

these two divergent stances to be based in ideological and philosophical positions, and in need of further research. Finally, the debate about representation and authenticity in the theatre can be seen as an extended, even concentrated, variant of a heated debate in today's Western society: the crisis of representation.

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Abstract

In contemporary Western theatre and actor's training there is a tension between different traditions in the actor's work, concerning the bodily practices that are related to representation, construction of identities, authenticity and self-expression. One aspect of the actor's methodical tradition – the openness to suffering and sacrificing oneself in the name of the arts – will be displayed and scrutinised through examples from ancient theatre, European avant-garde and the Method acting tradition. I will argue that this aspect is aimed at exposing the artist as a unique original, and in this way also serves the commodification of the artist's self-presentation. In contrast to the abovementioned moods of representation, 20th century artists and philosophers like Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin practically and theoretically challenge concepts such as originality, authenticity and artists' self-representation. They instead investigate the creative and political potential in phenomena like quoting and copying, and above all a playful and critical role-taking process, not based in self-expression. I will finally argue that Brecht's stance is in accordance with a non-essentialist view of humans and that his views are in line with certain tendencies in the post-dramatic tradition.

Key words: Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Acting, Actor's training, Representation, Identity politics, Acting methods, Original, Copying

Michael Wehren

The Institution of Class and Collective.

Remarks on *Fatzer* and *The Measures Taken*

Class and “the Classic”

Since the late 1990s *the political* has been a topic of ongoing debate and discussion in the context of Brecht studies as well as in the context of modern theatrical interpretations of his works. These discussions were not only based on critical and close (re-)readings of Bertolt Brecht’s works but also on the innovative impulses of contemporary political theory, which conceptualized a difference between *politics* and *the political* that allowed for a challenging reframing of the canonic notion of political theatre.¹ Yet, while *the political* became an important aspect of the discussions about Brecht and his works, it can be observed that discussions of class and classism have largely been ignored or marginalized. When one, for example, looks at different Brecht conferences from the last three decades and the related yearbooks one might even suppose that the question of class