's "fecal and erotic anti-humanism"¹⁰ suggests an affinity with Frank Wedekind (1864-1918), who in plays, such as Spring's Awakening (Frühlings Erwachen, 1891) and the Lulu plays (Erdgeist, 1898 and Die Büchse der Pandora, 1902), managed to offend popular morality with frank depictions of sensuality and sexuality, not to mention portrayals of the deadening restrictions of the popular morality. Brecht inherited not so much the erotic dimension of Wedekind but Wedekind's affection for scandal and outrage, and perhaps, an odd sense of humanism.¹¹

Wedekind was an accomplished cabaret performer whom Brecht saw perform. Cabaret bears many similarities to the episodic qualities of "epic" theater

in the wake of that work's triumphal progress it once again distracted him from producing more." From "Introduction" to Collected Short Stories, X.

⁹ Eric Bentley writes, in his introduction to his translation of Brecht's adapted Edward II: "The Brechtian counter-play is always a sort of serious parody, converting the sublime to the grotesque." x.

¹⁰ Ewen uses this catchy (but perhaps self-revealing) phrase to describe Baal. Bertolt Brecht: His Life, His Art, and His Times, 95.

¹¹ The young Brecht eulogized Wedekind in the *Augsburger Neueste Nachrichten*: "It was

If Wedekind is Brecht's dramatic father, Georg Büchner is perhaps his grandfather. In Baal, Brecht exposed a coarse underside to the stock character of Expressionist drama, the sublime poet who bewailed the debased state of *Menschlichkeit*. Brecht wrote of his character: "Baal eats, Baal drinks, Baal is transfigured."¹² Baal, though, is not a mere satire at Expressionism's expense; Brecht's early work overlaps Expressionism in several areas. The episodic structure, which Brecht was to employ in most of his works, was significantly similar to the Expressionist *Stationendramen*: both feature one scene after another instead of any tightly coiled plot. The common ancestor for this snaking dramatic structure was Georg Büchner (1813-1837) whose works were only first getting produced around the turn of this century.¹³

Brecht also picked up and carried throughout his career the central Expressionist motif of change, though he would come to develop it along different lines. For Expressionism, the revivifying change the society needed could be achieved through a poetic call for humans to renew themselves internally and become more human on a personal level. Brecht saw through this sentimental individualism and exhorted social change as the only means to true interior regeneration.

the man's intense aliveness, the energy which allowed him to defy sniggering ridicule and proclaim his brazen hymn to humanity, that also gave him this personal magic." Brecht on Theatre, 3.

¹² In a Prologue to the 1918 version. Collected Plays, Volume One, p 343.

¹³ Danton's Tod was not produced until 1902 and Woyzeck not until 1913.

Berlin: The Three Penny Opera

In 1924, Brecht moved to Berlin, the wicked, decadent city of prostitutes, whisky, cabarets, not to mention theatres. During his first few years there, Brecht was able to see productions of In the Jungle of Cities and Baal as well as the publication of his first book of poems Hauspostille. Among the works that he produced during these first years were his chilling comedy A Man's a Man (Mann ist Mann, 1926) and the small "Singspiel" Mahagonny (1927) which began his famous collaboration with Kurt Weill. The Brecht/Weill team hit pay-dirt with The Three Penny Opera (Die Dreigroschenoper, 1928), the immensely successful work which established Brecht as a playwright. The play itself well illustrates a couple aspects of Brecht's oeuvre: his penchant for adaptation and the use of music.

In Three Penny Opera, Brecht re-worked wholesale the English drama The Beggar's Opera (1728) by John Gay. Though adaptation was nothing new to Brecht's creative process, the success of this work helped draw stronger charges of plagiarism.¹⁴ A better way of understanding the parodic tropes of Brecht's dramas, perhaps, is the quality, that Brecht would later espouse in acting, of being able to hear both the character and the actor, both the creative playwright and the inherited material with which he worked.

In one form or another, the Three Penny Opera would occupy Brecht until his exile. After its successful theatrical run the work was made into a film (1931), directed by G.W.Pabst. Brecht objected to the film, sued Pabst and lost. Brecht published his response to the trial as "The Three Penny Lawsuit" and Brecht used his work on the film-script in his Three Penny Novel.

¹⁴ The epigram by Kurt Tucholsky sums up the charges of plagiarism against Brecht:
 "Who's the play by?
 The play's by Brecht.
 Then who's the play by?" Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht, 94.

The Three Penny Opera also illustrates Brecht's abiding interest in music.¹⁵ Brecht's well-theorized use of music (or "misuc" as he described it) as a technique to interrupt and criticize narrative connections has been documented both by Brecht¹⁶ and by others.¹⁷ The Three Penny Opera, like Gay's piece, is a reformulation (an innovation not a mere renovation) of the popular opera. Brecht's fascination with music is further worked out in The Happy End, a *Singspiel* that tried in vain to duplicate the success of Three Penny Opera. Brecht and Weill re-worked Mahagonny into a full opera and continued their association into some of the early Lehrstücke. Certain forms of "Neue Musik" such as the *Zeitoper*, *Gebrauchsmusik* and *Gemeinschaftsmusik*, we shall see, in turn influenced Brecht in his experiments with the Lehrstück.

Like Brecht, a theater intellectual, the composers with whom he worked were often also of high-brow pedigree: Kurt Weill (1900-1950) studied with Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924), an anti-Wagnerian avant-garde opera composer; Hans Eisler (1898-1962) was one of Schoenberg's favorite pupils; Paul Hindemith (1895-1963), one of the 20th century's greatest composers, formulated a theory of harmony and composition.

¹⁵ "The most successful demonstration of the epic theatre was the production of The Three Penny Opera in 1928. This was the first use of theatrical music in accordance with a new point of view." From "On the Use of Music in an Epic Theatre" in Brecht on Theatre, 85. However, Willett notes that Brecht's writings about the Three Penny Opera in particular, date after his original work on the project by about two years and Brecht may be ingenuously depicting the true formative inspirations of the work.

¹⁶ Brecht discusses his theory of theatrical music in, for instance, "On the Use of Music in an Epic Theatre" Brecht on Theatre, 84-90.

¹⁷ Two examples of Brechtian discussions of the theory of theatrical music are: Kurt Weill's "Gestus in Music" in The Tulane Drama Review, Volume 6, # 1. 28-33, and Willett's chapter on "The Music" in The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht.

Brecht perhaps viewed The Three Penny Opera as a successful experiment, and like a dutiful scientist, tried to formulate hypotheses to account for this. His next works, the *Lehrstücke*, were to be more experimental. Following the success with the Three Penny Opera, Brecht began to become more seriously interested in Marx, whom he had read since 1926. Brecht had achieved a status and from that position was called on by younger playwrights to offer advice. Brecht would give them a copy of the Communist Manifesto or Engel's Road to Socialism, saying, "Take this as a present. If, after reading them you still believe that your play stands up, then come to me again."¹⁸ In Marx, Brecht found his first true spectator, and in Marxism, Brecht found a tool that enabled him to be more what he wanted to be: critical and hence useful to society. In other words, Brecht's discovery of Marxism, rather than the radical "conversion" that is a commonplace of Brecht criticism, perhaps only sharpened and intensified pre-existing aspects of his writing and life, namely his taste for provocative scandal and artistic utility. Regardless, Brecht's commitment to Marx led to difficulties for him during the rise of National Socialism, whether or not Brecht's name actually appeared on Hitler's famous hit list. These "difficulties" finally convinced him to leave Germany in February, 1933, following the Reichstag fire.

Scandinavia: The Good Woman of Setznan

In exile, Brecht departed slightly from epic theater. He wrote epigrammatic poems to be broadcast into Germany that were concise and line-based so as to avoid interference by radio jamming. Brecht wrote a modular

¹⁸ This incident was reported by Fritz Sternberg, quoted in Ewen's biography of Brecht, page 184.

collection of realistic one-act plays called Fear and Misery in the Third Reich (Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches, 1935-38), one of which Lukács saw and welcomed the prodigal Brecht back to the Realist fold. In Denmark, relatively comfortable yet bereft of a theater, Brecht waited impatiently, thinking that any day he could safely return to Berlin.¹⁹

The Good Woman of Setzuan (Der gute Mensch von Setzuan, 1938-42), written during his exile, illustrates a couple of Brecht's preoccupations : the schizophrenic nature of human identity in modern capitalism and his interest in a mythicized Orient. In this play, the good soul, Shen Te, befriends three traveling gods who return the favour by setting her up as a tobacco merchant. As a small business owner, the very good heartedness that allowed her to go into business now becomes a liability as she is beset by beggars that she cannot refuse. To counter, Shen Te develops a callous alter-ego Shui Ta. The dilemma of her dual identity is not resolved at the end of the play.

The socio-economic construction of identity had been a theme for Brecht at least as early as A Man's a Man (1926). From this perspective, personal identity is not radically prime and prior to social involvement; rather it is dependant on the social roles allowed for it. If identity is so socially constructed, then personal integrity can only happen (without ill effect!) in an integral society; personal integrity, in fact, is itself an oppressive ideal in the contradictory world we now inhabit. This problem of inter-relation of individual and collective, a life-long motif for Brecht, is also a particular concern of the

¹⁹ In the poem "Thoughts on the Duration of Exile (Gedanken über die Dauer des Exils) Brecht wrote:

"Don't knock any nails in the wall
Just throw your coat on the chair.
Why plan for four days?
Tomorrow you'll go back home..." In Poems 1913-1956, 301.

Lehrstücke.

The setting for The Good Woman illustrates another interest of Brecht's. Since Mahagonny, America slowly was supplanted by the Orient in Brecht's imagination as the mythicized location of choice. Brecht began to grow disillusioned with America's greed and vacuousness around the same time that he discovered Arthur Waley's translations of Chinese wisdom and of the Japanese Noh drama.²⁰ This impact is obvious in the Lehrstücke, as we shall see, and can be seen in his poetry even during his sojourn in America.

While fleeing across Asia toward the United States, Brecht witnessed Chinese theater first-hand in Moscow. Brecht reflected on this in the essay "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting."²¹

California: Galileo

The dubious solidity of Brecht's Scandinavian refuge was threatened by political alliances and advancing Nazi troops. Brecht fled for Moscow and then on to California where a number of German emigrés has settled. Brecht was recruited into writing screenplays and into selling the screen rights to his plays.

Technically, Brecht did not write Galileo in America since the first draft was completed already in 1938. However, Galileo was to be one of the most significant productions given Brecht's works while he was in exile in America. The English translation occurred through the close friendship of Brecht with actor Charles Laughton (though Laughton knew no German and Brecht only a

²⁰ "... of all these translators it was undoubtedly Arthur Waley who had the deepest influence on Brecht's theatre (from the late 1920's), poetry (1930's) and even on his Weltanschauung," Patrick Bridgwater's "Arthur Waley and Brecht" 217.

²¹ The essay appears in Willett's Brecht on Theatre, 91-99. The essay is also notable since it features Brecht's first use of the word "*Verfremdung*" as estrangement, a usage probably borrowed from Russian Formalist Victor Shlovsky.

little English!).

The effect of exile on Brecht since it removed many possibilities for immediate production, perhaps contributed to the tender and personal tone in Galileo.²² This play so well exhibits general tendencies in Brecht's work, it could almost be considered a dramatic autobiography. One particular strand of the play that is relevant to the Lehrstücke is the emphasis on education though experimentation.

The character Galileo is Baal, grown and sober. There is still an undercurrent of pleasure²³ but the brutal truth-telling of Baal is refined and given a method. Galileo in many scenes must educate those who are around him who are persecuting him. He carries a pebble in his pocket which he drops to demonstrate gravity. Galileo depicts the relationship of the intellectual to the worker, a life-long problematic for Brecht the playwright dressed in worker's clothes, as a servant, a teacher.

Baal, too, is a truth teller: For instance, in the death scene, the lumbermen who are disgusted that Baal has eaten all the eggs and drank all the Schnapps, though he knows he is dying, spit in his face. Baal laughs in surprise: the spittle tastes good!

A Divided Berlin: Mother Courage

Finally, Brecht was allowed home, to Germany. A production of segments of Fear and Misery in East Germany stirred great interest in Brecht as a communist writer. He was set up in East Berlin with an ensemble, given at last the chance to experiment with and test out his hypotheses about theater.

Mother Courage (Mutter Courage, first version 1938-9) though not

²² Ewen refers to this late Brecht as a kind of "Marxist Humanism."

²³ In scene 11, the Pope describes Galileo: "He has more enjoyment in him than any man I ever saw. He loves eating and drinking and thinking. To excess. He indulges in thinking-bouts! He cannot say no to an old wine or a new thought..."

written during during Brecht's return from exile, was the foundational production of the Berliner Ensemble in 1949. Starring in the title role was Brecht's wife, Helene Weigel. Courage, the character, is perhaps the best known of Brecht's strong female leads. The emergence of a strong female role in Brecht's oeuvre can be directly traced to Brecht's association with Weigel. Brecht first encountered Weigel in the late 1920's when they both worked with the theater maverick, Erwin Piscator, the director who talked about an "epic" theater long before Brecht. Weigel and Brecht were married in 1928 and she may have been instrumental in Brecht's "conversion" to Marxism.²⁴ She became a stock actor for him, playing, for instance, the Young Comrade in the premiere of The Measures Taken. Beginning with St Joan of the Stockyards, Brecht was to start writing roles for strong women, prompted by the strong spirit of his wife. This positive impetus and response should suggest the danger of separating, in any absolute way, a human's artifacts from the historical existence of that human, a danger that this examination of the Lehrstück has tried to avoid by sketching this biographical prologue.

Brecht's Oeuvre: A Summary

A few words of summary will close this examination of Brecht's oeuvre by heightening and clarifying what has been discovered. Brecht's works from start to finish seem to exhibit a "picaresque" and "pragmatistic" character. Since I use those words not as adjectives but as terms in a rather idiosyncratic way,²⁵ a brief explanation is necessary.

²⁴ Bentley writes: "When people ask me if Brecht was a hundred percent communist, I used to answer, no, only ninety-nine but the women in his life: a hundred and one percent." The Brecht Memoir, 70.

²⁵ For insight into the larger historiographic method in which these terms operate, see

Picaresque²⁶

Brecht's writings share a rollicking, provocative character in common with, say, the writings of Chaucer, the paintings of Breughel²⁷ and the best example from Brecht's own time, the character Schweik in Hasek's legendary novel of the First World War, The Good Soldier Schweik.²⁸ This "picaresque" orientation, can be distinguished from the many other enduring outlooks, for instance, a "hedonic" perspective or an "heroic" perspective.

The picaresque Brecht differs, for instance, from Wedekind's eroticism. Wedekind depicts the repression of sexual expression and sensuous exploration as hypocritical given the carnal creatures that humans are. It is this hypocrisy that twists women into being Lulu and men into Jack the Ripper. There is a tragic cachet to Wedekind: sensuous beasts are all we humans are and prudish morality does not even allow us to be this.

Seerveld's "Toward a Cartographic Methodology for Art History."

²⁶ "Picaresque" refers to a kind of life-timbre, a world-and-life-view, that, as a typical pattern of relating to the world, appears across time and location.

²⁷ Brecht wrote about Breughel in "Alienation Effects in the Narrative Pictures of the Elder Brueghel." Brecht on Theatre, 157-159.

²⁸ In an unpublished note (quoted by Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht, 102f.) Brecht wrote: "If anyone asked me to pick three literary works of this century which in my opinion will become part of world literature, then I would say that one of them was Hasek's Adventures of the Good Soldier Schweik." Brecht worked on theatrical adaptations of Schweik twice in his life: once in the late 1920's for Piscator and then again during his exile in America where he wrote Schweik in the Second World War.

In Brecht, even in the early Baal, sensuality has more of a subordinate character. Brecht also seems to reject the essentialism of Wedekind; at best the organic drives and sentiments provide beginning impulses that must be allowed for in societal constructions to be fully realized. If the foundations for kindness could be properly laid at last, then true humanity might appear, true kindness. When Brecht argues that theater must give pleasure, rather than being erotic, it is merely fulfilling its job as entertainment.

*Roland Barthes
argues for an erotic
interpretation of
Brecht, though
perhaps that says
more about Barthes.*

Brecht's life-timbre is also not heroic. Since the contradictions that capitalism brings are experienced internally to humans, tearing their identities apart, no amount of superhuman striving of an individual, no matter how strong, good, true or brave, can rise above and transcend these destructive forces. In contrast to an ideal heroicism, the best example of picaresque character is Schweik, a blinking imbecilic creature that survives the natural selection of a bureaucratic war while the blustering heroes find ways of chopping themselves to pieces. This mercurial duplicity and betrayal is not lauded by Brecht but accepted as the way of the world, at least until the world-wide communist Utopia can be established.

*Brecht's only
unambiguously
good character, his
only "hero," is the
eponymous figure of
The Mother
adapted from
Gorky's novel.*

Pragmatistic²⁹

Brecht's writings also share a range of concerns and impulses in

²⁹ "Pragmatism," as a term, addresses an historically occurring cultural motivation by which works can be identified and recognized as synchronously similar.

common with certain other cultural trends of his own day, including, for examples, aspects of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in literature and painting, Bauhaus in architecture and design, Walter Benjamin's essays "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and "The Artist as Producer." This "pragmatism" can be distinguished from other communal preoccupations occurring at roughly the same time in Germany, for instance, Expressionism and Existentialism .

"Pragmatism" drives a much different kind of human activity than the call for invigoration, vivification and Life made by Expressionism in the arts and *Lebensphilosophie* in philosophy. In Expressionism, the artist was an eccentric individual consciousness that ejaculated humanist melancholia. After the first world war and the failed revolution, the reactionary nature of this warmed over *Schwärmerei* became evident; like a new mother whose baby has been taken away, whose breasts swell painfully with milk, whose milk must be "expressed," the Expressionist task of addressing the effects of alienation hardly encourages such bereaved audiences to search for their stolen child. Brecht and the Weimar spirit of New Sobriety stands against his naive faith in emotion as the litmus test of reality.

Brecht had more in common with the go-getting spirit of the early Renaissance, hence his allusions to Francis Bacon, (Brecht wrote a "Kleines Organon für Theater" as Bacon wrote a "Novum Organon") and his admiration of Galileo Galilei's Discorsi, as the re-birth of experiment-alism and popular education.

If "pragmatism" arose in the response to hopes of Expressionism made vain by WWI, after WWII a general disillusionment arose in existentialism that doubted pragmatism's faith in innovation and progress. Such technical ingenuity that lead to sulfanilamide also resulted in the blasts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Instead of the chastened horror that, for instance Adorno exhorts on this side of the abyss, a horror that silences all gasps at art as it was known before, Brecht looks at the horror and immediately asks, what's to be done about it? Brecht's answer is that these same scientific methods must be applied to human society, as in Marxism, to eliminate the aberrant abuses of human technique.

Brecht did some work toward staging Beckett's Waiting for Godot with the Berliner Ensemble in 1953. Vladimir would have been played as an intellectual; Estragon as a worker and the social relations of the work would have been made explicit. Perhaps Brecht didn't quite get the idea of the piece.

The preceding thumbnail profile has highlighted various concerns that appear in Brecht's career. In the summary, what I have called a picaresque and a pragmatistic character to Brecht's oeuvre has been underlined. This characterization sets the stage for the next chapter's examination of the Lehrstück by suggesting the broad relevance in Brecht's career of the two emphases provocation and utility. In the next chapter, we shall learn that the Lehrstück, as conceived and practiced by Brecht, is particularly provocative and useful theatre.

III. Das Lehrstück

Now that the overall shape of Brecht's career has been sketched through several key works and the general contours of his life-concerns identified, a closer look at the Lehrstücke themselves can proceed that is properly nested in a human context. These Lehrstücke could be examined and the implicit rules of their construction abstracted, along the lines of Aristotle's analysis of Greek tragedy in the Poetics. However, Brecht himself in his discussions with his collaborators had not a few things to say about the character of the Lehrstück, so many in fact that they have been characterized as a coherent Lehrstück-theorie.¹ The relationship between the products of Brecht the playwright and Brecht the theorist concerning the Lehrstück will be the subject of this chapter. In this third chapter, the examination of the Lehrstück as such will fall into three parts: 1) a philosophically primed examination of Brecht's so-called Lehrstück-theorie, 2) a briefly annotated catalog of Brecht's particular Lehrstücke and 3) a discussion of two works Brecht wrote at the same time as the Lehrstücke but which are not Lehrstücke, The Mother and Saint Joan of the Stockyards.

¹ In Reiner Steinweg's ground-breaking 1972 book, Das Lehrstück: Brechts Theorie einer politisch-ästhetischen Erziehung.

LEHRSTÜCK-THEORIE

Sometimes it seems that Brecht had a theory about everything; at least, Brecht managed to think deeply about a variety of matters, and especially those theatrical.² Not the least of these deep thoughts concerned the Lehrstück. For Brecht, the Lehrstücke were not intended for the repertoire of currently existing theatres. The deep-going reformulation of theatre that Brecht envisioned with the Lehrstück involved many specific changes that have been well-documented elsewhere, as in Steinweg (1972), Knopf (1980),³ Kamath (1983).⁴ A simple rehearsal of of this research would be redundant and worse, the radical implications of Brecht's Lehrstück design might still not be made evident. The extent of Brecht's innovations on theatre can be seen better by a comparison to another model of theatre that has been influential on the German stage, the theatrical paradigm presented in the essay "The Stage Considered as a Moral Institution" by Friedrich Schiller. The structure of the following section will be to compare and contrast Brecht's Lehrstück-theorie to Schiller's essay.

² Director Rudolf Frank reminisced of saying to Brecht after a performance of Edward II: "You know that they will chalk up against your plays the fact that you have broken the rules; until you have succeeded in bracing them with a new theory of your own. Invent a theory, dear Brecht! When Germans get a theory, they swallow everything else." Quoted in Ewen, 201.

³ Jan Knopf in his eminently useful encyclopedia of Brecht, the Brecht-Handbuch, perhaps overly concisely, identifies four aspects to Brecht's Lehrstück-theorie: 1) *Verbindung von Tat und Betrachtung*, 2) *Betonung des Produzierens*, 3) *Zueinander-Verhalten statt Aus-Bildung*, 4) *Die Lehre ist nicht primär, sondern sekundär*. Knopf, Brecht-Handbuch, 417-424.

⁴ Rekha Kamath's dissertation on Brecht's Lehrstücke examines several facets of Brecht's Lehrstück-theorie: 1) *Kunst für die Produzenten*, 2) *Einheit von Theorie und Praxis*, 3) *Einheit von Produktion und Konsumption* 4) *Zum Übungscharakter der Lehrstücke*, 5) *Kunst als Organisation des Lebens*, 6) *Einübung in Kollektivität*, 7) *Kunst für Laien*. In Kamath, Brechts Lehrstück-Modell als Bruch mit den bürgerlichen Theatertraditionen.

The essay "The Stage Considered as a Moral Institution"⁵ by Friedrich Schiller (1759 - 1805) is an important document for German theatre. Adorno notes, in arguing against Sartre, that, since Schiller's essay, most German theatre has been "committed literature."⁶ Christopher Innes, in his examination of German theatre since World War II, writes that "... the influence of Brecht could be said to have set the tone and standard for much of modern drama in a way comparable to Ibsen fifty years earlier" but then uses a phrase from Schiller in admitting: "Partly this importance comes from the traditional German view of the stage as a 'moral tribunal,' a political forum."⁷ It is this heritage of German theatre that Brecht addresses and innovates in the *Lehrstück*.

The organization of this comparison will examine three facets of the theatre proposed by Schiller and Brecht: a) theatre and the integration of society, b) the type of instruction proper to theatre and c) the institutional character of the theatre that each man proposes.

⁵ The original title of Schiller's 1784 speech was "Was kann eine gute stehende Schaubühne eigentlich wirken?" or "What can a well-established Theatre accomplish?" This text was first published in 1785. Schiller subsequently revised the text for publication in 1802 and gave the work its more familiar title, "Die Schaubühne als eine moralische Anstalt betrachtet." In citations hence, the essay will be called "Moral Institution."

⁶ "For a tradition extending deep into German Idealism—its first famous document, canonized in the intellectual history of the schoolmasters, was Schiller's treatise on the theatre as a moral institution—art's freedom from purposefulness, which was however, first elevated theoretically to a pure and incorruptible moment of the judgment of taste by a German, Kant, was suspect." In "Commitment" *Notes to Literature*, II, 91.

⁷ Innes' comments appear in *Modern German Drama: A Study in Form*, 1.

INTEGRATION

For both Brecht and Schiller, theatre can have profoundly beneficial effects on human societal life. The similarity between the aims for theatre imagined by Schiller and Brecht is grounded in a fundamentally similar view of human anthropology, where sensual pleasure can be, in principle, united without conflict to intellectual understanding by aesthetic products. For both men, theatre is important in doing this. Schiller writes:

The stage is an institution where pleasure is combined with instruction, rest with exertion, amusement with culture. Not a single faculty is strained to the detriment of another, no pleasure is enjoyed at the expense of the whole.⁸

This description of instruction in peaceful co-habitation with pleasure under the aegis of the aesthetic is reminiscent of Brecht's attitude discussed above, especially in connection with *Galileo*, where the delight of scientific inquiry is regarded as almost a refined type of sensuous pleasure. The anthropological model that Brecht and Schiller hold in common contributes to their understanding of the profound problems each sees as afflicting "modern" society. Though grounded in this common model, Schiller and Brecht make distinct diagnoses of "modern" society.⁹

For Schiller, these twin human impulses of sense and intellect have been established into societal institutions. The higher, external pursuits are

⁸ From Schiller, "Moral Institution," 187.

⁹ Granted, Brecht and Schiller live and respond to two very different ages. However, both men can be seen to address the problem of fragmentation and differentiation in secular "modernity."

worked out in the Law, the State-run adjudication of duties.¹⁰ The lower, animal impulses reach their fulfillment in Religion.¹¹ Between the external duties of Law and internal directives of Religion,¹² there is, in principle, no common ground and in fact, there seems to exist a widening gap.¹³ Schiller understood the aesthetic play-drive (*Spiel-trieb*) to be the central essence of what it means to be human,¹⁴ and so, theatre, as institutionalized play, has an important role in human society as a mediator of Religion and Law. The Stage, for instance, can

¹⁰ "Laws merely impede actions that might cause the disintegration of society...Laws control only the external manifestations of the will; actions alone are subject to them." Schiller, "Moral Institution," 178-9.

¹¹ "On the whole, religion (I am separating here the political aspect from the divine) acts mainly on the sensual part of the people. It probably has an infallible effect only by way of the senses." Schiller, "Moral Institution," 179.

¹² "... while laws revolve around negative duties, religion extends her demands to positive acts." Schiller, "Moral Institution," 178. Schiller's theory of Morality, the State and Religion has been simplified in this depiction mostly since its intricacies are not that relevant to the specific point of this chapter.

¹³ "Exhausted by the higher efforts of the mind, wearied by the monotonous and frequently depressing duties of his profession, satiated with sensuality, man must have felt an emptiness in his nature that was at odds with his desire for constant activity." Schiller, "Moral Institution," 178.

¹⁴ "Human nature, incapable either of remaining forever in an animal state or of devoting itself exclusively to the more subtle work of the intellect, demanded a middle condition which would unite these two contradictory extremes; a condition that would ease the hard tension between them and produce a gentle harmony, thereby facilitating the mutual transition from one to the other. This function is performed by the aesthetic sense or the appreciation of beauty." Schiller, "Moral Institution," 178.

curb the excesses of Religion, as Schiller credits the Theatre for increasing religious tolerance.¹⁵ Similarly, the Stage extends the scope of the courts:¹⁶ "A thousand vices that are tolerated by justice are punished in the theatre. A thousand virtues ignored by human law are recommended on the stage" (Schiller, "Moral Institution, 180). Theatre, and presumably other aesthetic institutions, form the central and mediating fulcrum of human cultural achievement.

Given the Theatre's strategically mediating position in society, Schiller prescribes a properly established Stage to heal the fragmentation of society caused by modernity. Modern fragmentation resulted as societies advanced and differentiated to a point where a sense was lost of how the increasingly complex and specialized parts fit together. Differentiation was not forsaken for some "primitive" ideal, though ancient Greece was a fixation for many around Schiller's era, because modernity was seen to have brought many good gifts, like the separation of Church and State. For the Idealist Schiller, modernity posed a problem that a spiritually-fulfilling, patriotic Theatre could solve.¹⁷

¹⁵ "How universal has the tolerance of religious sects become in recent years! Even before Nathan the Jew and Saladin the Saracen shamed us and preached the divine doctrine that submission to the will of God is not dependent upon our misconceptions of him, ... the stage was engaged in plating the seeds of humanity and gentleness in our hearts." Schiller, "Moral Institution," 184-5.

¹⁶ "The jurisdiction of the stage begins where the domain of secular law comes to an end. When justice is blinded by gold and revels in the wages of vice; when the crimes of the mighty scorn her impotence and the dread of human power has tied the hands of legal authority, then the stage takes up the sword and the scales and drags vice before a dreadful tribunal." Schiller, "Moral Institution," 179.

¹⁷ "What linked the Greek states so firmly together? What drew the people so irresistibly to the stage? It was the patriotic subjects of their plays. It was the Greek spirit, the great and consuming interest in the republic and in a better humanity that pervaded them." Schiller, "Moral Institution," 186.

Theatre, for Schiller, had largely an integrative function and given Schiller's Idealist accentuation of unity and totality, largely a reactionary direction. Theatre helped manufacture consent with the leaders while they strove toward the common brotherhood of man (sic) just a little beyond current human grasp.¹⁸ A key focus of Schiller's defense of Theatre as re-integrational propaganda appears as Schiller discusses how the Stage can kindle national spirit:

I cannot possibly overlook the great influence that a good permanent theatre would exercise on the spirit of a nation. By national spirit I mean opinions and tendencies which are common to the people of one nation and differ from those of other nationalities.¹⁹

Schiller's exhortation of Theatre in the pursuit of such national accord allows a good segue to Brecht: the harsh echoes of such talk surrounded Brecht as he wrote the *Lehrstücke*, in the fever-pitched shrieks of Hitler.

For Brecht, Schiller's understanding of society overlooked an important dimension, the antagonistic division between classes. Class conflict is necessarily intrinsic to society as arranged in capitalism. Instead of trying to heal a fundamentally healthy society, Brecht thinks the whole capitalist organization of society should be entirely replaced. However, the theatre itself is not immune to the economic forces that tear human society apart. Before the

¹⁸ "Likewise the chiefs and guardians of the state—if they knew how to do it—could use the stage to correct and enlighten popular opinion of government and the governing class. The legislating power might speak to those subject to it in foreign symbols, might defend its actions before they had time to utter a complaint, might silence their doubts without appearing to do so." Schiller, "Moral Institution," 185.

¹⁹ From Schiller, "Moral Institution," 185.

theatre could help reintegrate society, theatre at least had to reintegrate itself. Brecht addressed the Lehrstück toward this revolutionary reintegration.

Brecht saw that societal fragmentation, the results on the Superstructure of a capitalist arrangement of the Base, had left its traces in theatre as the rupture between audience and ensemble. This internal division is consonant with the larger division in capitalism between work which produces and leisure which consumes, a dualism that results from viewing humans as essentially economic functors. In the Lehrstück, Brecht responded to this division by attempting to erase the boundary between audience and ensemble.²⁰ This erasure had two facets: the Lehrstück would not be primarily performed for consuming public,²¹ and the Lehrstück would not be produced by actors as professionals.²²

On one level, Lehrstück theatre addresses the irony that actors go to the theatre to work while audience members go to the theatre to relax after work. This irony suggests the societal contradiction arising from differentiated "classes" of occupations. For Brecht, like many Marxists, the differentiation of specialized occupational roles within society is seen as complicit with the broader divisions between economic classes. If it ever will be possible for a

²⁰ Walter Benjamin gives a good visual metaphor for this task of Brecht: "It concerns the filling-in of the orchestra pit. The abyss which separates the actors from the audience like the dead from the living, the abyss whose silence heightens the sublime in drama, whose resonance heightens the intoxication of opera, this abyss which, of all the elements of the stage, most indelibly bears the traces of its sacral origins, has lost its function." From "What is Epic Theatre? First Version," Understanding Brecht, 1.

²¹ Steinweg quotes Brecht's comments in the 1929 program booklet to Brecht's Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis: "...Das Publikum würde also, sofern es nicht bei dem Experiment mithilft, nicht die Rolle des Empfangenden, sondern eines schlicht Anwesenden spielen" (Steinweg, Das Lehrstück, 12).

²² Steinweg quotes a 1930 fragment by Brecht concerning the production of Lehrstücke: "wenn Ihr ein Lehrstück aufführt, müßt Ihr wie Schüler spielen" (Steinweg, Das Lehrstück, 34).

human to be kind to other humans, according to Brecht, these unnecessary antagonisms must be superceded, including that division between expert practitioners and mystified observers.

Therefore, Lehrstücke are not focused on being a product of consumption for a leisure-time public.²³ The Lehrstück is better seen as a learning process undertaken by those who are learning most from it. Instead of highly trained theatre professionals, the Lehrstücke indicate that they are to be performed, for instance, by school children.²⁴ The further implications of this radical re-arrangement will be noted in the next section.

The political direction of Schiller and Brecht is radically divergent, and the difference of their specific historical situation is perhaps important in assessing that difference. However, from the perspective of theatre-practice, both Schiller's "warm-hearted patriot"²⁵ and Brecht's class-conscious revolutionary are whole humans struggling to heal their society.

INSTRUCTION

For both Schiller and Brecht, art and instruction were mutually compatible, and in fact education was a positive virtue for theatre. Brecht, in "A Short Organum for the Theatre" describes his overall theatrical project as an attempt "...to transform the means of enjoyment into an instrument of

²³ The focus of the Lehrstück on the participants does not necessarily mean that there can be no witnesses, as a later description of a production of The Measures Taken and Mauser suggests.

²⁴ For instance, The Ocean Flight is subtitled a "Radiolehrstück für Knaben und Mädchen," or The Horatians and the Curatians, a "Schulstück."

²⁵ "It is in this higher realm [of intellectual enlightenment] that the great mind, the warm-hearted patriot uses [the Stage] to the best advantage." Schiller, "Moral Institution," 184.

instruction, ... to emigrate from the realm of the merely enjoyable."²⁶

Similarly, in applauding the Theatre, Schiller notes: "While man's moral development has greatly benefited, and in a variety of ways, from the higher order of drama, his intellectual enlightenment is no less indebted to it."²⁷

However, a large difference of opinion exists between Brecht and Schiller concerning precisely what instruction means. For Schiller, the Theatre he wished to be established instructed through a kind of representational enlightenment. For Brecht, the Lehrstück provided rather a participatory provocation to learning.

The fundamental divergence of opinion between Brecht and Schiller can be seen most strikingly in their discussions of "destiny." For Schiller, Theatre helps us humans discover those givens that are not changeable and instructs how to submit gracefully to destiny.²⁸ Perhaps because bourgeois theatre in the tradition of Schiller teaches such graceful assent, Brecht works to change the established nature of the theatre, since "destiny" is nothing but the accumulated residue of historically-made human decisions:

We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself.²⁹

²⁶ From Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," Brecht on Theatre, 179.

²⁷ From Schiller, "Moral Institution," 184.

²⁸ "The Stage not only makes us aware of men and human character, but also of the grim power of destiny, and teaches us the great art of bearing it. In the web of life, chance and design play an equal role. The later we can direct, to the former we must submit blindly." Schiller, "Moral Institution," 183.

²⁹ From §35 of the Short Organon for Theatre, Brecht on Theatre, 190.

The disagreement between Brecht and Schiller over the nature of instruction is itself instructive.

When Schiller describes the positive project of theatre, instead of its beneficial affect on other institutions, it is in terms of instruction.³⁰ Two aspects of Schiller's implicit educational theory are of interest in this connection to the *Lehrstück*: theatre is a representation, a mirror of nature; and education is enlightenment. Both aspects of Schiller's view of instruction appear in the following quotation:

The stage is the common channel in which from the thinking, better part of the people the light of wisdom flows down, diffusing from there in milder rays through the entire state. More correct ideas, purified principles and feelings flow thence through all the vein of all the people. The mists of barbarism, of gloomy superstition disappear. Night yields to victorious light.³¹

Schiller's description of education here is unabashedly "trickle-down" and strikes the contemporary ear as patronizing and hierarchical. However, the common wisdom that Schiller is combatting said that knowledge, by any means, never got down to the peasants but was the privilege and prerequisite of the ruling class. The common populace could keep their barbaric mists of superstition, as long as they kept obedient. Though patronizing, Schiller is advocating education via theatre of the common populace.

³⁰ "The stage, more than any other public institution, is a school of practical wisdom, a guide through social life, an infallible key to the most secret passages of the human soul." (Schools, it seems, for Schiller, are a part of the problem of fragmentation since they contribute to the specialization and technization of knowledge.) From Schiller, "Moral Institution," 182.

³¹ From Schiller, "Moral Institution," 184.

The power by which the Stage can impart such enlightenment is based on its representation of nature. The Stage does not teach through "a dead text or a cold narrative" but rather offers "the powerful effect" of "a visual representation."³² The metaphor for this representation is the mirror.³³ For Schiller, humans can see nature better when it is reflected in the mirror of the Stage, than when nature stares them in the face. By Brecht's day, such innocuous metaphors had collapsed into a justification for the illusions of strict Naturalism.

To understand Brecht's alternatives to enlightenment and representation, some criticisms of Schiller's model of educational theatre are necessary. In an enlightenment,³⁴ trickle-down model of education, knowledge is treated as if it were a scarce commodity, sometimes transmitted, according to the economic laws of supply and demand, but never actually created. For an "enlightenment" educational matrix, the limits of what can be learned are the contours of what precisely is taught.

In this model, the playwright is key, formulating in a script the way that some pre-existent, handed-down knowledge is to be imparted. The producing

³² From Schiller, "Moral Institution," 180.

³³ Two examples of Schiller's use of mirrors: "Vice, as reflected in the mirror of the stage, is made as hideous as virtue is made desirable." From Schiller, "Moral Institution, 180. "It is the stage that holds the mirror up to the great class of fools and shames the manifold forms of their folly with wholesome ridicule." From Schiller "Moral Institution," 181.

³⁴ By "enlightenment" I am not entirely prepared to indict only the specifically historical period. Rainer Nägele, however, does: "The general assumption that Lehrstücke are didactic plays that communicate a certain knowledge is based on a reduction of the idea of teaching and learning to a mere cognitive process. The modern discussion about 'didacticism' seems to have forgotten a very different notion of pedagogy from Plato and Nietzsche and Lacan, as well as the tradition of Lehre as apprenticeship. The reduction of teaching to a purely cognitive 'communication' since the Enlightenment is part of the phenomenon that Freud calls 'isolating.'" (In "Brecht's Theatre of Cruelty" Reading after Freud, 117).

ensemble, as representatives of the playwright, dole out this enlightenment to the ignorant audience, always cautious not to over-step the playwright's semi-divine pre-scriptions. This trickle-down theory of didactic art is, needless to say, implicitly hierarchical even when claims are made to the contrary.³⁵

One trouble with this arrangement is that it doubles and hence reinforces the capitalist arrangement of society. Just as the acquisition of societally-formative capital is beyond the grasp of the proletarian class, the audience in "enlightenment" didactic art can never own the means of producing knowledge. At best, knowledge is doled out to them like a paycheck.

In contrast, Brecht's *Lehrstück* model of educational theatre treats knowledge as if it can be created, as if it is an ongoing process rather than a finite product. This difference has profound ramifications.

In the *Lehrstück* model of didactic theatre, the playwright is no longer the theatrical equivalent of the sun. Instead of sending a relatively clear Message down a more or less noisy Medium, the role of the *Lehrstück* text is to become a provocation, a challenging occasion for learning to take place, not the pronouncement of a semi-divine playwright. The lesson, in effect the "light" of the "enlightenment" model, has become desubstantialized.³⁶

³⁵ Nägele writes: "Contrary to well-meant ideologies, the teaching situation is never a matter of symmetrical communication between 'equals'." In "Brecht's Theatre of Cruelty" *Reading after Freud*, 115.

³⁶ Steinweg quotes a 1930 fragment of Brecht's on a "Theorie der Pädagogien:" "die bürgerlichen Philosophen machen einen großen Unterschied zwischen den Tätigen und den Betrachtenden... zwischen der wahren Philosophie und der wahren Politik ist kein Unterschied. auf diese Erkenntnis folgt der Vorschlag des Denkenden die jungen Leute durch Theaterspielen zu erziehen d.h., sie zugleich zu Tätigen und Betrachtenden zu machen wie es in den Vorschriften für die Pädagogien vorgeschlagen ist" (Steinweg, *Das Lehrstück*, 26-27).

As a provocation,³⁷ the Lehrstück text must be clearly differentiated from a profession of belief. However, that confusion is exactly what many critics have done. After assuming that Brecht "converted" to Marxism, critics both East and West then read the Lehrstücke as professions of this new-found faith. As such, the Lehrstücke are revoltingly harsh, simplistic and extreme. These critics faithfully point out such implications shortly before dismissing the whole lot of plays written between Three Penny Opera and Galileo, as a superceded phase of Brecht's vulgar Marxism.

What this confessional interpretation cannot account for is the sly, wry "picaresque" Brecht. These critics seem convinced that the parodic Brecht has been completely suppressed in the Lehrstücke. Brecht is not just joking around; all around him, Brecht watched the growing power of National Socialism and the ineffective in-fighting of the communists.³⁸ The Lehrstücke were Brecht's direct response to these threats but not all direct addresses are confessions.

In this respect, Walter Benjamin perceptively noted a Socratic edge in Brecht, a gadfly irritating people into reflection.³⁹ Understanding the Lehrstücke

³⁷ Weideli, not a generally perceptive critic, notes that even the early version of Brecht's Lehrstück Der Jasager was not intended to announce Brecht's beliefs but rather had "provocative intentions." Weideli The Art of Bertolt Brecht, 46.

³⁸ Serge Tretiakov described the atmosphere of the time where "everyone is taking part in the talk. In even tones, without unnecessary movements and intonation, decanted judgments pour from these mental retorts of German intellectuals—economists, critics, political scientists, journalists, philosophers—about the events of the day." And then Tretiakov continues to chide "Comrade Brecht, get up from your lowly seat, and tell us why all these people are here and not with their party cells, or among the assemblies of the unemployed? (quoted in Ewen, 237-8). The Lehrstücke, which took learning to the pubs, could be read as a response to this desperate situation.

³⁹ Brecht's provocation to reflection should be distinguished from agitational propaganda's call for immediate, sometimes shallow and ineffective, action.

as a provocation is a particularly important way to interpret the extremes they depict.⁴⁰ The model of rationality as reflective utility that Brecht employs, his "pragmatism" hence, does not seem engaged by the contemporary critiques of rationality as an oppressively prescriptive metanarrative. For Brecht, the mask must pinch, if for no other reason than to remind the wearer to take the mask off and consider the pain.

If the Lehrstück text is a provocation to learning, it is also an invitation to participate in a production; the Lehrstück is not didactic literature, which can be read, but necessarily didactic theatre: it must be played.⁴¹ The producing ensemble, instead of being a group of initiated, patient instructors, becomes the ones who learn the most from the Lehrstück experience, since they are the ones directly in contact with the script, manipulating it into performance.⁴² Production of the script implies making "artistic" choices concerning, for instance, casting, set design, etc, each of which implies a certain interpretation of the piece and hence, has ramifications for what the Lehrstück means and teaches. Brecht insisted on a rehearsal-quality to Lehrstück productions both

⁴⁰ Nägele's article forefronts these extremes as the title of his chapter suggests: "Brecht's Theatre of Cruelty."

⁴¹ Ernst Bloch, in a perceptive essay that refers strongly and positively to Brecht, and whose title, "The Stage Regarded as a Paradigmatic Institution and the Decision within It" alludes to Schiller, explains the performative necessity in this way: "...all proper plays are better to see than to be read because decision can be made in a less tasteful way in front of the stage and can be made in a more communal way than in front of a book." Bloch, 230.

⁴² Bloch suggests that this aspect is at least nascent in all theatre: "It is undoubtedly unusual that plays teach first by learning themselves, that the involved persons and their actions are turned upside down in a questioning and investigating way. And yet, there is already an open form in all dramas, where human beings and situations are shown particularly in their permanent contradictions." Bloch, 228.

so that interpretive choices can be tested in perpetual process and to show the tentativeness and historical mutability of any given interpretation.⁴³

The Lehrstücke also present a criticism of representation which was essential to Schiller's moral institutional theatre. Where for Schiller an appeal to Nature was a liberating reference to a standard beyond the power-plays of the ruling classes, for Brecht, an appeal to Nature was just another oppressive, inhuman authority. Given the impressive advances of science in the nearly two centuries between Schiller and Brecht, Brecht's faith in the pragmatic malleability of reality seems at least understandable. Brecht's approach to the natural and representation can be summed up in this quotation from The Exception and the Rule:

Inquire if a thing be necessary
Especially if it is common
We particularly ask you—
When a thing continually occurs—
Not on that account to find it natural
Let nothing be called natural
in an age of bloody confusion
Ordered disorder, planned caprice,
And dehumanized humanity, lest all things
Be held unalterable!⁴⁴

⁴³ Steinweg quotes Brecht's comments in the 1929 program booklet to Brecht's Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis: "Das 'Lehrstück,' gegeben durch einige Theorien musikalischer, dramatischer und politischer Art, die auf eine kollektive Kunstübung hinzielen, ist zur Selbstverständigung der Autoren und derjenigen, die sich dabei tätig beteiligen, gemacht und nicht dazu, irgendwelchen Leuten ein Erlebnis zu sein. Es ist nicht einmal ganz fertig gemacht" (Steinweg, Das Lehrstück, 12).

⁴⁴ From The Exception and the Rule in Brecht, The Jewish Wife and Other Short Plays, 111.

Brecht's Lehrstücke, like his epic dramaturgy, attacked the aura of representation as the mirror of nature, so that the machinations of human decisions behind every "natural" condition could be revealed.

Mirror-like representations were also not necessary for the Lehrstücke since the participants knew that they were performing the piece and hence were not deluded by the illusion. The critique of representation is another reason behind the rehearsal-like quality that Brecht exhorted for the Lehrstücke. Since aura is one of the cues used to keep audience members quiet, stunned, reverent, in their place, and in fact distracts attention from the actual work involved in the production, this rehearsal quality also helps minimize the separation of stage and auditorium. As in sports, where it seems everyone in a stadium can tell what the players on the field should do better than their coach, attendants at a Lehrstück should be primed to participate and offer criticism of the proceedings.

Brecht's Lehrstück avoids Schiller's trickle-down arrangement by working out an alternative view of knowledge, one where knowledge is produced by the audience and ensemble working together on the occasion of the script's production.⁴⁵ Working together, audience and ensemble acquire the means of knowledge production.

INSTITUTION

As shown above in examining theatre as instruction and the integrative task of theatre, Brecht re-works the heritage of Schiller's Moral Institution in a complex way. Brecht's work banks on various emphases of Schiller's Stage

⁴⁵ Elisabeth Wright suggests this co-operative sense in her translation of the term Lehrstück as "teaching / learning piece."

while taking them in a different direction. This bipolarity of critique and complicity is evident when examining what kind of theatrical institution is implied by the *Lehrstück*. As a radical break with the "bourgeois" theatre tradition, the *Lehrstück* attempts to constitute a different, rival theatrical institution.⁴⁶ However, since the widespread societal changes necessary to make such a new institution a reality must themselves be provoked by the *Lehrstück*, the *Lehrstücke* must operate to some measure within the bounds of already existing theatre institutions.⁴⁷

This dual character was a problem for Schiller, though Schiller did not notice it. Schiller wrote as if trying to legitimate theatre-as-such as it had already been established in other countries. Adorno's worries, however, cited above, suggest a flaw in the way that Schiller attempted this legitimation. Schiller's project largely was to describe the beneficial effects of theatre on other institutions. Using the distinctions made in the first chapter, a theatre so established would always have the internal impetus to lapse into ornamentation of another institution. For instance, theatre as the lap-dog of the State in manufacturing consent. Adorno suggests that a strong strain of asceticism runs through German theatre, traceable to Schiller, where theatre is ashamed to be purely aesthetic pleasure-as-such.

⁴⁶ Kamath makes the insightful claim that while epic theatre attacked the auratic and illusionistic mode of representation, only *Lehrstück* theatre critiqued theatre both in its mode of representation and its character as an institution.

⁴⁷ Not a little critical ink has been spilled analyzing the tenuous relationship between the "*Model-charakter*" and the "*Zukunft-charakter*" of the *Lehrstück*; whether they were intended for Weimar Germany, and perhaps only for that time or whether they will never be adequately producible until a communist Utopia wipes away the divisions that they try to mediate. This discussion, within Marxist circles at least, seems intricately linked to the conception of Base and Superstructure and the possibility of anticipatory phenomena in the Superstructure.

Schiller has left a dangerous dynamic in German theatre that might booby-trap any attempt, like Brecht's *Lehrstück*, to establish a truly interlaced theatre. If German theatre, as per Adorno's critique, is abashed at being art-as-such, then no firmly distinguished institution of theatre exists to be interlaced with another institution. Schiller's well-established Stage is perhaps not as well-established as he imagined.

Given this tenuous character built into the German Stage, Brecht had two strategies open to him in attempting to create a truly interlaced theatre. Either this heteronomous element already strongly present in the theatre could be radicalized or a utopian critique of the Stage could be launched and a radically different type of theatre instituted. The *Lehrstück* seems largely to attempt both strategies.

Several points support the view of the *Lehrstück* as a utopian project. Brecht critiqued the societally irrelevant margin to which theatre had been exiled. Theatre was just one optional leisure-time pursuit, one of many. As such, theatre had to pander to attract an audience. Brecht develops his *Lehrstück* in conscious opposition to such culinary "Schaustücke." Brecht realizes that writing plays that can not fit in the repertoire of currently existing theatres was not much of a criticism. Brecht also posited a "Pädagogium"⁴⁸ There, workers could role-play and work out specific activities they have to do later on, such as addressing a group of workers or advocating a change of

⁴⁸ Steinweg cites a fragment written by Brecht in 1930: "...wenn einer am abend eine Rede zu halten hat, geht er am morgen in das Pädagogium und redet die 3 Reden des Johann Fatzer. Dadurch ordnet er seine Bewegungen, seine Gedanken und sein Wünsche. Weiter: wenn einer am morgen einen Verrat ausüben will, dann geht er am morgen in das Pädagogium und spielt die Szene durch, in der ein Verrat ausgeübt wird. Wenn einer abends essen will, dann geht er abends in das Pädagogium un spielt die Szene durch, in der gegessen wird" (in Steinweg, *Das Lehrstück*, 18). Kamath also discusses the "Pädagogium" in Kamath, 18.

factory policy. The impetus behind such useful theatre is to erase the division between production and consumption.⁴⁹ Through the *Lehrstücke* and *Pädagogium*, theatre, as an activity, could be societally de-centralized from the institutional theatre.

The utopian "Zukunft-charakter" of the *Lehrstück* is not the whole picture; if it were, the *Lehrstücke* might be little more than an historical oddity, a vision of the future now gone by. The *Lehrstücke* also work within the notions of traditionally established theatre in an effort to subvert them. Two facts suggest that Brecht intended the *Lehrstück* as historically viable models for contemporary theatre. First, Brecht wrote the *Lehrstücke* as the Nazi's rose to power. This twilight of the enlightenment that engulfed Brecht was not an atmosphere conducive to fostering radically utopian thinking, that is, criticism totally divorced from the present situation. A further fact argues against a pure "Zukunft-charakter" for the *Lehrstücke*. Most of them were produced, though not with great success.

The nub of this dual character for the *Lehrstücke* is addressed by the question: Can a *Lehrstück* ever be performed for an audience? Given the strong bifurcation within Brecht's *Lehrstück-theorie*, no clear and distinct answer can be given. What could be said is that given the differences between the *Lehrstück* and its intrinsic criticism of the traditional theatre for a *Schaustück*, specific allowances must be made in the presentation of *Lehrstück* so that if an audience is allowed, the audience and the ensemble stand in solidarity in a similarly active relationship to the *Lehrstück*.

⁴⁹ I would not go quite so far as Nägele who relates leisure to pleasure and hence, the introduction of instructive rigor to theatre implies the addition of cruelty and pain. The inextricable link of pain to pleasure, for Nägele, is one of the connections that capitalism necessarily repressed.

The production of Brecht's The Measures Taken and Heiner Müller's response piece Mauser launched by the Brecht Company of Ann Arbor, Michigan (1987) took special care in allowing the audience to engage actively the issues raised by the Lehrstücke. First, both plays were presented separated by a brief intermission. The audience was invited to stay and the entire cast and musicians assembled onstage with the dramaturg acting as a facilitating M.C. The dramaturg invited all present to reflect on how the pieces would be different if presented in a different way. Comments about the meaning of the play were channeled back into tangible ways that a different meaning could be staged. The actors would then use the suggestions offered to re-run various sections of the play.⁵⁰ For example, to accent the corporate guilt of the Agitators in the death of the Young Comrade, one audience member suggested that the Young Comrade be strangled by all eight hands.⁵¹ These alternative stagings were then examined to discern what resonances they brought out of the script and what issues they raised about individuals existing within collectives. The Lehrstück, thus presented, made an issue tangible through theatrical representation and further, this representation was corporately manipulatable by both audience and ensemble.

From the scattered writings that Brecht made about the Lehrstück, a coherent pattern emerges even if not in the form of as recognizably cogent as Schiller's essay "The Stage Considered as a Moral Institution." Brecht intended

⁵⁰ The modular "epic" segmentation of the play's action facilitated this re-staging since action could easily begin at any discrete segment. This feature seems a good example of what Brecht called the "literarization" of the theatre; just as in a book one could look up footnotes.

⁵¹ Since the Young Comrade was reconciled to her death, it was suggested that she assist the other three agitators in killing herself (!)

the theatre of the Lehrstück to heal the rift between audience and ensemble. To this end, the Lehrstück-theatre, as an alternative model of theatre, rejected not only a passively receptive spectator but also the socio-economically differentiated institution that supplies theatre-events as consumable leisure-time activities. This stance leads to several particular implications such as: the Lehrstück as instructive and useful theatre versus a culinary past-time; the rehearsal-quality to the Lehrstück performance instead of a well-polished, seamless illusion; and the participants as untrained fellow learners rather than fully trained, know-it-all illusionists. All these techniques were intended to work together to allow a maximum learning response to the provocations that the Lehrstück provides.

THE LEHRSTÜCKE

Until Steinweg's book of 1972, studies of Brecht's Lehrstücke largely ignored or were ignorant of the special emphases that Lehrstück theatre demanded. According to the prevailing wisdom, the Lehrstücke belonged to the middle Brecht, that tediously committed Party hack, and were largely lumped together with non-Lehrstück works like St Joan of the Slaughterhouse or the quasi-Lehrstück, The Mother. The trained palates of the theatre-connoisseurs were unable to detect anything distinctive about the Lehrstücke, except for a foul aroma of didacticism emanating from all the works of that period.¹ This present study intends to be more informed and to suggest that Brecht's Lehrstück-theorie is not a radically alien superimposition on the Lehrstücke, this theory, as explicated above, will guide the following catalog of the completed Lehrstücke that Brecht wrote.²

¹ Elizabeth Wright traces this pattern of Brecht reception in "Misunderstanding Brecht: The Critical Scene," Chapter Two of her Postmodern Brecht, 5-23.

² I have not been able to examine the substantial fragments of two other Lehrstücke dating from this period: Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer (1927-30) and Der Böse Baal der asoziale (circa 1930).

The Ocean Flight / The Badener Lehrstück of Einverständnis (1929)

Several reasons suggest that Brecht's first two completed Lehrstücke, The Ocean Flight (Der Ozeanflug), a "Radiolehrstück," and The Badener Lehrstück of Einverständnis,³ be considered together. Both works premiered within a couple days of each other at the 1929 Baden-Baden Music Festival. The pieces, both written with "Neue Musik" scores, are also linked internally and thematically. The Ocean Flight closes with a choral passage that is mirrored almost verbatim in the opening passage of The Badener Lehrstück. Both pieces involve flights: one successful; the other, a crash. In The Ocean Flight, Humanity through Technology has triumphed over Nature; in The Badener Lehrstück, however, Humanity suffers, unable to help fellow humans because Science has not yet been applied to human societies.

The Ocean Flight is reminiscent of a morality play, but one turned against religious mysticism toward a communal ethos and pragmatic experimentation. Its protagonist, The Flyer, is visited by various obstacles, which, he, in turn, overcomes by remembering and allying himself with the specific efforts of the collective that built the airplane that he flies. This collective is represented onstage as the motor; at a point when he has defeated Sleep, Fog, Ice, The Flyer addresses the motor, confesses in effect his faith in the motor, and in effect, the collective. After his successful arrival, the chorus declares the motor, the collective, was proven to be without fault.

"Wenn ich fliege, bin ich / Ein wirklicher Atheist." Der Ozeanflug, Szene 8: Ideologie

The Flight tests by doing, not just in the sense of hypothesis and experiment but almost a trial by ordeal.

³ Since Brecht uses "Einverständnis" and the related verb "einverstanden" in a particular way, a usage I will examine closer in chapter four, I chose to leave these words untranslated.

When The Ocean Flight premiered, Lindbergh's momentous flight across the ocean was still relatively recent history (1927). Lindbergh's own memoir We may have suggested the communal nature of the enterprise which Brecht accented in his version. In earlier drafts, Brecht mentioned Lindbergh by name but as Lindbergh began to voice his rightist tendencies, Brecht deleted the name, inserting instead: "Mein Name tut nichts zur Sache."

Human flight was a powerful metaphor for Brecht. Another notable use of flight can be found in Brecht's poem "Songs for Children, Ulm 1592" (Kinderlieder, Ulm 1592)⁴

If in The Ocean Flight, the Flyer remembers the collective, understands his contribution as part of a collective and hence succeeds, the situation is largely reversed for The Badener Lehrstück. A flying expedition has crashed and the survivors include three Monteurs and a pilot. They call out for help from the "learned" chorus who refuse, explaining that kindness is not possible in this society. The pilot who does not agree is eventually silenced and ordered off the stage. The collective has crashed and one of its members has been broken off.

In addition to the thematic linkage between the pieces concerning the functioning of an individual within a collective, both The Ocean Flight and The

⁴ "Bishop I can fly,
The tailor said to the Bishop.
Just watch how it works.
And he climbed with things
that looked like wings
to the broad, broad roof of the church.
The Bishop passed by.
It's all a lie,
Man is no bird,
No one will ever fly,
The Bishop said of the tailor.

The tailor is done for,
The people said to the Bishop.
It was the talk of the fair.
His wings were smashed
And he was dashed
On the hard, hard stones of the square.
Toll the bells in the steeple,
It was all a lie,
Man is no bird,
No one will ever fly,
The Bishop said to the people.
(From Selected Poems, 179)

Badener Lehrstück are indebted to the *Neue Musik* movement of Weimar Germany. One of the central concerns of this movement, which is perhaps broad enough to include the *Novembergruppe* of artists and composers, was to forge musical works appropriate to the new Republic, which meant, largely, in reaction against Wilhelmine values. For instance, the 19th Century symphonic indulgences were countered by a new fascination with chamber music.⁵ Those interested in musical theatre looked back over the looming gaze of Wagner with a new appreciation of Mozart and Händel. All of the composers with whom Brecht collaborated (Weill, Hindemith, Eisler) were associated with the *Neue Musik* movement.

A festival for this *Neue Musik* was established at Baden-Baden in 1921. Among the terms and phrases used to describe species of this new music are: the *Zeitoper*,⁶ the *Gegenwartoper*, the *Zeitopernrevue*, the *Tempo der Zeit*,⁷ *Alltäglichkeit*, *Spiegel der Zeit*, *Gemeinschaftsmusik*, etc. Kurt Weill makes an important distinction between one use of the term "Zeitoper" and what he saw himself busy with. A *Zeitoper* could be understood as merely a mirror of the current times: Weill, like Brecht, was interested in presenting reality with the idea of changing it for the better. Perhaps a better term for the particular up-to-dateness that the *Lehrstücke* tried for is suggested by Paul Hindemith's word:

⁵ A notable example of the Weimar interest in chamber music is Paul Hindemith's Kammermusik I.

⁶ Examples of such "Zeitopern" are Krenek's famous Johnny spielt auf of 1927, Kurt Weill's Der Zar läßt sich photographieren of 1927, and Paul Hindemith's Hin und Zurück of 1928.

⁷ The particular rhythms played to this "Tempo" were often syncopated: Susan Cook notes that to German composers of the 20's, American jazz was "... a potent political and cultural symbol. And these composers shared with the French an infatuation with America, a country which represented both political democracy and cultural modernity." Opera for a New Republic, 4-5.

Gebrauchsmusik, useful music. Weill and Hindemith wrote the music for The Ocean Flight and Hindemith wrote the music for the "secular cantata," The Badener Lehrstück.

The rosy relationship of the Lehrstück with Neue Musik was not to last, however. Hindemith and Brecht had a substantial disagreement about the status of improvisation in the presentation of a Lehrstück. Though Weill composed an opera based on Brecht's next Lehrstück, Der Jasager, the tensions that arose from Brecht's work, The Measures Taken were to founder Brecht's relationship with Weill. When The Measures Taken with music by Hans Eisler, was submitted to the *Neue Musik* festival, which had now moved to Berlin, the piece was rejected due to the "poor quality of the libretto." In the resulting fracas, Hindemith resigned from the adjudicating board. The Exception and the Rule was not set to music until 1948, by Paul Dessau, the quasi-Lehrstück, The Mother, featured songs by Eisler; and Brecht's last completed Lehrstück, The Horatians and the Curiatians, had no songs. Though Brecht is most famous for his musical collaboration with Kurt Weill, due perhaps to the popularity of The Three Penny Opera, his association with Hans Eisler lasted much longer, enduring even into exile.

• **The One Who Said Yes / The One Who Said No (1930)**

Brecht's first stage play to be called a Lehrstück was titled The One Who Said Yes (Der Jasager, 1930) and was generally a faithful translation of the Japanese Noh drama Taniko. Elisabeth Hauptmann had discovered Waley's English version of the Japanese work in 1928 and freely translated it into German. Kurt Weill at that time was searching for a libretto that could serve for

a "Schuloper."⁸ Brecht adapted Hauptmann's translation of Taniko for this purpose. When the piece was performed by/for the Karl-Marx Schule in Berlin, Brecht and Weill participated with the student's discussion and production of the work. In response to their objections, Brecht wrote another play, The One Who Said No (Der Neinsager) with the intention that both pieces be performed together.⁹

Several key changes occur between the two scripts: the second is not a mere negative image of the first.¹⁰ In both plays, a traveling party including a teacher and a student who has begged to accompany him, must cross a mountain to get an antidote for a disease. In the first play, it is the student's mother who suffers from the disease; in the second, it is the whole village. During the ascent, the student becomes ill. According to "The Great Custom" the student must be tossed into the valley. In the first play the student assents and the party throws him into the valley. In the second work, the student objects and instead proposes a new "Great Custom:" that things should be thought through freshly in every new circumstance.

The Japanese title, Taniko, means: "The Valley Hurling."

⁸ Weill intended the "Schuloper" in at least three senses, as Knopf notes: 1) an opera aimed at student's attentions, 2) an opera that demonstrated or taught a new approach to opera, and 3) an opera performable by children. Jan Knopf's Brecht-Handbuch, 88.

⁹ Weill's opera remained concerned only with Der Jasager.

¹⁰ Knopf suggests that the non-symmetries between the two pieces were given attention only after Peter Szondi's 1966 edition of Die Jasager und Die Neinsager: Vorlagen, Fassungen, Materialien. In Brecht-Handbuch, 90.

Many commentators have noted the debt that Brecht's Lehrstücke owe to Noh theatre of medieval Japan.¹¹ Though some perduring regularity undergirds both medieval Japan and Weimar Germany, such gnomic pronouncements of Lehrstücke being "Marxist Noh" are at best only deceptively explanatory. Noh and Lehrstücke, even in this brief comparison must be both compared and contrasted.

Noh theatre blossomed in medieval Japan¹² and survives in some form to this day. Noh performance typically involves dance and music as well as stylized dialogue.¹³ As relief between the elevated Noh, brief, farcical plays called Kyogen were presented. The positive comparisons between Lehrstücke and Noh come easily. Bridgewater attributes most of Brecht's theatre techniques to Noh.¹⁴ Though Brecht was not able to read Japanese, Brecht was familiar with Arthur Waley's English translations of Noh and other Japanese and Chinese works.¹⁵

The Kangi character used to write the word "Noh" also means "to be able," "talent or an exhibition of talent" or "performance."

¹¹ For instance, Ewen writes: "One might almost say that Brecht's own didactic plays are the Noh plays moved from their fourteenth-century environment into the present, supplanting the Buddhist ideology with a Marxist dialectic." 238. Ewen's comment, though, belies a sense that the Noh "form" can be picked up, out of its time, transported to Brecht's era like an antique wineskin and then filled with Marxist vintage.

¹² Waley describes Noh as developing from Dengaku no Noh, exhibitions of juggling and acrobatics in the early 13th century, via a kind of "licentious buffoonery" to Sarugaku no Noh, a kind of serious dramatic, almost operatic performance: "During the fourteenth century the term Noh had implied Dengaku but from about 1430 onwards it has meant Sarugaku." The Noh Plays of Japan, 17.

¹³ Waley writes that: "At its simplest, the Noh play consists of a dance preceded by a dialogue which explains the significance of the dance or introduces circumstances which lead naturally to the dancing of it." The Noh Plays of Japan, 17.

¹⁴ "A comparison of the main features of the Japanese Noh theatre with those of the epic theatre reveals that *almost all* the characteristic features of the epic theatre are prefigured

Even in The Jasager, which is almost entirely an untroubled translation of Taniko, Brecht's use of Noh resembles his other tropic borrowings more than simple quotation. For instance, Brecht changes the pilgrimage to a high mountain shrine into a expedition beyond the mountain where some great doctor has a cure. In addition to such generally superficial updates, Brecht's libretto only uses the first act of Taniko. In the second unused act, the sacrificed boy is returned via the direct mediation of the deity of the mountain. Brecht and Hauptmann might not have been aware of this second act since it does not appear in Waley's book. Waley's reasons for not translating the second section, as he invokes for exempting and paraphrasing portions of other Noh dramas, are that the last half of the work is too poetic, ritualistic and relies on untranslatable word-play. The divine reconciliation of this missing half, in effect, makes Taniko reactionary and mystically religious, asserting that the gods do not allow anything bad happen ultimately to those who unquestioningly follow their precepts. With this ameliorating god excised, Brecht still has to make

in the Noh theatre" (Italics Bridgewater's). He goes on to list the "numerous parallels:" "The language, the prose that often gradually heightens into verse, the dispassionate, detached style that reports on a past action so that the audience's emotions are not directly involved; the actor is not directly expressive, and often addresses the audience direct (sic) —though he does not try to carry them with him; the chorus and commentary on what they are doing by the actors; the self-introduction of the characters; the use of masks; the use of gesture and mime; the flash-back technique; the background music which shows the songs; the interludes in which the words are improvised by the actors; the audience seeing preparation being made for the next scene; the use of existing material; the stylized rather than realistic acting; the idea that the actor should shock the audience by presenting them with an emotion they do not expect, etc., etc." In Bridgewater, "Arthur Waley and Brecht," 219.

¹⁵ Bridgewater notes that "In his working library Brecht had a number of Waley's books, including: 170 Chinese Poems, Chinese Poems, The Analects of Confucius, The Pillow-Book of Sei Shonagon, The Poetry and Career of Li Po, Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China, and The Noh Plays of Japan." In "Arthur Waley and Brecht" 218.

modifications, as occur in Der Neinsager, for the piece to be provocative, to voice the new "Great Custom" of reflective action.

The relationship of Lehrstück to Noh might be further brought out by comparing the work of Brecht to Noh actor and dramaturg Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1444). Like Brecht, Zeami wrote several dozen dramas, as well as many important treatises on theatre. The treatises of Zeami, however, were secret, to be passed down only to the actors of his company, who were most often, relatives.¹⁶ In fact, definitive editions of these treatises have only been widely available this century. The esoteric nature of Noh theatre practice should remind us that Brecht intended the Lehrstück as theatre work for laity, performed for and by non-professionals. Zeami, in treatises such as "The True Path to the Flower," described the disciplined, lifelong training necessary for the professional Noh actor. Zeami's rigorous professionalism was also coupled with a mystic understanding of how this knowledge of the craft was to be transmitted. These explanations reek of auratic mystification and the legitimization of the artist as visionary that Brecht found necessary to critique.

Though having specific structural details in common, the analogy of Brecht/Lehrstück to Zeami/Noh breaks down at the level of the concrete historical significance that these features portray. For instance, Zeami's treatises and the genre of the esoteric writing shown only to initiates was not uncommon at that period of Japanese history, nor was Brecht's talk of "dialectic" or even "epic" theatre uncommon during his time.

¹⁶ For instance, Taniko was written by Zenchiku (1405-1468) a student and son-in-law of Zeami. Zenchiku is a second great name in Noh theatre, having founded the Komparu school of Noh.

However, it is not entirely fruitless to note the similarity of Lehrstücke and Noh. Perhaps the very feature that attracted Brecht to this medieval Japanese theatre is suggested by Noh scholar, Yamazaki Masakazu:

"The fundamental aesthetics of the West ultimately aim to capture an ideal in its purest form, and have tried to eliminate all that is inconclusive or ambiguous; in other words, an attempt has been made to exclude compromises between the artist and the rest of humanity."¹⁷

In Brecht's attempt to reject and reverse this "Aristotelian" or "essential" theatre tradition, Noh perhaps offered an example of a theatre aesthetics that was not based on reason-models nor word-models for knowledge. Yamazaki suggests that Noh is based more on a model of aesthetic ambiguity than its Western counterparts. If so, Brecht had to strip Noh of its accompanying religiosity, as we have seen in his modifications of Taniko. Perhaps then, the relationship that Brecht's Lehrstücke have to medieval Noh is not on the order of an essential identity, but rather more along the lines of historical utility; Noh provided Brecht useful grist for the Lehrstücke.

• The Measures Taken (1930)

The Measures Taken remains one of Brecht's most challenging and strongly debated works and will be the focus of this catalogue of Lehrstücke. If provocation is indeed part of the Lehrstück's modus operandi, these critical responses might best not be excluded from an examination of the work. Of course, the full shape of this reception is beyond the scope of this brief

¹⁷ From "The Aesthetics of Ambiguity: The Artistic Theories of Zeami" an introduction to Zeami, On the Art of the Noh Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami, xxxvi.

discussion,¹⁸ but a suggestion can be made by examining two, somewhat fragmentary interpretations: a review of the premiere of The Measures Taken by Alfred Kurella, and Brecht's own remarks on the piece when interrogated by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1947. In this section I will summarize the story of The Measures Taken, consider these two interpretations and close with a reading of the play examined as itself a representation of the educational model suggested by Brecht's Lehrstück-theorie.

The Measures Taken opens as a group of communist Agitators return from a mission to China and report to a Control Chorus. As the Chorus pronounces its blessing on the group's work, one of the Agitators asks that the Chorus determine whether the group acted correctly in killing a Young Comrade who had joined and later endangered the mission. The action of the play occurs as the Agitators depict the various actions that the Young Comrade took and the dangerous situations that resulted. These situations culminate in a condition where, finally, pursued by counter-revolutionaries, the Agitators decide that their only recourse is to murder the Young Comrade, lest in recognizing her,¹⁹ they all be discovered. The Young Comrade agrees to her own death and her body is tossed into a lime pit. The Chorus vindicates the actions of the Agitators.

¹⁸ For a choice condensation of the reception of The Measures Taken, see Knopf's Brecht-Handbuch, 92-105.

¹⁹ Brecht refers to the Young Agitator as male, even though the character is played by the other Agitators who are "three men and one woman." Given the character's "feminine" compassion, her status as naturally revolutionary material to be informed as well as her final repression and demise suggest to me that, within the discourse of the play, the gender of the Young Agitator is female, even if her sex is male, hence the feminine pronoun. Helene Weigel played the Young Agitator at its premiere.

A contradictory critical storm greeted the first production of The Measures Taken. Among these voices was Alfred Kurella's article "What was He Killed for?" which appeared in Literature of the World Revolution, Number 5, Moscow, 1931.²⁰ Kurella's strategy is to interpret The Measures Taken as if it were a piece of socialist realism. He assumes that the work actually refers to the historical Chinese Revolution²¹ and critiques Brecht for repressing and obscuring this relationship. Kurella further construes the structure of the piece as an allegory²² where the actions of the Young Comrade are taken to be personifications of various doctrinal errors. Kurella's interpretation thus sets up a situation where the interests of the individual Young Comrade are set as antithetical to the collective Agitators. On the basis of appeals to historical evidence, Kurella then overturns what he considers Brecht's endorsement of the collective's position by showing that Lenin himself actually behaved as the Young Comrade did. Brecht's collective, Kurella charges, practices "right wing opportunism."²³ Kurella, though, stops short of censuring the play;²⁴ instead,

²⁰ Kurella's article is re-printed as an appendix to Brecht, The Jewish Wife and other Short Plays, 163-172.

²¹ "...we shall start from the assumption that the events take place against the perfectly real background of the Chinese revolution." In "What Was He Killed For?" 165.

²² "One has to assume that the young comrade is a personification of the wrong course of action and that the agitators give an example of the true bolshevism which everyone should learn." In "What Was He Killed For?" 165.

²³ "...to advocate a point of view such as that of the three agitators means virtually to support right-wing opportunism. This opportunism consists in an underestimation of the readiness of the masses for the revolutionary fight. Opportunism is also shown in the subordination of the Party to the organization that it ought to be leading." In "What Was He Killed For?" 167.

²⁴ The provocation of The Measure's Taken is not the least of its virtues: "Brecht's new play, which he produced in Germany in co-operation with Dudov and Eisler, has given rise to a lively discussion both in the bourgeois and the worker's press. This fact alone shows that it is a work of very much more than average importance." In "What Was He Killed For?" 163.

he commends the songs, especially “where right ideas from the proletarian ideological arsenal are clearly formulated,” (171) and judges that The Measures Taken, despite its errors,

will have a very important place in the future history of proletarian art, and even when the play is no longer produced (which will probably very soon be the case) its influence will be felt in the programs of propaganda theatre troops.²⁵

Kurella’s strongly transcendent type of criticism, primed by a grounding in socialist realism, interprets The Measures Taken in light of certain assumptions about didactic literature, mostly that it is/should be allegorical, historically-based and clear. Our discussion of Brecht’s Lehrstück-theorie above should, at least, cast doubts as to whether any of those assumptions apply to Lehrstücke.

Which text? Brecht evidently revised The Measures Taken after its opening and no copies of the original text survive.

The Measures Taken is also discussed in another, very fascinating text, the transcript to the HUAC trials in 1947,²⁶ when Bertolt Brecht was questioned. The transcript, as is the style, is written in a dialogue format similar to a play script. Hence, the precious nature of this transcript: Brecht the playwright appears in a dialogue, one whose overall shape he is unable to control. Here, Brecht must be Socrates, not Plato. What is particularly fascinating, from the

²⁵ From “What was He Killed For?” in Brecht, The Jewish Wife and Other Short Plays, 171.

²⁶ The transcript of Brecht’s HUAC interview appears as an appendix to Ewen’s biography of Brecht, 497-509.

perspective of this study, is that two rival interpretations of The Measures Taken emerge in the interplay of Senators' questioning and in Brecht's responses.

The Senator's interpretation seems to try to read The Measure's Taken as an apologetic for Party discipline,²⁷ that within communism, doctrinal deviations are considered justly punishable by death. He begins by asking the translator if "die Maßnahme" could mean "disciplinary measures." No, the translator responds, only "the measures to be taken." Not put off, the Senator reads a passage from the work and notes that it mentions such things as the "ABC's of communism" throughout. The direct focus of the Senator's questions, however, concerns whether the Comrade was, in fact, murdered for not agreeing to Party discipline. It is difficult to say exactly what the Senator would have attempted to prove from this point but encountering Brecht's persistent denial, the Senator jumps to address an entirely different matter. As with Kurella's interpretation, the Young Comrade is understood as antithetical to the mission and their aims are assumed to be essentially at odds.

If one reads the Young Agitator's death as murder, one could read the whole work as anti-communist propaganda,²⁸ that those evil communists murder each other over trifling matters, don't get involved with them.

²⁷ "Mr. Stripling: Didn't it have to do with the Communist Party?

Brecht: Yes.

Mr. Stripling: And discipline within the Communist Party?" Ewen, 502.

²⁸ The senator leaves this strategy open to Brecht. At one point the senator interrupts Brecht to ask: "Would you consider the play to be pro-Communist or anti-Communist, or would it take a neutral position regarding Communists." Ewen, 502. Brecht responds that it is anti-Hitler.

Before Brecht's counter-interpretation can be discussed, a couple factors should be noted. First, the inequity of power in the interrogation situation. Brecht, summoned as a witness, is allowed and obligated only to respond to the questions. Further, the results of this questioning has ramifications that are more immediate and existential for Brecht than for the Senator, if not specifically for his well-being then for that of Brecht's associates. Hence, it seems more likely that the Senator's inquiries were more in earnest than Brecht's responses. Another clue that suggests Brecht's responses are not genuine is the way he misrepresents, for instance, the import of China as depicted in The Measures Taken to Germany.²⁹ By denying any connection between the setting and participants, Brecht in effect cuts loose the *Verfremdungseffekt*, instead of making strange to re-present with a new relevance. That Brecht made light of such a crucial theory for his theatre suggests that he was tidying up his answers for the bureaucrats.

It may be even problematic to say that this is Brecht speaking: the polite yet opaque character that emerges from Brecht's testimony might best be seen as Schweik.

Brecht's strategy to render his play innocuous and undeserving of official attention is to read it, in the manner criticized before, as an ancient Noh play filled with contemporary relevance.³⁰ This move is essential since it shifts the

²⁹ Senator: "You say it is about China, though; it has nothing to do with Germany?" Brecht: "No, it had nothing to do about it." Ewen, 502.

³⁰ "Brecht: This play is the adaptation of an old religious Japanese play and is called a No (sic) play, and follows quite closely this old story which shows the devotion for an ideal until death." Ewen, 502. When questioned more precisely about this "religious" ideal, whether it

meaning of the play's undeniable Marxist content from that of normative endorsement to that of descriptive reportage.³¹ HUAC could hardly disagree that communism was prevalent in the then-contemporary world: that was its very own *raison d'être*. Communism, as Brecht made out, was only the contemporary guise by means of which The Measures Taken treats the timeless "religious" theme of "the devotion for an ideal until death" (502). What Brecht does not get a chance to mention is, as with the "Great Custom" of Taniko, that this devotion is not presented unambiguously.

How then should The Measures Taken be read? In this closing section, I will suggest a reading of the work tuned to seeking the relevance of the *Lehrstück* in a consciously post-communist era. What this approach must seek distance from is the typically Western response that Brecht would have been a "better" playwright if not for his communism. Rather, the discussion of Brecht's communism must attain the same status as discussion of Dante's "catholicism" or Donne's "protestantism." In the readings suggested above, The Measures Taken was taken as an allegory showing the follies of immature communism, a tragedy showing how the personally held ideal of collectivism is ultimately destructive of the individual person, or as Marxist Noh updating an ancient religious play. In distinction from these efforts, I will try to read The Measures Taken as a *Lehrstück*, that is, as a piece of consciously didactic theatre that takes its theatricality very seriously. This forefronted theatricality seems not so

was not in fact communism, Brecht replies: "Yes, yes; it's a new play, an adaptation." Ewen, 502.

³¹ Brecht: "...Literature has the right and the duty to give the public the ideas of the time." Ewen, 502.

much coy self-referentiality, but rather a reflection on the implicit and limiting shapes of what didactic theatre as theatre can be and teach.

If Brecht's Lehrstück-theorie applies, The Measures Taken is not primarily to be read or even seen but rather played, hence learned on the body. At least as far as this inscribed analysis is concerned then, the actions and their relevance within the work must be described. In particular, three clusters of actions seem important: the initial establishment of the presenters from the chorus, the blotting out of the faces and the reflective silence before the Young Agitator's death. Undoubtedly, other points are also important but my reading will focus on these three incidents.

The first words of The Measures Taken are an imperative: "Step forward" ("Tretet vor!") This command is spoken by the Control Chorus and is addressed to the Four Agitators. What this command achieves is a division of the participants, to establish a cast of players by fiat. The Chorus continues to address those who have stepped out by listing the accomplishments of the mission and closes with the benediction: "We are in agreement with you." ("Wir sind einverstanden mit euch.") This blessing, pronounced on the falling action of what seems like another story, threatens to dissolve the cast back into the collective. This reconciliation, however, is interrupted by another imperative: Wait! ("Halt!") spoken by the Four Agitators. In the course of their mission, an incident occurred, the death of the Young Comrade, that requires re-consideration. This second imperative, the narrative situation of the play, the story, is established. A different kind of pronouncement is substituted for the benediction. The Chorus agrees to pass judgment and the Four Agitators agree to abide by the decision.

With this incident, the stage is set for the Lehrstück, carved off from the Control Chorus and sanctioned by it. As an encompassing frame, this tribunal situation allows constant intervention by the Chorus in examination of the events depicted. By contrast, the framing device of, say, the Caucasian Chalk Circle only intrudes for comment at the end after establishing the situation at the very beginning. In The Measures Taken, the Control Chorus initiates a "Discussion" after each of the incidents and also sings various songs. With this simple passage of four exchanges, The Measures Taken establishes the theatrical rationale of the Chorus and the Agitators which initiates from and preserves the active stance of the Chorus.

A second important incident in The Measures Taken is subtitled: The Blotting Out (*Die Auslöschung*). Here, the Young Comrade is taken into the fold as the expedition is charged with its mission. As they assume this charge, the Agitators are transformed: "You are yourselves no longer... One and all of you are nameless and motherless, blank pages on which the revolution writes its instructions." When their own faces are wiped away, they are given masks. These masks have the effect of consolidating the Agitators into a whole.

The use of masks to convey this consolidation of the Agitators is profoundly theatrical. The face is commonly taken as a sign of a whole individual human, a thing in itself. It is this false individuality, so generally assumed in capitalist society, that must be set aside to function in a group. The mask implies this role, the agitator as a functional participant in something else. These masks are distributed by a Party leader. Just as actors sometimes consolidate to function together in production or as ensembles, so do other humans when we consolidate together, for instance, as countries, and function as citizens, or universities and function as academics.

The interplay between face and mask, a crucial theatrical construction, forms an important thematic backbone to The Measures Taken. The interests of this new amalgamated whole, the collective, are not necessarily the interests of those of other wholes that comprise it. The conundrum that Brecht poses is how a relatively whole, individual human can be a functional part of a larger whole, without it occurring at the expense of the individual human.

The Measures Taken seems to leave this interplay as intrinsically ambiguous. One could read the play, understandably, as saying that the fate of all who join a collective will be a lime pit that corrodes away both existence as well as identity. This understanding of The Measures Taken, as directly posing the individual human and human collectives as essentially anti-thetical, is not unproblematic. Very equally, the play could be read that it is the Young Comrade's lack of resolve, in various cases along the way, that leads

The individual as a construct prior to social engagement, in this case economic engagement, is also mocked in "The Song of Supply and Demand" in section 5, where a mercenary arms trader sings: "Who knows what a man ("Mensch") is really? I only know his price." Predictably, the Young Comrade cannot agree with this and so, the mission cannot get its necessary weapons.

irrevocably to her demise. The play then becomes a warning against lukewarm liberal criticism and surface-deep amelioration of injustices.

Reading the work as a Lehrstück, a teaching theatre piece, importantly gives a different emphasis. Both interpretations above try to paraphrase the import of the work. Perhaps what is to be learned is not an insight, but rather something resembling a skill. Given the intense theatricality of The Measures Taken coupled with the fact that everyone involved in a Lehrstück is to be an active participant, Brecht's own comments on acting seem germane. For Brecht, an actor's portrayal should allow the audience to see both the character and the actor beneath the role. This approach is not a content that must be learned and can be regurgitated on a written test but rather a style of behaving that must be practiced. The point of The Measures Taken, hence is not whether one's face can actually be wiped out or whether that face is itself an illusion but rather a practical lesson, learning the ambiguous integrity necessary to be fully human as both an individual creature and a contributor to other collective creatures (states, theatre companies, Poetry, gender, etc...) The tragedy of the Young Comrade is that she never got the hang of this way of being that the modern world requires of those who would survive.

A final significant incident occurs in the eighth section when the Agitators have come to the conclusion that the Young Comrade must be shot. Before they perform what they believe to be the only solution, the Agitators pause to reflect on other possibilities. The particular incident, the pause, is preceded by this passage:

The time was short. We
Found no way out.
In sight of our pursuers
We reflected for five minutes
on a better possibility.

You too, think now about
a Better possibility.

The script indicates itself a pause at this point.

This non-incident, where no action happens, is an eloquent silence, since it offers a rationale for the whole project of *Lehrstücke*, and perhaps even for art in dangerous times. Even in a dire and desperate situation, where no time is to be wasted, time had to be invested in reflection, an imaginative reflection.³² The *Lehrstücke*, as a provocation to critical praxis, is shown as a way that avoids the immediate practicalism of agitational propaganda, which in this light, itself taken as propaganda, becomes only a liberal criticism.

Surrounding Brecht as he wrote, the Nazi menace grew and became more virulent. Agitational propaganda, the most directly pragmatic kind of political art, might have forestalled this rise. But if the populace could be inspired to be actively critical in a pragmatic way, no totalitarianism could ever triumph.

³² One of the Agitators exhorts us in the Chorus: "You too, think now about / a Better possibility."

This pause represents the culmination of the Young Agitator's education, the moment when critical thinking finally is born within her. She must literally think as if her very life depends upon it. Her reflection is not primarily humanitarian enlightenment. The Young Comrade seems to have sentiments that are heightened enough.³³ These sentiments must be trained so that what they mean is a long-term praxis. Finally, agreement comes: she consents to her own ultimate wiping out. The Agitators then lament briefly, concluding:

It is not granted to us, we said
Not to kill.
At one with the inflexible will to change the world
We formulated
The measures to be taken.

*The Measures Taken
integrates this action
more organically than in
the Badener Lehrstück
where the pilot is
ordered off the stage,
for reasons that didn't
connect tightly to his
position.*

The education of the Young Comrade, represented in this reflective pause seems a crux of The Measures Taken.³⁴ Instead of making things worse, she is in agreement, finally with a horrible situation she herself contributed to. What

³³ When the Agitators first meet the Young Comrade, she declares: "...My heart beats for the Revolution. The sight of injustice drove me into the ranks of the fighters. I am for freedom. I believe in humanity. And I am for the measures taken by the Communist Party which fights for the classless society against exploitation and ignorance." From Section 1: The Classical Writings.

³⁴ Brecht evidently agreed. Elisabeth Hauptmann quotes an unpublished letter of Brecht's, dated 1949, which explains why the author no longer gave permission to perform The Measures Taken: "The writer has always turned down proposed productions of Die Maßnahme, as only the Young Agitator can learn anything from it, and even he can only do so if he has also played one of the Agitators and sung in the control-chorus." Cited in Willett's The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht, 39.

this agreement must provoke in the actor is reflection as to how such horrible situations can be avoided in life.

In closing, a brief contrast might be suggested to another theatre work not intended for public consumption, Wagner's Parsifal. Parsifal was conceived as a stage-consecrating ritual to hallow the space at Bayreuth. The Measures Taken, too, could be performed to launch a company. Instead of consecrating the sacred rites of theatre, The Measures Taken, as a beginning piece, practically works out how the company would deal with individual egos and the ensemble ethos.

Is the fate of all who join collectives to burn, in one way or another, at the bottom of a lime pit that eats away all that is not their commitment? This is in effect the Zen koan that Brecht presents us with in The Measures Taken.

• **Exception and the Rule (1930)**

Brecht's critical stance to the action and decisions depicted in his own Lehrstücke should be obvious from an examination of his work The Exception and the Rule (Die Ausnahme und die Regel, 1930). Again the setting is a mythic Orient where an abused Carrier and his overbearing master are traveling through the Mongolian desert. Half-way through the journey, the master fires the Guide for consorting with the Carrier. After days of ill-treatment, the coolie approaches his master from behind to offer water. The master, afraid the coolie is attacking him, strikes and kills the coolie. In time, the master is tried for the offense but in the end, the master is acquitted, not only for the abuse but also for the murder.

Serge Tretiakov has noted Brecht's interest in trial situations.³⁵ This jural fascination of Brecht arouses the suspicion in Rainer Nägele that, especially in the *Lehrstücke*, these court scenes are actually covering a posteriori rationalizations of cruel actions. In the interest of suspending narrative attachment by telling the end at the beginning, Brecht opens himself up to the charge that in fact his works are not experiments to test hypotheses but rather apologia to exonerate extreme actions. The sinister air grows thicker when we remember that the famous Purge trials are roughly synchronous with the *Lehrstücke*.

Nägele's suspicious reading of Brecht's trials as exonerations for cruelty is nowhere as tenuous as when applied to The Exception and the Rule. The uniquely provocative nature of the *Lehrstück* should be evident from a comparison of The Exception and the Rule to another famous Brecht trial, the judgment of Azdak at the end of The Caucasian Chalk Circle. As a "Schaustück," Circle presents a just judgment, one that is unexpected perhaps but based according to an understandable maxim: that possessions should be the responsibility of those who can take proper care of them. The spectators can take away that depicted wisdom perhaps as a touchstone for their own further actions.

In the Exception and the Rule, the judgment again is unexpected but obeys the contradictory norms that undergird a capitalist society, that kindness must be an exception to the rule of self-interest. The point of the *Lehrstück* trial

³⁵ "One year later Brecht told me of a new idea of his: a panopticum (sic) theatre should be established in Berlin, showing the most interesting trials in the history of humanity. 'The theatre would be built like a law-court. Two trials every evening. For instance, the trial of Socrates. A witchcraft trial. The trial of George Grosz, who was charged with blasphemy because of his picture of Christ in a gas mask saying: Hold your mouth and obey orders!'" In Witt, Hubert, ed. Brecht as They Knew Him, 74.

is not that kindness is undesirable just because it is currently impossible: rather, the innate impulse to kindness requires that better societies and relationships be constructed to realize true kindness. The judgment depicted, that compassion is a deviation from capitalist norms punishable by death, must be read as a provocation to move beyond both capitalist society as well as beyond merely liberal critiques of capitalist injustice.

• **The Horatians and the Curatians (1933-4)**

Brecht completed his last Lehrstück, The Horatians and the Curatians (Die Horatier und die Kuriatier) while in the first years of exile in Scandinavia. Brecht didn't live to see a production of the piece.³⁶

The setting is a war which the Curatians have declared on the city of the Horatians. The Curatians test their weapons until they are satisfied with them, a luxury that the trapped Horatians cannot afford. In the first section, the Horatian archers allow a good location to decay strategically until they are overcome. In the second section, an Horatian lance-bearer must stop the advance of the Curatians through a narrow pass. Though, he discovers many uses for his lance in this battle, he too eventually is killed. In the third section, despite the advice of the Horatian chorus, the Horatian sword-bearer does not fight the better-armed Curatians, but rather runs away. The Curatians pursue him and, once tired by dragging along their formidable weapons, are easily killed by the Horatian. The city of the Horatians is saved.

³⁶ The premiere, according to Willett's Theatre of Bertolt Brecht occurred in 1958. A musical setting by Kurt Scwhaen (born 1909) also exists, dated that year.

After The Horatians and the Curatians, Brecht's experiments in the laboratory of the Lehrstück come to a close with his exile. Perhaps the complex nature of The Horatians and the Curatians suggests a dissatisfaction with the schematic nature of the Lehrstück as a satisfactory way to raise awareness of the constellation of factors in any situation. In The Horatians and the Curatians, the familiar Lehrstück structure of a collective chorus and individual actors is complicated by having a chorus for both Horatians and the Curatians, three commanders from each side and a group of women from each side, who largely mourn the deaths of their husbands. The Horatians and the Curatians also involves a thematic departure from the concerns of individuality and collectivity of the other Lehrstücke, focusing more on tactics and the proper use of weapons.

Brecht's next two works have an explicitly anti-Nazi focus, the modular collection of one-act plays, Fear and Misery in the Third Reich (1935-8) and the one-act, Frau Carrara's Rifles (1937). Both are sufficiently Realist that, with them, Lukács believed Brecht was finally reconciled to Socialist Realism.

NON - LEHRSTÜCKE

During the years that Brecht wrote the Lehrstücke, Lehrstücke were not all that Brecht wrote. This catalog of Lehrstücke might mislead if not augmented by an appendix that considers some of these non-Lehrstücke works. Two likely examples of synchronous non-Lehrstücke, for reasons that will emerge, are the quasi-Lehrstück The Mother and Saint Joan of the Stockyards.

• **The Mother (1932)**

In 1932, The Mother (Die Mutter) became the last of Brecht's works to be produced in Germany before World War II. The production, which eventually toured beer halls in worker's district Berlin, featured Helene Weigel in the title role of Vlassova, the mother. Its premiere coincided with the anniversary of the murder of Rosa Luxemborg. Years later, Brecht was also able to remount the play with the Berliner Ensemble, again with Weigel in the title role.

In 1935, Brecht traveled to New York City for another production of The Mother, done by a company who had only barely heard of Brecht, let alone understood his theatrical principles. Hence, understandably, Brecht, and the critical press, were less than satisfied with this production.

The story of The Mother, based on the novel by Maxim Gorky, follows the education of a mother's nurturing sentiments for her son to the class consciousness of a revolutionary. Vlassova begins her education by taking her son's place in the dangerous task of distributing communist leaflets at a factory. She makes herself innocuous by wrapping the leaflets around sandwiches which she distributes at the worker's lunch time. Through various incidents, Vlassova's praxis, spiked at times with a distinctively inventive flair, inspires her deeper understanding and commitment to communism. She herself becomes a tireless teacher, using colorful examples to instruct the workers and peasants in their true condition under the Tsar. For instance, by using a paper pattern as a coat, she demonstrates that the articles that hang in the shopkeeper's window are also not coats, but rather are merely merchandise. Eventually, her own son Pavel, the original cause of her involvement, is killed. In a song, Vlassova remarks that her relationship with her son was strengthened by the cause they held in common, rather than its proving an

obstacle coming between them. Finally, roused from her sickbed, Vlassova carries a flag in a march to save the Party.

The Mother is important to this study because Brecht considered it "in the style of a Lehrstück, although it requires professional actors."³⁷ What this "style" must mean is that, similar to the Lehrstücke, The Mother describes a practical, "materialist" education that requires both learning and teaching.³⁸ An example of this bilateral education can be seen in Vlassova's relationship with the Teacher with whom she stays. Vlassova succeeds in educating the Teacher about class consciousness, so much so that his own brother can't recognize him.³⁹ In another scene, Vlassova successfully mediates between the Teacher who would teach reading as a kind of knowledge divorced from need or purpose⁴⁰ and her fellow learner Sostkovitch's impatience at the irrelevance of such learning.⁴¹ Vlassova wisely advises that "reading, too, is class struggle" (77). As could be guessed by this description, The Mother tells its story spread out through a snaking chain of such incidents.

³⁷ Brecht's notes to The Mother, written after the Berliner Ensemble production, are reprinted in full as an appendix to the 1965 Grove edition of The Mother, 133-158. This quotation cited appears on 133.

³⁸ In his "Introduction" to the 1965 Grove edition of The Mother, Lee Baxandall makes a fruitful comparison between the education depicted in The Mother and that of the more idealistic Bildungsroman, such as Mann's Magic Mountain or Joyce's Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man.

³⁹ The Teacher has almost become a revolutionary, a change which amazes his brother in the section of scene 6 subtitled, appropriately enough, "Ivan Vessovchikov Fails to Recognize his Brother."

⁴⁰ The Teacher: "I beg your pardon but the reason you may have for learning to read is a matter of total indifference." The Mother, 76.

⁴¹ Sostakovitch: "I can learn nothing from you if you don't want to know anything about class struggle." The Mother, 77.

This epic scale and format is one important difference that The Mother has to the relatively short Lehrstücke.⁴² Another difference is the reduced, if almost vestigial, role played by the chorus. Far from the direct interrogators of The Measures Taken, the chorus in The Mother only appears in the third to last scene to sing a call to rouse Vlassova from her sickbed. This marginal role for the chorus seems to mean practically that a large group of people could only participate in The Mother as audience, watching Vlassova's growing agency and self-understanding. The Mother, as Brecht suggests, is a Schaustück in only the "style," not the revolutionary form of a Lehrstück.

Saint Joan of the Stockyards (1931)

Another work important to this Lehrstück appendix is Brecht's Saint Joan of the Stockyards (Die Heilige Joanna der Schlachthöfe), a non-Lehrstück written between 1929 and 1931,⁴³ at roughly the same time as the Badener Lehrstück and The One Who Said Yes. The work's title suggests that it is a strongly adapted treatment of the martyrdom of Joan of Arc, whose 500th anniversary had also inspired G. B. Shaw's Saint Joan (1923) and Paul Claudel's Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher (set to music by Arthur Honegger in 1938). Brecht's work is as much, if not more so the culmination of his research into slaughterhouse economics that lead him to Marx, via Upton Sinclair.

With its stinging parodies of the Bible and Salvation Army songs, Brecht's Joan might be as much a trope of Shaw's Major Barbara as of his Saint Joan.

Years later, with the Berliner Ensemble Brecht was again to treat the story of Joan of Arc in a radio play based largely on a story by Anna Seghers.

⁴² Brecht complained that the disastrous New York production pandered to the audience's preconceived taste by cutting scenes in order that it fit in under two hours.

⁴³ However, Brecht's Joan was not staged until 1959.

The play's title, Saint Joan, is somewhat deceptive, since the story revolves at least as much around Mauler, a capitalist "meat king" with a sentimental heart, as it does around Joan, the "black straw hat" revivalist. Joan convinces soft hearted Mauler to buy surplus canned meat futures which she believes will put the unemployed meat packers who are her parishioners back to work. (These packing factories have been closed by Mauler's attempt to takeover a rival "meat king.") Mauler soon regrets his momentary weakness and corners the livestock market. Hence, Mauler drives up cattle prices which the cannery must pay to fulfill their contract. Joan is expelled from the Black Straw Hats and falls among communists who entrust her to deliver a letter with information vital to a proposed strike. However, Joan's visions dissuade her from delivering the letter on time and the strike is crushed with volleys of machine-gun fire. Meanwhile, the strain that Mauler has put on the meat industry has crushed it into bankruptcy. Mauler, penitent and ruined, comes to the Black Straw Hats who had awaited the redemption of his money for their unpaid rent. The ruined meat kings approach the humbled and spiritualized Mauler for help in re-instituting the meat trade, which he does, setting it up as ruthlessly as ever while funding the Black Straw Hats, whose value he has discovered is indispensable to capitalist venture. Over the dead body of Joan, now canonized despite her protests, a paeon to the contradictory drives of humanity is sung.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Willett describes the style of this final apotheosis as a "parody of Goethe and Schiller." The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht, 36.

Since the section of Lehrstück-theorie began with a discussion of Schiller's "Stage Considered as a Moral Institution," it is at least symmetrical that the discussion of Brecht's Lehrstücke end with another comparison to Schiller. Those who believe that Brecht's tropical antics were entirely suppressed during this phase of vulgar Marxism need only compare Brecht's Saint Joan of the Stockyards to Friedrich Schiller's Die Jungfrau von Orleans. Brecht's materialist tragedy neatly incises the inflated idealism of Schiller's "romantische Trauerspiel." Schiller's Joan is a daring, inspired individual, unafraid to follow through on the sublime impulses that drive her to pick up the sword and helm in defense of her king. By the middle of Schiller's play, Joan has affected a touching reconciliation of the French forces through her unswerving idealism. In the last half of the play, however, personal doubt and unenlightened superstition bring about her downfall, despite a corny finale that allows her to die a hero with full state honors.

Schiller's rendering of the tale is more "romantic" than historical, neatly sidestepping Joan's trial and execution.

The story of Brecht's Joan, too, is a tragic tale, complete with anagnorisis and peripetia. This story, however, is surrounded if not engulfed by the dynamic of supply and demand, the forces that cause her story to be tragic. Similarly, Schiller's work set Joan's brash inspiration against the controlling horizon of inhibiting popular superstitions, such as those advanced by Joan's father, Thibault. Though Brecht mercilessly parodies Schiller's idealism in exposing the concrete economic dynamics beneath the popular heroicizing naiveté, both Brecht and Schiller seem allied in the project of popular enlightenment. For both Schiller and Brecht, this education has a distinctly aesthetic cast to it, which places theatre in a prime strategic position.

Schiller's theoretical writings were perhaps as much influenced by Kant as Brecht's theories were by Marx.

In this section I have catalogued Brecht's writings in the years prior to his exile with an eye especially focused on how his Lehrstück-theorie sketched in the previous section influenced this work. An examination of the works specifically indicated as Lehrstücke has been augmented by an appendix of two other works from this same time period. In summary, education rises to the forefront of Brecht's attentions during the late 1920's / early 1930's beginning in an explicit way at least with The Ocean Flight and persisting at least as late as Galileo.

IV. Einverständnis

In chapter two, the shape of Brecht's overall career was traced through various key works. In chapter three, the broad contours of both Brecht's Lehrstück-theorie and his actual Lehrstücke were examined and contrasted to two works of the period that were not Lehrstücke. This final chapter on Brecht will indicate a thread of continuity between the Lehrstücke and the more general concerns of Brecht's career. This integrity can be seen by an examination of the key term "Einverständnis," for its importance within the Lehrstücke and its resonance with Brecht's oeuvre as a whole.

"Einverständnis" and the verb "einverstanden" appear frequently in the Lehrstücke. Brecht's second Lehrstück was entitled: Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis.¹ In the opening lines of Der Jasager and repeated in Der Neinsager, the Chorus tells us that:

Wichtig zu lernen vor allem ist Einverständnis.
Viele sagen ja, und doch ist da kein Einverständnis.
Viele werden nicht gefragt, und viele
Sind einverstanden mit Falschem. Darum:
Wichtig zu lernen vor allem ist Einverständnis.

The first address of the Chorus to the Agitators in Die Maßnahme ends with the pronouncement, "Wir sind einverstanden mit euch." As the Agitators describe their activities, the words "Einverständnis" and "einverstanden" are used over

¹ Since literally speaking the word "Einverständnis" only appears in the German versions of Brecht's plays, in this chapter all titles will appear in German.

a dozen times and include the description of how the Young Comrade is reconciled both to joining the expedition and consenting to her own death. In Die Horatier und die Kuriatier, "einverstanden" also figures prominently, for instance, the word is used to describe the stance of a warrior accepting the weapons at hand. The use of the word "einverstanden" and its associated noun is almost an internal cue to the Lehrstücke; it does not figure as prominently before or after this period of Brecht's writing, nor does it receive the usage in the non-Lehrstück plays of the 1930's.

Literally, "Einverständnis" means "understanding" in the sense of having an understanding with someone. It is similar to "verstehen," to understand. However, "einverstanden" is an unusual word which Brecht loads with meaning as he uses it in the Lehrstücke. A look at two usages of the word must suffice, as used in Die Maßnahme and as used in Die Horatier und die Kuriatier.

As mentioned in the earlier discussion of Die Maßnahme, *einverstanden* is used in the opening sequence to express the control-chorus' agreement and acceptance with what the Agitators had accomplished. The Control-Chorus also uses "einverstanden" at the end of the Discussion sections where the actions of a previous incident are assessed. Significantly, *einverstanden* is used both by the Agitators and the Young Comrade, when asked at the end to consent to her own death. Finally, after the favorable decision concerning the expedition's measures, the Control-Chorus can pronounce its original blessing on them, "Wir sind einverstanden mit euch."

What these usages of *einverstanden* indicate is a communal, consensual standpoint, one that must be learned and seems contingent upon agreement. It is the same verb for groups relating to groups, such as the control-chorus to the expedition, as it is for individuals relating to measures to be taken, such as

the Young Comrade to her death sentence. In her final words, the Young Comrade uses *einverstanden* almost in the sense of standing in solidarity with the advance of the proletarian masses. *Einverständnis*, as a knowable orientation, as an awareness of intrinsic, historically necessitated connecting conditions and hence duties, appears in Die Maßnahme both as the interaction of human individual and a collective, as well as between the Young Comrade and her final acceptance of her own demise as a consequence of her own previous actions.

Brecht's use of *einverstanden* in Die Horatier und die Kuriatier emphasizes another nuance of the word. Die Horatier und die Kuriatier could be analyzed with an emphasis only on its thematic links with the other Lehrstücke. Such an analysis, based perhaps on the interaction of individuals and collectives, would miss the essential continuity and innovation of Die Horatier und die Kuriatier as a Lehrstück. This connection, I believe, can be seen through its use of *einverstanden*.

In the first section, *einverstanden* is used to describe the Horatian's orientation to his weapons. In contrast, the Curatians, who possess better weapons and the luxury of discarding inferior ones, are only satisfied ("zufrieden") with their weapons. The meaning of the Horatian's *einverstanden* is demonstrated in the following sections. A strong example involves the Horatian lance-bearer, who discovers the many uses of his lance, such as a balancing-pole or a rudder. He repeats "Viele Dinge sind in einem Ding" seven times as a refrain during his speech. The final and decisive way that the Horatians show *Einverständnis* with their weapons involves the sword-bearer. He realizes that with his light and small weapons he cannot prevail against an attack by the Curatian's heavy arms, but neither could they pursue him long without becoming exhausted. Hence, despite the admonitions of Horatian

chorus, the sword-bearer runs away, tires out the pursuing Curatians and one by one, slays them.

Die Horatier und die Kuriatier brings out a thrust in the word *einverstanden* that is not just consensual agreement between humans, but also the deep-rooted acceptance of the means at hand. The Horatian weapons are no mere tools, to be picked up, used and discarded. Though the condition is perhaps unfortunate that the weapons were not better, the Horatians spend no time bemoaning this. Rather, what is available and given is incorporated fully into the Horatian's defense.

These two examples should suggest that *Einverständnis* is what the Lehrstücke teach. *Einverständnis* is hence knowable but perhaps not qualifiable as knowledge in the sense knowledge has been understood in the West. This section will conclude with a meditation on a couple aspects of *Einverständnis* as a kind of knowledge that is corporeal, that is, done by whole bodies, participatory, that is, accessed through experience and historical, that is, done by humans and has a distinctly human character.

There is an awesome corporeality to Brecht's *Einverständnis*. *Einverstanden* as an orientation is no head-shaking opinion-deep agreement but rather involves the whole body. Its consequences include being thrown wholesale into a valley, killed and tossed into a pit where the lime will burn away your flesh, etc. The corporeality of the Lehrstücke corresponds to Brecht's broader concern with a socially determined *Gestus*, that is, not merely opinions but how social forces impress themselves on bodily functioning.

Brecht is often characterized as coolly rational, ready to subject all aesthetic constructions to analytic criterion. Such a characterization must diminish the importance of corporeality to Brecht's theater and theory. The view of Brecht as a reason-idolizing barbarian also does not take into account

the cultural environment surrounding Brecht. As he wrote the *Lehrstücke* in particular, the forces of National Socialism mobilized the arts.² The overwhelming tendency in Nazi art was to a sentimentalizing kitsch, a practice which drummed up the politically-useful emotional if not sexual resonances for blood and soil. For instance, Susan Sontag describes the audience depicted in Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* as erotically overwhelmed, a sexual conquest of Hitler.³ Such kitsch in effect constrains art to a psychic, if not biotic focus, albeit in a politically pre-determined niche. Brecht, in his appeals for an active and critical audience, utterly rejects this soft pornographic idealism. For this rejection, Brecht is often branded as too analytic to be properly aesthetic. Behind the mask of such Nazi ideals of bodily perfection, the corpse, as emphasized by Brecht, must always emerge.

Brecht did also not embrace an orthodox leftist stance on propaganda, either as Lukács' socialist realism nor even less the vulgar Marxist agitprop. Such propaganda, perhaps, took its model from the semantic model of Medium and Message. Brecht, in his *Lehrstücke* especially, counters with a thoroughly embodied pedagogy, one that refuses and confounds paraphrase, one that must be learned by doing.

² Recent work has uncovered Hitler's skill as a performance artist. For instance, a lengthy article in the Summer 1992 *The Drama Review* analyzes "Hitler's movement signature." The documentary *Architecture of Doom* by Peter Cohen "traces the rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazism in light of Hitler's deeply held convictions as an artist" (*High Performance* #57, Spring 1992, 10). And even as early as 1975, Susan Sontag remarked that "*Triumph of the Will* represents an already achieved and radical transformation of reality: history become theater." "Fascinating Fascism" in *Under the Sign of Saturn*, 83.

³ "The expression of the crowds in *Triumph of the Will* is one of ecstasy; the leader makes the crowd come." Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism," 102.

The *Einverständnis* depicted and taught in Brecht's *Lehrstücke* is participatory in the sense that it is learned by communicants who participate in the proceedings, not by those who just watch. In a sense, the *Lehrstücke* are an anti-secular theater.⁴

However initiatory the *Lehrstück* may be, this is not a secret lodge type of initiation, where a hidden codex is revealed. In this, at least, the contrast to the sensuously ascetic, religious fervor of Artaud seems valid. Nägele suggests that a facile contrast between Brecht and Artaud which polarizes Brecht as analytic and Artaud as sensuous obscures both figures. Nägele makes his point by emphasizing the *Lehrstücke* as "Brecht's Theater of Cruelty." A similar re-interpretation could take place for Artaud. For instance, Artaud's fascination with Balinese trance-dancing may be the Dionysian reveling of a sensualist coupled with an almost puritan grounding of theater in religion. Artaud does not surrender aesthetic pleasure to sensual pleasure but rather finds even in sensation a kind of tribal, ritual, cultic gratification.

By contrast, the revelation of Brecht's *Einverständnis* is grounded in experience; it is empirical like the hard sciences but unlike them, its findings are not universalizable.

Finally, *Einverständnis* is historical knowledge, an understanding of humans made among humans. Just as humanity has overcome natural boundaries (depicted by *Der Jasager's* mountain or *Die Oceanflucht's* ocean), we are now to learn to overcome the inequities and irregularities that separate and tear at our social bodies.

⁴ Perhaps "theatre" as a word with roots in the Greek for watching, is not the most appropriate word for what Brecht is up to.

As historical in this sense, Brecht's *Einverständnis* could be contrasted to the ontic knowledge of Aristotle's catharsis. For Aristotle, the condition of reality is and is inalterable. The human task is to bring to fruition various unrealized but pre-existent aspects of this state of affairs. For Aristotle, then, in drama, an apparent contradiction and conflict allows a reconciliation to the-way-things-are, both within the drama itself and, through extension by empathy, in the audience as well.

Brecht is suspicious of how this reconciliation has worked to "naturalize" various inequalities and ontically rationalize various forms of oppression that are actually contingent and remediable. For Brecht, one must be reconciled to the socially mutable state-of-things, one which is conformable to the "Great Custom" of appropriateness. If *Einverständnis* is the beginning of wisdom, the end of such knowledge is to change the world.

In the context of Aristotle, the anti-idealism of *Einverständnis* makes it appear almost as Machiavellian *realpolitick*. What saves Brecht from endorsing the dog-eat-dog world of capitalism and the social contradiction it brings, is that Brecht never grants an ontic status to their perversions, even as he accepts them as currently unavoidable. Below the oppression and conflict, Brecht believes, as perhaps it already glimmers in the hearts of his worst characters, that it is difficult work to remain evil.⁵

⁵ The Mask of Evil

"On my wall hangs a Japanese carving
The mask of an evil demon, decorated with gold lacquer.
Sympathetically I observe
The swollen veins of the forehead, indicating
What a strain it is to be evil."

from Poems 1913-1956, p 383. Written by Brecht during his exile in America, 1941-47.

If evil takes such effort, a glimmer of hope remains, even in these dark times, that utopia might be made. Brecht's utopic sentiment, however, has a will-'o-wisp character. As soon as the promised land becomes an inevitable given, an idyllic topos to be revelled in, it lapses into a legitimization of the status quo. The shimmering quality of utopia soured can be seen as early as the melancholy ode of "Die Seeraüber Jenny,"⁶ who washes dishes daily, hoping the pirates that will take her away and revenge her upon her captors, half-realizing it is only a dream. Though evil is an unnecessary strain, hope must remain only a whisper that can be passed along, a grounded intuition that the way things are now is not the way that they must be forever.

For all his anti-Aristotelian posturing, the ultimate ground of Brecht's critique remains in some scientifically discernable world order. Just as science has discovered the principles that govern the planets' motion, so must we learn to live by the laws that provide for justice in human relations. Despite his accentuation of theater and pretense as a necessary way of being-in-the-world, by contemporary insights, Brecht still could be accused of dabbling in metaphysics. It should not be amazing that the "post-modern" epistemic crisis was not one of the wrinkles that furrowed Brecht's brow; he had not yet heard these terrible tidings.⁷ Whether the fragile craft of Brecht's utopia can remain afloat given the current dark flood, let alone what shape the Lehrstück must assume to survive, will be examined next chapter in the work of Heiner Müller.

⁶ "Die Seeraüber Jenny" appears in Die Dreigroschenoper.

⁷ "Indeed I live in the dark ages!
A guileless word is an absurdity. A smooth forehead betokens
A hard heart. He who laughs
Has not yet heard
The terrible tidings."
from H.R. Hays translation of "An die Nachgeborenen."

V. Müller / Mauser

BRECHT

by Heiner Müller

*Truly he lived in dark times.
The times have become brighter.
The times have become darker.
If brightness says, I am darkness
It spoke the truth
If darkness says, I am
Brightness, it doesn't lie.¹*

SELF-CRITIQUE

by Heiner Müller

*My editors rummage through the old texts
Sometimes when I read them I shudder That's
What I wrote OWNING THE TRUTH
Sixty years before my presumable death.
On the tube I see my compatriots
With hands and feet vote against the truth
That forty years ago was my own.
What grave will protect me from my youth? ²*

¹ Müller wrote three short prose poems in the mid-fifties about the three dramatists that were his strongest influences: Brecht, Maykovsky and Büchner. This translation appears in HamletMachine and Other Texts for the Stage, 25.

² Müller wrote three short prose poems in the fall of 1989 about the changes of his homeland which he was forced to witness via television since he was in New York rehearsing "The Man in the Elevator," a section from The Task. This translation appears as section 3 of "Television" in The Battle: Plays, Prose and Poems, 176.

Heiner Müller, currently aged 63, has outlived the division and reunification of Germany, his homeland. He has outlived Hitler, though the son of a socialist party functionary,¹ and Stalin, though he held certain misbeliefs concerning communism and art.² He writes "after" Shakespeare, "after" Kleist and Lessing, but most notably after Brecht, whose mantle of dramaturgy he is widely acknowledged as having inherited and whose tradition he critically continues.³ Since 1966, Müller has survived the suicide of his first wife and collaborator, Inge. In many ways, Müller stands on the crested wave of history: he proclaims himself

¹ Müller's earliest recorded memory is the night that his father was arrested and beaten by Nazis. He went to the door to listen but when the stormtroopers checked in on him before escorting his father away, he jumped back in bed and pretended to be asleep. Müller refers to this, his first experience of "treason," as the first scene of his theatre. In Müller, "Walls" Germania, 39.

² In a sense, Stalin lived until 1971 when Erich Honecker finally proclaimed an end to "taboos" concerning art at the VIIIth Party Congress. See Weber in Müller, Hamletmachine, 28.

³ Müller himself ends an article on Brecht ("Fatzner+Keuner" in Brecht-Jahrbuch 1980: Frankfurt, 1981) with the imperative: "To use Brecht and not Critique him is Betrayal." This phrase served as the essay's title in the English translation (Theater, Vol. XVII, No 2, Spring 1986).

"the last German writer."⁴ Such self-conscious belatedness, coupled with his own work on Lehrstücke, qualify Heiner Müller as a suitable guide to accompany this study of the Lehrstück into "post-modernity."

Heiner Müller is in an important sense a post-Brechtian playwright, that is, he has worked through Brecht's theatrical experiments to reach a distinct set of historically relevant concerns. To best grasp these concerns, the following chapter will first trace Müller's career and then analyze the last of his works which he called a Lehrstück, Mauser (1970). Set in the context of the present study of the Lehrstück, Mauser can be seen to criticize and appropriate the Brechtian legacy in several important ways which can be typified as post-representational, post-humanist and post-Christian. Mauser will allow a momentary stopping point in Müller's perpetual development to assess the effect that the epistemic shift of "post-modernism" on the project of didactic theatre.

Müller

Müller has been busy with Lehrstücke at a couple points in his career, and some of his abiding concerns, such as erasing the line drawn between artist and audience, jibe with Brecht's in the Lehrstück-theorie. Before Müller's Lehrstück-related works can be directly examined, a biographical⁵ sketch of Müller's career⁶ is a necessary

⁴ "Lotringer: And you feel history is working for you?

Müller: Absolutely [He laughs] This is my chance.

Lotringer: History is making you...

Müller: Yes, the last German writer." From Müller, "Wars," Germania 88.

⁵ For a concise sketch of Müller's more purely biographical data, see Weber's introduction to Hamletmachine, 19-24. Müller himself has also written broadly auto-biographical

introduction. This context is required to locate Mauser along a continuum of development and hence understand some of the forces that drive Müller's critique of the Lehrstück as form. The contours of Müller's career will be traced through a couple key works: The Scab (Der Lohndrucker (1956), Heracles 5 (1964-6), and HamletMachine (Hamletmaschine, 1977).

Heiner Müller was born in 1929 in Eppendorf, a small German town between Leipzig and Nürnberg in what was Saxony. While Müller was young (in 1933), the family moved North to Mecklenburg. Müller's high school career was interrupted by military service where he was briefly taken as a POW⁷. After the war, Müller finished school and worked for a time as a librarian.⁸

material in "ABC" (an English translation of which appears in Explosion of a Memory, pp 13-38) and other facets of the same stories emerge in his interviews with Lotringer, "Walls," "Wars," and "Winds" in Müller, Germania, 13-96.

⁶ Müller (to Lotringer) "My main existence is in writing. The other level of existence is just perfunctory." From Müller, "Walls" Germania, 43.

⁷ Müller (to Lotringer): "I remember being a soldier in northern Germany during the last weeks of the World War II... I ended up being a POW in an American camp, just for a few days. We stopped twice on the way, once for a Russian tank and another time to get water in a nearby village. The village was totally abandoned. In one of the houses I found a great library and I stole a few books, a beautiful edition of Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and a volume by Schopenhauer. I read a few sentences from Kant and I felt it was the text of a madman. Schopenhauer not so much but Kant was really mad, like Artaud. That was the basic power of his philosophy." From Müller, "Wars," Germania, 73.

⁸ Müller (to Lotringer): "I read Nietzsche just after the war when I returned from the American prison camp. I was working in an office during the university vacations and I stole the book from the library upstairs. It was very important for me reading Nietzsche in 1946-7, very healthy too, just to figure out how to survive." From "Wars" in Müller, Germania, 69-70.

Müller's career as a writer began during the 1950's amid this critical period of German and European reconstruction. In late 1951, Müller had a story "The People are on the March," published in the cultural weekly, *Sonntag*. Müller collaborated with his wife, Inge, on his first theatre-piece The Scab (Der Lohndrucker) which was published in 1957. Also in 1957, Müller's adaptation of John Reed's account of the Russian Revolution Ten Days that Shook the World (Zehn Tage, die die Welt erschütterten, 1957) was produced by the Volksbühne in East Berlin, a production which garnered much praise. The Scab was first performed in 1958 with The Correction (Die Korrektur), a work that began first as a radio drama commissioned in 1957, at the Maxim Gorki Theatre where Müller worked as a dramaturg. In 1959, at the end of his first decade as a writer, Heiner, together with Inge, won the Heinrich Mann prize for their collaboration, The Scab.

Several interesting problems arise when trying to assemble the dates of Müller's works. 1) Dates of completion are tenuous because Müller tends to rework continuously earlier material, chewing and re-chewing it. His works are more like processes.

The first writings of Müller's late "synthetic fragments," such as Hamletmachine, The Battle, Germania Death in Berlin, even The Task, began during the fifties.

Müller's early theatre work is broadly realistic, dealing with characters and situations in the GDR during the reconstruction after WWII.⁹ In The Scab, an enthusiastic worker, Balke, pioneers new techniques in a brick manufacturing factory. For example, Balke attempts to repair a still-burning furnace with risky, hot toil. The risks are not only physical but political as well; if the experiment fails, Balke stands liable for a prison term for treason. Such heroic innovations increase efficiency, which raises the worker's production norms. Balke's fellow workers, disgruntled at these standards which will make them work harder for the same pay, see these innovations as class treason, and remember Balke as an informer during the war.

Brecht also worked on an adaptation of this story, but only fragments of this "Büsching" project, named for Brecht's Balke-character, remain. Müller probably did not know of the Büsching fragment when writing The Scab.¹⁰

⁹ The incidents depicted in The Scab are based on actual events in an East Berlin plant in 1948-9 and an actual worker named Hans Garbe.

¹⁰ Müller did know of the Büsching fragment later when in 1978 he produced a version of Brecht's Lehrstück fragment, Fatzer with material from Brecht's "Stories of Herr Keuner." Müller describes his interest in the Büsching fragment: "The name Büsching (just as other names in the Garbe project) refers to the Fatzer material, Brecht's largest sketch and the only text in which he, like Goethe with Faust, allowed himself the freedom of an experiment, freedom from the pressure as perfection as seen or expected by the elites of present or future generations, freedom from the pressure of packaging and delivering the product to a public, a market. An incommensurable product written out of a need for self-understanding." From "Brecht vs. Brecht" in Müller, Germania, 131).

The Scab skillfully demonstrates a familiar topos for Müller: a situation where treason and betrayal are tightly enmeshed with direct, progressive action. Using the form of the "production play," a kind of drama used to encourage workers to efficiency, Müller contextualizes and problematizes the situation that makes such encouragement necessary. For instance, in The Scab, the pressing historical need for reconstruction demands that the directors set fantastic quotas that can never be fulfilled by the bombed-out plants. When the old machinery breaks, as could be expected, a scapegoat must be charged with sabotage. In this context, Balke's efforts to help achieve the quotas appear as a kind of naively dangerous idealism. Helen Fehervary discerns what she calls a poetics of entanglement in Müller's late work, which she contrasts to a poetics of enlightenment in Brecht.¹¹ This entanglement of disseminated treason is also present in The Scab.

2) Given Müller's intense process-orientation, the first production is not necessarily definitive. Even productions that Müller directs undermine the authority of the published, dateable script Müller's production of The Scab (Deutsches Theater, East Berlin, 1988) radically broke up the text. For instance, the whole of The Horatian (1968) was inserted as a dream and both acts were prefaced by a short film.¹²

¹¹ Fehervary reads Fear and Misery in the Third Reich and The Mother, two of Brecht's most realistic works, as quintessentially Brechtian, which she contrasts to Müller's synthetic fragments Germania Death in Berlin (1971) and The Slaughter: Scenes from Germany (1974). In New German Critique, No. 8, Spring 1976, 80-109.

¹² For a substantive review of Müller's production of The Scab, see "Heiner Müller's Der Lohndrucker, 1988" in Theater, Vol XIV. No. 3, Summer/Fall, 1988, 22-33.

During the early 1960's, Müller published poems and other writings, though what was perceived as his counter-revolutionary pessimism continued to draw increasing amounts of both official and popular fire.¹³ This censure culminated in 1965, when, at XIth Conference of the SED Central Committee, Eric Honecker quoted Müller directly while criticizing "nihilistic, hopeless and morally subversive philosophies in literature, theatre, television and magazines."¹⁴ In 1966, Inge, a long-term depressive, finally succeeded in committing suicide.¹⁵

If Müller's early work tended toward the Epic realism of the late Brecht, in the 1960's, Müller began to work with classical forms and myths and use more heightened forms of language. During this phase, Müller began his experiments with *Lehrstücke*. In all, Müller wrote three *Lehrstücke* during this period: *Philoktetes* (1966), *The Horatian* (*Der Horatier*, 1968), and *Mauser* (1970).

Heracles 5 (1964-66), one of Müller's rare comedies, was written during this period, most probably without hope of ever being performed. *Heracles 5* deals with the fifth of the seven feats that Heracles performed, the cleansing of

¹³ Early critical response to *The Correction* spurred Müller to reply, writing: "The author's self-critique has entered an executive phase: *The Correction* will be corrected. The new literature can only be developed together with our new audience." Cited by Weber in Müller, *HamletMachine*, 32.

¹⁴ Cited by Weber in Müller, *Hamletmachine*, 26. Weber also notes another irony, that six years later, in 1971 "...Erich Honecker, newly installed chief of the SED, proclaimed at the VIIIth Party Congress: 'There should be no taboos anymore for the arts as long as [the artist] stands on a firm Socialist position' (28)."

¹⁵ Müller writes disturbingly of discovering her body, finally dead after several attempts, in "Obituary" (a portion of "ABC" also published in English translation in Müller, *Germania*, 180.) The fear of such discovery had concerned him for several years. He recorded these concerns in the poem "selfportrait two am august 20, 1959" (Müller, *HamletMachine*, 26-27)

the Augean stables. The play begins as two snickering Thebans rouse Heracles from his gluttonous stupor, amid the carcasses of oxen that he has devoured upon the completion of the previous task. The Thebans direct him toward his next effort, the stables of Augias that are eternally shit-filled. At a moment of desperation, Heracles cries out to Zeus, who encourages the hero with the promise of a tantalizing woman, who wafts through on a cloud. Though Heracles triumphs over the manure, the stable-owner Augias complains about various of the means employed and especially takes offense at the payment of seven cattle. Heracles tears Augias in half as the snickering Thebans re-enter and direct Heracles toward his next great task.

As in The Scab, Heracles is not the object of admiration from those who benefit from his triumphs. The ambivalence towards heroes in Heracles 5 illustrates another enduring theme for Müller: the tenuous necessity of heroes for progress, which is alloyed with a resentment from the general populace.

Heracles, however, in contrast to the innovative but mundane worker Balke, is a classical hero. During the 1960's Müller begins to use subtly re-interpreted classical myth. Müller employs classical myth paradigmatically to forefront the stories and ideals that guide and dominate human behavior and culture. Skillfully re-worked myth is an enduring motif for Müller. In his earlier works, it is the myths of efficient production as the key to a higher communal standard of living that are examined and criticized. In Müller's later works, Müller attempts to deflate the very myths of Germany, of "germania."

Though the use of classical myth is somewhat distancing even as it heightens the point being made, immediate relevance can still be seen in Heracles 5. The piece is explicitly critical, for instance, of the official idolization of physical work. It is most definitely shit by no other name than Heracles labours against.¹⁶ Again, as in Traktor, and The Scab, the hero innovates a kind of technical advance to overcome his laborious obstacle. Müller clearly shows that, in spite of official policy, menial toil should be dispensed with, not glorified.

3) A more germane problem regarding production dates is that they often refer to the first professional production, which, in the case of the Lehrstück is perhaps beside the point. For instance, the first production of The Horatian was by an amateur learner's theatre in 1972 while the professional production didn't occur until 1973.¹⁷ If Lehrstücke do not require audiences, which date is most appropriate?

After Mauser, the character of Müller's work again shifts. As restrictions on artists in the GDR eased,¹⁸ Müller's work received productions and Müller himself received rewards, including the GDR's Lessing Prize in 1975. In the

¹⁶ In a passage serendipitously similar, Milan Kundera also writes of shit and its relation to kitsch in The Unbearable Lightness of Being (Harper and Row: New York. 1984): "Kitsch is the absolute denial of shit, in both the literal and figurative senses of the word (248)." Though Müller has at times a strong current of sentiment running through his work, Müller explicitly criticizes the mythic sentimentalization of shit that occurs in officially endorsed kitsch.

¹⁷ The Horatian was first produced by the "Billstedt Students and Apprentices Theater" of Hamburg (1972). The play was subsequently performed at the Schiller Theater, West Berlin (March, 1973).

¹⁸ Though in general "taboos" concerning art were largely lifted in 1971, Müller continued to draw fire for his "historic pessimism" as artistic advisor to the Berliner Ensemble, 1970-1976. Some of these difficulties are discussed in an article on Müller by Joel Schechter in Theater, Vol 8, #2 & 3, Spring 1977, pp. 152-154.

mid-1970's, Müller's collected scripts were published.¹⁹ For these publications, Müller intervened with the texts of his completed scripts. For instance, with his then-unproduced work, Traktor (1957), Müller inserted prose quotations and passages before each scene, that examine and criticize the work as writing. Müller called this resulting montage of texts a "synthetic fragment." Most of Müller's works from the 1970's are such synthetic fragments, for example Germania Death in Berlin (Germania Tod in Berlin, 1971) and The Battle (Die Schlacht, 1951-1974).

The most successful and difficult example of this period of Müller's writing is Hamletmachine (Hamletmaschine, 1977). Its success comes from the nearly opaque interweaving of texts and languages.²⁰ As a result, narrative representation is strongly problematized. Hence, a paraphrase of a depicted story is not possible for Hamletmachine, but rather, at best, a description of the text.²¹

¹⁹ Müller's collected plays began to be published by Rotbuch Verlag in the West in 1974 and Henschel Verlag in the East in 1975.

²⁰ The various languages found in HamletMachine include phrases of English in Hamlet's first monologue and a scene where Mao, Lenin and Marx appear as three naked women, perhaps mocking the witches of MacBeth, each quoting Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law in their own language.

²¹ A performance of Hamletmachine perhaps is also just a description of its text and is similarly difficult. An early attempt at producing Hamletmachine ended in defeat after two weeks of rehearsal. (See Müller's Endspiel by Theo Girshauen, Prometh Verlag, Köln. 1978) Much of Müller's work, at least since the 1960's, is not overly congenial to production. Weber describes the situation succinctly when he notes that Heracles 5, for instance, exhibits "an amusing contempt for theatrical practicalities." In Müller, The Battle, 87.

The overlaying of texts in Hamletmachine results in potent images with resonances to political, psychological, and sexual realities.²² In one of these subtexts, the use of classical myths is supplanted by the use of indigenous, Germanic if not European myths and heroes of Marxism. For instance, the figure of Hamlet hearkens to the intellectual who, however progressive, is unable to join a revolution.²³ This isolation is shown by his ability to speak only in monologues. In contrast to the lamenting but effete revolutionary Hamlet, Ophelia is, in effect, a terrorist.²⁴ Her pronouncement at the end of HamletMachine, as she is being muffled, executed under white gauze, quotes the words of Manson family-member and American would-be assassin of Gerald Ford, Squeaky Fromme: "When she walks through your bedrooms carrying butcher knives you'll know the truth."

A psychoanalysis of Hamletmachine must be wary: details, such as the similarities of Ophelia to Müller's first wife Inge, may be booby-traps. Müller says that he carefully disseminated the rumour that the initials of Hamlet-Machine, "HM" concided with those of his own name.²⁵ In this, Müller seems purposefully mocking the romantic tendency of looking at artworks as the personal testament of artist's psyche.

²² The poem "Images (Bilder)," written in 1955 and published in 1974, captures Müller's enduring interest in the treacherous importance of images:

"Images mean everything at the start. Are durable. Spacious.
But the dreams curdle, they take on a shape and frustration.
No image contains the sky any longer. The cloud from the airplane's
Angle: a vapor obstructing the sight. The crane just a bird.
Communism even, the ultimate image, always refreshed
Since washed with blood again and again, daily routine
Pays it out in small change, without sparkle, tarnished from sweat
The great poems: rubble, like bodies loved a long time and now
Of no use, at the wayside of a species that's finite but using up plenty
Between the lines: lamentation

on the bones of the stone carriers: happy
Since the beautiful means the possible end of the horrors." From Müller, The Battle, 15.

²³ The specific revolution referred to probably is the Hungarian coup of the mid- 50's. Müller began writing the first scraps of HamletMachine in the days following.

In the closing years of the 1970's Müller's writing again shifted emphasis. In 1978-79, Müller spent an extended stay in the United States. These next works, which include The Task (Die Aufag, 1979) and Quartet (Quartett, 1981), are less like the collages of his synthetic fragments, and often have exchanges resembling dialogue and structures similar to plots. Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall and Soviet communism, potent events for a writer with Müller's concerns, Müller has stayed with directing more than writing.²⁶

One issue that has not been raised during this sketch of Müller's career is the ambiguous position Müller holds with respect to Brecht. Müller's process of working though Brecht can be best seen by examining a work from a specific, now superceded phase of Müller's development: Müller's Mauser as a response play to Brecht's The Measures Taken and the Badener Lehrstück.

Mauser

Though Müller completed writing Mauser, the last of his initial experiments with Lehrstücke, in 1970, Müller has continued to be involved with productions of the work. Müller witnessed the first performance of the work in 1974 while in the United States for a semester as the writer-in-

²⁴ In a conversation quoted by Weber, Müller spoke about HamletMachine's Ophelia: "Ophelia has to do with Ulrike Meinhof and the problem of terrorism in Europe, a complex issue that was very much, and in a very ambivalent way, on my mind while I wrote the piece." Müller, HamletMachine, 50.

²⁵ Weber mentions Müller's remarks from an interview in Theater Heute, April 1982, in the introduction to HamletMachine in Müller, HamletMachine and other Texts for the Stage, 51.

²⁶ For details on Müller's post-Soviet activities, see Eva Breuner's slightly condescending article, "Heiner Müller directs Heiner Müller" in The Drama Review 36, no. 1 Spring 1991, 160-168.

residence at the University of Texas in Austin.²⁷ In 1991, Müller directed a Vienna production of Mauser, jibing it with Quartet, a production he had dreamed of for several years.²⁸ Though Müller may have gone on beyond his direct dabbling with Lehrstücke, a failed experiment from his perspective, he does not repudiate these works. In fact, much of Müller's later dramaturgy must be seen in the context of his reception and critique of the Lehrstück.

Mauser, as the culmination of Müller's first experiments with Lehrstücke, appropriates Brecht's Lehrstück model in a variety of ways, three of which will be examined in this section: 1) In Mauser, Müller endorses Brecht's theoretical rejection of the division between audience and ensemble, and continues this dynamic to reach a critique of representation as used by Brecht in his Lehrstücke. 2) Again following Brecht's concerns, Mauser depicts a criticism of production and consumption; but where for Brecht knowledge was what was produced, for Müller it is death that must be managed collectively, literally the consumption of humans in the pursuit of producing the true Human. 3) Finally, Müller rejects the "christian apocalypse" of Brecht's Einverständnis, in his attempt to deconstruct the binarism of Hope/Despair. Hence in Mauser,

²⁷ An American publication of script of Mauser appeared in 1976 in New German Critique in a bi-lingual edition where text and translation appeared on facing pages. The German publication appeared in alternative the following year.

²⁸ This Vienna production is reviewed in the article "Heiner Müller directs Heiner Müller" in The Drama Review 36, no. 1 (Spring 1991). But as early as 1988, Müller also describes a previous production: "I remember attending a performance of Mauser in Cologne...they had thought a lot about the text and realized that they couldn't deal directly with the idea of revolution; the only conflict— let alone revolutionary conflict— they felt comfortable with was the relationship between men and women...I recognized that it was a very good performance although I couldn't figure out why. Years later I realized that they were playing Quartet with the text of Mauser...It made me realize that, indeed, the structure of Quartet was that of Mauser. I dream of a performance in which Mauser would be presented as a palimpsest behind or underneath Quartet. It's really the same structure, the same dramaturgy." From "Wars" in Müller, Germania, 72-73.

Müller's innovations of the Lehrstück can be seen as post-representational, post-humanist and post-Christian.

In his concluding "Note" to Mauser,²⁹ Müller is explicit that "Mauser ... presupposes/criticizes Brecht's theory and practice of the Lehrstück."

Consistent with Brecht's theory, Müller considers Mauser a play that is "not for the repertoire." However, Müller spends almost half of his page-long "Note" describing various techniques where a performance could be made for an audience. Such a performance is possible "...if the audience can check the acting against the text (das Spiel am Text zu kontrollieren) and the text against the acting...." Given the reception of Brecht's Lehrstücke which largely disregarded his utopian Lehrstück-theorie, Müller's suggestions seem practical ways that Mauser could be effectively produced in a theatre with a minimum of compromise.

If Müller's "Note" seems largely consonant with Brecht's Lehrstück-theorie, Mauser, the text, involves a strong critique of Brecht's actual Lehrstücke, most notably the Badener Lehrstück and The Measures Taken. One way that Mauser stands in contrast to Brecht's Lehrstücke is in its general presentational style. Müller counters Brecht's estranged realism with a strongly anti-representational mode. *Verfremdung* or non-empathetic estrangement is not good enough for Müller, since it allows an easy separation of player and role, reality and fiction. As in Beckett's anti-representational theatre, the boundary between mirror and reflection is blurred in Mauser.

²⁹ The text of Mauser cited is the bi-lingual first publication in New German Critique #8, Spring 1976 pp.122-149. The Note mentioned appears on page 148 & 149.

For instance, Mauser does not feature something paraphrasable as a story, much less a plot, and in this sense, is similar to, though not as extreme as, Müller's later works of the 70's such as HamletMachine. If Mauser lacks precisely a "story" or a "plot," then the "situation" that Mauser depicts is the dialectical interplay of reflections by an executioner on his own execution; his own death is a command of the Revolution whose orders he carried out while being an executioner. This situation is depicted by an exchange of lines between a collective chorus and the executioner A, with a few exchanges by another figure, the former executioner, B.

*Brecht sold a
screenplay while in
Hollywood, later
filmed by Fritz Lang,
that was titled:
"Hangmen Also
Die."*

For Müller, the clearly demarked play-within-a-play of, for instance, The Measures Taken, unacceptably transfers the division of audience and ensemble, to that of Chorus and Agitators within the ensemble. Mauser blurs the narrative frame that was clear in The Measures Taken. Both plays begin similarly, with an address of the Chorus. However, the narrative indeterminacy of Mauser is soon apparent. The addressee of the clear initial command of The Measures Taken ("Step forward!") is the ensemble-within-the-ensemble, those who will represent their past actions for an adjudicating Chorus. In Mauser, those first lines address a figure largely in the same situation as the Young Comrade beside the chalk pit, in an immediate and existential wrestle for his life, not the rhetorical re-presentation of this struggle:

You have fought at the front of the civil war
The enemy hasn't found any weakness in you
We haven't found any weakness in you.
Now you yourself are a weakness
The enemy must not find in us (121).

Apparently, a figure, A, is singled out by these lines. However, the status of A's identity as distinct and separable from the chorus remains highly problematic throughout Mauser.³⁰ At many points, A speaks his lines in unison with the Chorus. (Müller's script indicates several other passages that may be spoken by either A, the Chorus or both, as per the producing company's interpretation.) This interplay of individual and collective is never resolved as it is in The Measures Taken: A's death is not depicted and even his final lines, A's back up against the wall, we shall see, continue rather than conclude the dialectic.

With such ambiguities supported in the script, much responsibility for interpretation is handed directly to the producing cast (and by extension, to the audience). With this power comes an increased possibility for learning, for realization of self-consciousness. Huyssen and Bathrick suggest that this lack of represented (hi)story makes Mauser effective in performance, since any company attempting to produce Mauser must insert its own history into the work to interpret it.³¹ Such was the case with the premiere production which used explicitly feminist material to frame and interpret the work.

At the premiere, however, the audience rejected this increased responsibility to both interpret and adjudicate a message. After-play discussions tried to fix the play's meaning, not satisfied with this deferral. Largely, the feminist framing material was not seen as a way of interpreting the work but rather as clutter.³²

³⁰ For instance, A quotes these beginning lines back to the Chorus when trying to get himself relieved of his post as executioner. 134 & 135.

³¹ "Müller presents us with a form in which one can create the process of an immediate experience of a momentary suspension of history. The very abstractness of the model

Mauser has a similarity to Müller's other experiments during the late 1960's in its heightened poetic language, which might be seen to compensate for its lack of narrative. The poetic principle of composition is a series of line-based statements that are arranged and repeated in a coherent collage of intra-textual echoes and inter-textual allusions. These lines shift in meaning with context and with change of speaker and their position within the whole. In this recontextualizing collage, even clearly programmatic statements gain nuances.

Mauser alludes not only to Brecht but also "themes" in And Quiet Flows the Don, a novel of the Russian Revolution by Nobel prize winner Mikhail Sholokov. Müller mentions this allusion in his "Note."

For instance, an often repeated phrase is, "Death to the enemies of the Revolution." In one context, it appears as "the bread of the revolution is the death of its enemies."³³ The phrase also appears several times in the capitalized sentence DEATH TO THE ENEMIES OF THE REVOLUTION. Betty Nance Weber notes that this capitalized line, which also is the last line in Mauser, spoken by A, resembles grammatically and in effect the last line of

demands the historicity and activity of the participants and thus explodes the strictures of traditional drama." In Huyssen, "Producing Revolution: Mauser as Learning Play," 90.

³² Betty Nance Weber writes: "Throughout our Austin run and the tour, however, the question of exoneratation or condemnation continued to concern a sizable portion of the audiences....people of a wide variety of political persuasions seemed to find evidence in the play to support their own points of view....Unwilling to accept the frame built around Müller's text as an analytical tool, they expected the company to celebrate a particular strategy and offer a clear directive." Weber, Betty-Nance, "Mauser in Texas," 153-4.

³³ Müller's line seems purposefully reminiscent of a late poem of Brecht's "The Bread of the People" (1953) where "Justice is the bread of the People...Plentiful, wholesome, daily." (Poems 1913-1956, 435.

Kleist's Prinz von Homburg,³⁴ which she calls "one of the most controversial last lines in the history of drama" (Weber, Betty-Nance, 153f) due to the continuing debate as to its determinate political import. Does A go to his death resisting the order of the Revolution (death to the ENEMIES of the Revolution not me) or fervently agreeing, branding himself among its enemies?

Mauser's reiterative poetic collage of lines and narrative indeterminacy allows performance both as a Lehrstück and as a Schaustück: Müller's "Note" seems to endorse production for an audience under certain conditions. Betty Nance Weber suggests that while their production ran in Austin, Mauser was a Lehrstück but when it was taken out on tour, the more conventionally theatrical aspects of the work became accented. As it was performed for an audience, the piece lost its focus as a process and became more a product.³⁵ In its anti-representational mode of presentation, Mauser is a Lehrstück that incorporates Adorno's criticism of Brecht / valorization of Beckett and refuses to become a discreet object for contemplation.

This alloy of Lehrstück and Schaustück, however is ultimately a self-defeating experiment since as soon as an audience is allowed to watch the deliberations of A, rather than participate with them (as per Müller's note), the lack of resolution presented in Mauser becomes coy deferral since the audience does not realize itself as responsible and implicated. Brecht's Lehrstück problematized the expectations of didactic art by dissolving the audience, a move that removed the Lehrstücke from the repertoire of currently existing theatres. Müller, in being more pragmatic, constructed Mauser to

³⁴ Kleist's play ends with the statement: "Down with all the enemies of Brandenburg!"

³⁵ "In planning a marketable product for the tour, the process of learning and constant alteration within the company had stagnated." Weber, Betty-Nance, 155.

allow satisfactory productions before the establishment of Brecht's utopian Pädagogium. Neither "solution" as such, however, seems successfully to address directly the expectations of currently existing, institutional theatre.

Mauser continues and critiques another aspect of Brecht's Lehrstück in its consideration of production and consumption. For Brecht, the Lehrstück was to mediate the division between production and consumption with respect to theatre and thereby to knowledge. For Brecht, it was a Human (social) body that produced and consumed this knowledge. Though essentially social and hence torn apart by present conditions, Brecht's Human was, in some sense, assumed to exist. The Human, for Müller, has become itself fully an historical construct, one that has not quite been achieved. The scope of Müller's post-humanism can be seen by looking at his take on production and consumption in Mauser.

Significantly, the collective antagonist in Mauser is the Revolution, as compared with The Party in Brecht's The Measures Taken. The goal of this Revolution is to produce the Human,³⁶ and by so doing eradicate itself. To produce this Human, the Revolution must consume its enemies,³⁷ these not-quite-humans.³⁸

This antagonism of production and consumption is mirrored in the individual worker. A, as an executioner by command of the Revolution, Müller

³⁶ "Chorus: ...The revolution will triumph or the human will not be / But disappear in increasing humankind." 139.

³⁷ "Knowing the daily bread of the Revolution is the death of its enemies." 123,127,131.

³⁸ The Chorus corrects A who says that a human was before his pistol: "Not humans are you ordered to kill, but / Enemies. For the human is unknown." 139.

reminds us, is not an exception but a paradigmatic example of a human in this struggling process toward Humanity.³⁹ For the executioner, death is a kind of work,⁴⁰ a job but "...a job like no other" (127, 133). As such, all attempts to resolve this conflict of worker and work, of human and the steps necessary for Humanity are rejected. When A's predecessor, B, uses his present humanity to over-rule the command to kill, B himself becomes an enemy. When A conflates his task with his person and personally hates those he must execute, stamping his boots over their dead bodies,⁴¹ A, too, becomes an enemy of the Revolution. In the case of B, the worker shirked from his work;⁴² in the case of B, the worker was consumed by his work.⁴³

³⁹ "The extreme is not the object of the play, but an example demonstrating the continuum of normality which is to be exploded." From "Note," 149.

⁴⁰ "Chorus:...Your work was bloody and like no other / But it must be done like other work / By some one or by an other." 143.

⁴¹ "A (perhaps with Chorus): I take under my boot what I have killed / I dance on my dead with stamping dance rhythms / For me it is not enough to kill what has to die." 141.

⁴² "B:...I withdraw my hand from the order / Which the revolution has given me." 129.

⁴³ "Chorus: ...We knew then that his work had consumed him." 141.

The powerful images associated with this interplay of worker and work throughout Mauser is the hand and the gun. These hands do not belong to those that possess them,⁴⁴ but are either for or against the Revolution. There are a thousand hands at the throat of the Revolution,⁴⁵ including the uninstructed workers that B has released.⁴⁶ To one of these hands that works for the Revolution, that has fought at the front, the Revolution entrusts a revolver and the task of executioner,⁴⁷ as it had to B before him.⁴⁸ Between the gap of hand and gun, finger and trigger is the space of individual human consciousness, the gap that A forsakes and hence becomes himself a gap.⁴⁹ Overwhelmed with the horror of killing those like himself, A dreams for the sleep of machines: "I am a human. A human is not a machine. Killing and killing, the same after each death / I could not do it. Give me the sleep of the machine" (143). These two uneasy creatures, hands and guns must co-exist in tension and anticipation of the day when no more killing must be done and the hand can belong to its possessor alone.

A Mauser is a pistol that was popular with the Red Army during the Russian Civil War.

"Mauser" is also the German word for moulting, when birds lose their old feathers.

⁴⁴ "Chorus: ... For your hand is not your hand / As my hand is not my hand / Until the Revolution has triumphed finally." 129.

⁴⁵ "A: ... A thousand hands at our throat." 131.

⁴⁶ "Chorus: ... it was one more hand at our throat." 129.

⁴⁷ "Chorus: ... with your hand / the Revolution kills. With all hands / with which the Revolution kills you also kill." 137.

⁴⁸ "B: ... I dispensed death / the revolver my third hand / to the enemies of the revolution in the city Vitebsk." 129.

Müller's depiction of production and consumption as death responds to Brecht's production and consumption of didactic theatre because death and execution is equated throughout Mauser with knowledge. The executioner executes "knowing the daily bread of the revolution is the death of its enemies" (123, 127). When B falters, he says, "I know it no longer. I can no longer kill" (129). B, hence, sends away the workers that faced execution who were "enemies of the Revolution out of ignorance" (129) and who "went back to their work... having not learned" (129), that is, having not been killed. The Chorus finally beseeches A to die and in dying learn and instruct them: "The revolution does not abandon you. Learn to die. / What you learn increases our knowledge. / Die learning. Do not abandon the Revolution" (147). Knowledge, in the world of Mauser, must be death

For ignorance can kill
 As steel can kill and fever
 But knowledge does not suffice, for ignorance
 Must cease completely, nor does killing suffice
 For killing is a science
 And must be learned so that it ceases (131).

Perhaps because of this equation, nothing can be known absolutely about conditions beyond death. In his revolutionary struggles before becoming an executioner, A says: "I learned nothing about life after death" (125). As he executes the Revolution's enemies, he learns nothing about an after life.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ "Chorus:...Between finger and trigger the moment / was your time and ours. Between hand and revolver the span / was your post in the front of the revolution / but when your hand became one with the revolver / And you became one with your work / And were no longer conscious of it / ...Your post in our front was a gap." 145.

⁵⁰ "I knew when you shoot into a human / Blood flows out of him as out of all animals There is not much that distinguishes the dead and / This much is not for long. But a human is not an animal" (133). This language is directly reminiscent of an early poem of Brecht's from

When A finally faces his own execution, first, he demands that the Revolution produce the Human, to which the Chorus responds: "You ask too soon. We can not help you. / And your question does not help the revolution" (143). At the moment of death, A asks (with or without the Chorus): "What comes after death" (147). The Chorus can give no definite answer, but rather, shifting into the past tense,⁵¹ repeats lines spoken before: "...You know what we know, we know what you know / And your question does not help the revolution" (147). Hence in Mauser, the ends of death and knowledge are dialectically and inextricably linked.

In Brecht's Lehrstücke, humans produce and consume knowledge/theatre; In Mauser, humans themselves are consumed in anticipation of a Human yet to be produced. Mauser does not merely mock Brecht's construction but rather radicalizes undeveloped implications of Brecht's own theory. For Brecht, the Lehrstück is a parable, in effect a cautionary or-else tale: learn from this unfortunate tale of the Young Comrade or else you'll end up in the same state. Despite Brecht's theoretical collapse of stage and auditorium, this distance reappears between the Lehrstück Chorus and the other performers. Brecht's style of estranged Realism implied a degree of human autonomy with respect to the narratives that engulf us; human agency of any sort, individual or collective, has become deeply problematical in Mauser. The ironic distance of *Verfremdung* is exposed as an illusion, as

Hauspostille (1927), "Gegen Verführung," whose last stanza runs: "Laßt euch nicht verführen! / Zu Fron und Ausgezehr! / Was kann euch Angst noch rühren? / Ihr sterbt mit allen Tieren / Und es kommt nichts nachher." Müller, though, rejects such a bald-faced atheism for an endlessly deferred agnosticism.

⁵¹ The response that the Chorus gives begins (with or without A speaking along): "He asked yet and already rose from the ground / no longer screaming, and we answered him" 147.

Mauser describes what dynamics are already at work on and in us. For Müller, we are straining, rather, to look over our shoulders to read what sentences History has inscribed on our flesh.⁵²

Just as Humans have ceased to be in any sense the image bearers of a sovereign God, so does Mauser reject any eschatological shape for history: neither God nor any doubles of God's presence are allowable in Müller's post-Christian context. True: Brecht mocked and chided religion, but read the Bible extensively and often uncritically appropriated its forms. The corpse of Nietzsche's dead god has decomposed to dust around Müller. One way that this post-Christian horizon can be seen is in Müller's take on *Einverständnis*.

For Brecht, *Einverständnis* was a kind of agreement that an individual made with the collective, a peace which happens in death, if not before, as if a band of past Revolutionaries on the other side beckon you to come over. From this position of solidarity with an all-knowing Revolution, its ultimate purposes can finally occur. Mauser rejects this promise of reconciliation, even if it requires death, as too unprobably hopeful. Hence the death of A is not the final, sacrificially effective act of Brecht's Young Comrade from The Measures Taken. Even less is it the punitive death of the pilot in the Badener Lehrstück. In both those cases, to some degree, the individual is the root of the problem,

⁵² Müller himself picks up this allusion to Kafka in Mauser and elsewhere. A describes his early education: "With fist and gun butt, with boot heel and shoe tip / The text was inscribed into my flesh / read under school benches and in the latrine / WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE." 125. In Traktor, for instance, the tractorist, while recovering from having his leg blown off by a mine in a field he was plowing, is "comforted" by Visitor 2: "We saw with our eyes what had been written/ With Marx' and Lenin's texts on our bodies." From Traktor in Müller, The Battle, 73. Again, later, in The Task, the white-trash revolutionary Galloudec says to Black slave Sasportas: "I know your role is most difficult to play, Sasportas. It's written all over your body." To which Sasportas replies: "With the same whips our hands will use to write a new alphabet on other bodies." From The Task in Müller, HamletMachine, 89.

the obstacle to the progress initiated by the placid, rational and inevitable collective. In Brecht, the collective is a double for a communal, providential God, and *Einverständnis* is the individual human's communion, if not last rites.

In the late 1970's, Reiner Steinweg petitioned Müller for an essay concerning the contemporary use of the Lehrstück. Müller, disillusioned with the form, wrote back a short letter describing why Lehrstücke were historically impossible, at least for the moment: "I think we have to bid farewell to the Lehrstück until the next earthquake. The christian apocalypse (*Endzeit*) of Brecht's The Measures Taken has lapsed....What remains: isolated texts waiting for history."⁵³ In this context, Mauser presents both individual and collective "humans" as fallible, victims and progenitors of evil, with no scrap of the Divine Providence remaining to impinge on the historical transmission of these horrors. A must be killed because he has cracked up under the strain of daily terror, "now his burden (has become) his booty" (141). He has been led to this insanity by normally humane (perhaps even revolutionary⁵⁴) impulses, but he has become a crazed, blood-thirsty "animal" nonetheless. However, A's failure seems to some degree endemic in the role allotted to him by the Revolution. The gun they put in his hand, that is, the task they charge him with, is necessarily destructive and corrosive. Worse, perhaps, is that the Revolution seems blind to their own implication in the agony they purport to abolish. For Müller, as Mauser demonstrates, neither the individual nor the collective is the reservoir of an unsullied presence in their bickering interplay,

⁵³ From "Isolated Texts waiting for History" in Müller, Germania, 239.

⁵⁴ A begins to crack when he is required to execute someone like himself who would have been killed by reactionary as well as revolutionary powers: "His kind has been killed / And my kind for two thousand years / By wheel gallows garotte knout Katorga / By my enemy's kind who is his enemy." 137.

nor is there ground for hope that this conflict will ever be resolved historically much less transcended metaphysically, nor is there any sense of a Being or Power at work behind history that is itself not the work of human hands.

Perhaps understandably, Müller has been frequently accused of nihilism, pessimism and general hopelessness. His approach to the same phenomena is instructive so I quote him at length:

"Today, there exists a corrupted attitude toward the tragic, or also toward death. In my opinion, an ideal stance would be: 'To live without hope and despair.' And this has to be learned. I believe, I'm able to. People always ask for hope. That is a Christian question. It wouldn't have been a question for the Greeks, the contemporaries of Socrates: One had neither hope nor despair. One was alive. This attitude toward the tragic as something that enriches life and the theatre has been lost because of Christianity. The tragic is something very vital: I see a man perish and that gives me strength. Nowadays it is the rule, a widely shared response, that it is depressing when someone perishes."⁵⁵

More concisely, Müller says: "I am neither a hope nor a dope dealer." This deconstruction of the binarism of Hope/Despair, for Müller is an appropriate, perhaps adaptive behavior. At the end of the letter to Steinweg quoted above Müller coins a phrase for what he is about, his credo: constructive defeatism.⁵⁶

Given this overarching context of a suppression of Hope and Despair, *Einverständnis*, the instruction that *Lehrstücke* accomplish, for Müller,

⁵⁵ From "The End of the World has Become a Faddish Problem" in Müller, Explosion of a Memory, 163.

⁵⁶ Elsewhere, Müller casts this orientation as a joke: "to believe that there will be a fourth world war is historical optimism."

becomes something very blank and ineffable. Lehrstücke, when possible, are a means for allowing experiences between the collective and the individual. In this *einverstanden*, both the collective and the individual are to learn. In Mauser, the chorus exhorts A, at the end of their first exchange, to: "Learn your last lesson. Your last lesson is: / You who stand at the wall are your enemy and ours" (125). Conversely, the Revolution is to learn from A's death: "You die only one death / But the Revolution dies many deaths. / The Revolution has many times, not one. / Too many..." (145).⁵⁷ In his "Note" to Mauser, Müller writes: "Experiences can only be passed on collectively; training the (individual) faculty to gain experiences is one function of enactment (*Spiel*)" (149). As a counter-example, in effect an anti-Lehrstück, Müller describes his distressed shock at the movie Fantasia, in an interview with the German filmmaker Harun Farocki: "The horrifying thing for me in this is the occupation of the imagination by cliché's that will never go away. The use of images to prevent experiences, to prevent the having of experiences. ... Intelligence without experience: this is what I mean with America."⁵⁸ For Müller, as for Brecht, the Lehrstücke instruct the participants in *Einverständnis*, a corporeal and empirical kind of knowledge; Müller however, strips Brecht's *Einverständnis*, of its theological resonances in order to avoid what he perceives as the Scylla and Charibdis of Hope and Despair.

⁵⁷ This passage is directly reminiscent of the song "In praise of the Party" in The Measures Taken, where the strength and intelligence of the Party is contrasted to the weakness of the individual: "The individual has two eyes / The Party has a thousand eyes. / The Party sees seven states / The individual sees one city / The individual has his hour / But the Party has many hours / A single man can be wiped out / but the Party cannot be wiped out." From Brecht, The Jewish Wife and Other Short Plays, 101.

⁵⁸ From "Intelligence without Experience: Interview with Harun Farocki" in Müller, Germania, 165.

Though Mauser was Müller's last work qua Lehrstück, Müller has continued his critical appropriation of the Lehrstück into more recent works, such as The Task (Die Auftrag, 1980) and Volokolamsk Highway (Wolokamsk Chausee, 1985-88). The first steps toward these later works, however, can be seen fully evident in his criticisms of the Lehrstück presented in Mauser. These critiques have been examined in order to follow the trail of the Lehrstück across this juncture between generations. In tracing the Lehrstück, it is necessary to see not only what Brecht has taught but what Müller has learned.

Concluding Notes

In this thesis, the Lehrstück has been examined as a 20th century attempt at didactic theatre. First, modern aesthetic theory was reviewed through Hegel, Lukács and Adorno, for remarks concerning Form and Content, a deceptively applicable doctrine for considering didactic art. A notion of interlaced artworks was suggested as a better theoretical grasp of the issues raised by the Lehrstück. Second, the trajectory of Brecht's overall career was plotted through several key works and an overall character to this work, as picaresque and pragmatistic, was described. Next followed a brief exposition of Brecht's remarks on an overarching Lehrstück-theorie which provided a rationale for the Lehrstücke as a theatrical mediation of the societal divisions between audience and ensemble, between production and consumption and between work and leisure. The consideration of Brecht's work with the Lehrstück concluded with a catalogue raisonné of his Lehrstücke and a brief analysis of a key term for these works, *Einverständnis*. Finally, Heiner Müller's Lehrstück, Mauser, was contextualized and analyzed as a critique of both Brecht's Lehrstück-theorie and Lehrstück practice in a direction that was characterized as post-representational, post-humanist and post-Christian. These concluding notes will present an ordered series of observations, assertions and hypotheses culled from the previous chapters with the interest of highlighting the structural regularities illuminated by this examination of the Lehrstück in order to make explicit the contribution of Brecht's Lehrstücke for our philosophical understanding of aesthetic knowledge.

The Form and Content of Art-As-Such and the Structure of Other Aesthetic Products

1A: Modern aesthetic theory has been pre-occupied with art-as-such.

Though Kant and a strain of Romantics were fascinated by the sublime effects of natural aesthetic phenomena, modern aesthetics, for instance, the thought of Hegel, Lukács and Adorno, has considered primarily art-as-such. It is indeed quite possible that the development of the academic discipline of philosophical aesthetics required as a precondition the rise of the institution of art-as-such.

1 B: Art-as-such embodies aesthetic knowledge.

The import of art-as-such is particularly aesthetic, hence cannot be reduced to fundamentally non-aesthetic functioning. For instance, the transmutation of art into a semantically clear paraphrase, or an analytically precise definition, are both hopeless desiderata. The impetus for such reduction, perhaps relates to an implicit idolization of knowledge as strictly semantic (logocentrism) or analytic (rationalism). However, the aesthetic nub of art can validly serve as the object of, say, semantic discourse (as in the case of good criticism) or theoretic discourse (as in proper philosophical aesthetics.)

The doctrine of Form and Content is a way of grasping the uniquely aesthetic insight of art in distinction from its more technical, formal moments. Such a Form and Content doctrine realized that art is not a semantic phenomenon, not a matter of Medium and Message; hence an internal coherence of Form and Content within the artwork was necessarily stressed.

1C: Art-as-such is not the only valid form of human aesthetic endeavor.

Some human practices and artifacts aesthetically enhance phenomena that have another structural focus. These practices and artifacts can be called ornamental, and examples include cathedral gargoyles that gussy-up rain gutters or sermon illustrations.

Other human artifacts and practices are fully artistic while at the same time combine being fully functioning subjects under a different qualification. These doubly qualified phenomena can be called interlaced artworks and examples include liturgical art and ambient music.

1D: Didactic art is a kind of interlaced artwork.

Truly interlaced works that are both didactic and artistic are perhaps historically rare. The double focus of truly interlaced artworks is difficult to maintain; the artistic nub is often compromised for ornamentation, or the didactic focus lapses into cheap relevance, as occurs in the case, perhaps, of television movies or pot-boiling novelized biographies.

1E: Not all forms of knowledge can be taught via didactic art.

The type of knowledge conveyed by didactic art needs to be congenial to the specific characteristics of the art-genre used. Under the rubric of didactic art (itself a sub-category of interlaced art), valid distinctions can be made on the internal structure of the genre. What can be taught by a didactic novel might not be appropriate for a didactic theatre-piece. Hence, reflections on the nature of didactic theatre seem necessarily to require considerations of the normative structures of the given genre. The intrinsic demands of the genre must jibe with the concerns of available theories of education and epistemology for viable didactic art to be produced.

Bertolt Brecht as a Pragmatistic and Picaresque Theatre Theorist/Practitioner

2A: A continuing dynamic of Bertolt Brecht's career was an interest in the utility of artistic products. (Pragmatism)

Brecht seemed careful not to lapse into agitational propaganda, at least in his own terms. (Adorno's criticisms raise the possibility that Brecht was incorrect in his understanding of the difference between propaganda and art-as-such, but such objections are a separate matter). For Brecht, utility, largely, did not over-rule and corrode the aesthetic quality of artworks. Usefulness was pursued as the engaged rationale of the nature of the work as art.

2B: Brecht understood the relationship between pleasure and instruction in didactic art as a non-contradictory relation. (Picaresque or interactionary monism)

"First the meal, then the moral" did not imply that education was a bitter pill that must be essentially disguised. Rather, instruction was a kind of heightened pleasure and the substrata of pleasure remained in a mutually beneficial interaction with instruction.

2C: Brecht's pragmatistic and picaresque attitudes formed a matrix for his work with the Lehrstück.

However, to the extent that the Lehrstücke existed as concrete historical attempts to respond to reality, the Lehrstück reveals an understanding of reality, and is not just a deluded figment of Brecht's preoccupations. The perduring structural contours undergirding Brecht's experiments is a valid topic for an investigation of philosophical aesthetics.

Brecht's Theory of the Lehrstück and Practice of the Lehrstücke as Didactic Art

3A: The Lehrstück is a kind of didactic art, specifically didactic theatre.

Attempts to understand Brecht's Lehrstücke as Schaustücke, that is, as theatre-as-such, necessarily misses the kernel of their identity. (Brecht, in his Lehrstücke, perhaps, contributed to this mistaken analysis, by introducing tragic elements despite his "anti-Aristotelian" pretensions.) Brecht's remarks on a Lehrstück-theorie provide a necessary but not sufficient context for understanding the Lehrstücke as didactic art.

3B: Brecht intended the Lehrstück to mediate theatrically various contingent, societal divisions.

Brecht's Lehrstück dramaturgy attempted to affect a mutually beneficial interaction between various phenomena that he believed had been artificially set at odds through capitalism. Brecht perceived a contingent alienation between the audience and the ensemble which related to a societal division between production and consumption and between work and leisure. Since contingent, such divisions were not essential to human community. The Lehrstücke hence were utopian and prophetic critiques of what Brecht saw as destructive results of capitalism's business-as-usual.

3C: Lehrstücke, like perhaps all interlaced artworks, need to be presented in an environment distinct from art-as-such settings to highlight their special qualities.

Interlaced artworks, such as didactic theatre, require, perhaps, the existence of strongly-constituted institutions that are not the same as aesthetic institutions, as vehicles for their production. Brecht, for instance, realized rather quickly that his Lehrstücke were plays for school children and school use.

A non-art institutional necessity underlines an antinomy in Brecht's Lehrstücke. To the extent that they are prophetic critiques of then-contemporary society, Lehrstücke must be produced to affect that society. However, to the extent that the Lehrstücke are utopian constructs, requiring the existence of ideal institutions for their transmission (for instance, a Pädagogium), Lehrstücke cannot help but be misunderstood when produced before the Utopia they anticipate.

Brecht's Lehrstücke are in a similarly tenuous position as works of an icon painter would be in an era when the institutionalized Church has been made impossible.

Brecht and the Contours of Didactic Theatre

4A: The Lehrstück, as intrinsically didactic theatre, assumes a view of knowledge where ambiguity is instructive.

The Lehrstücke as such reject an epistemic privilege granted to semantic knowledge (logocentrism) or rational knowledge (rationalism). However, unlike the "post-modern" critiques of logocentrism and rationalism, the Lehrstück banks heavily on pragmatic experience.

Fruitful comparisons could be made between the Lehrstück and the educational and artistic theories of John Dewey.

4B: Einverständnis is Brecht's grasp of the unique curriculum of didactic theatre.

Einverständnis, for Brecht, is a practical, social assent given to conditions or previous decisions. *Einverständnis* is a lived knowledge not just read about in books, just as theatrical productions are physical and participatory

performances which interpret a script. Theatrical knowledge, so conceived, is given a privileged relationship to embodied experience, and cannot be transferred but rather is produced through corporeal induction. Perhaps Brecht is confusing the unique niche of didactic theatre with the non-paraphrasable character of aesthetic knowledge

Heiner Müller's criticisms and variations on the Lehrstück

5A: Heiner Müller's work Mauser, issuing from a different matrix of concerns, both offers criticisms of the Lehrstück and presents variations on its practice.

These criticisms underline non-optional aspects of the Lehrstück's structure while the variations present alternative emphases for the practice of Lehrstücke.

5B: Mauser problematically blurs the formal limits between Lehrstück and Schaustück.

Müller has described Lehrstücke to be "isolated texts waiting for history." Perhaps to compensate and allow proper production in theatres before the advent of the Pädagogium, Mauser employs an anti-representational mode similar to Beckett. Adorno's arguments cited in Chapter One suggest that such a mode is the glory of theatre-as-such. Mauser forefronts the antinomy of Lehrstück AND Schaustück, which was always an intrinsic problem in Brecht's Lehrstück as a utopian and prophetic theatre. Mauser demonstrates a misunderstanding of didactic artworks, which must succeed as both art and education, to mean that Lehrstücke must be both Lehrstücke and Schaustücke.

The absence of a patroning institution for interlaced artworks, apart from those constituted for art-as-such perhaps doom them to historical isolation if not systemic misunderstanding.

5C: The anti-representationality of Müller's Mauser develops a sophisticated variation on Brecht's Lehrstücke.

Mauser's narrative ambiguity and poetic collage introduces a rich variety of interpretive opportunities to a savvy ensemble. However, the reports of confusion from the Austin production suggest that such skilled and schooled ensembles might not be readily available.

5D: Mauser critiques the implicit, ungrounded Humanism of Brecht's Lehrstücke by presenting an intrinsically ambiguous status for the human agent.

An abiding interest of Brecht was the societal mutability of human identity, given perhaps clearest form in Mann ist Mann. However, the Lehrstücke seem to assert an a priori human subjectivity that produces and consumes the knowledge/theatre. Mauser continues Brecht's trajectory by radically disseminating human identity into a construct of the collective, which itself has no transcendently constituted nature. The post-Humanism of Mauser is best seen as a critique/radicalization of Brecht's perspective, rather than as a criticism of the Lehrstück as form.

5E: The ambiguous ending of Mauser radicalizes and criticizes Brecht's internal dynamic of process-oriented learning.

Brecht's Lehrstücke deferred an explicit "message" in order to focus on the process of learning through theatre, and aimed to avoid the product of easily paraphrased knowledge. Brecht's deferral invested the ensemble with

sovereignty in discovering the ambiguities inherent in the situation depicted. However, enough residue of narrative structure remains to undergird and heighten the events, giving the shape of the Lehrstück Aristotelian if not theological resonances.

In Müller a rigorous suppression of message results in a strongly anti-eschatonic shape to the piece. Brecht's "epic" chaining of event "one after another" has become for Müller a non-linear situation whose telos is fundamentally undecidable, an endless deferral, a waiting for Godot. Mauser raises the ensemble's awareness that human agents, either individually or collectively, are largely disempowering when it comes to fixing or determining meaning, even their own identity. It is not surprising, hence, that Müller eventually found the Lehrstück-as-such unsuitable for his purposes.

To conclude these notes, let me underscore an incredibly fascinating aspect of Brecht's Lehrstück: their implicit insistence that clarity and precision are not the only ways that education can occur. Instead, the Lehrstücke point to a realm of instructive ambiguities. This class of nuanced knowledge must be remembered, for instance, when governments tell our children to "just say no" rather than giving them viable methods for coping and dealing with the complex problems of modernity. Too often, it seems that the Church, too, has been satisfied with similar moralizing, of limiting evil rather than of inspiring and enabling good. The Lehrstück, through Brecht's theme and Müller's variations, suggests a practical attempt to grasp and make tangible these instructive ambiguities.

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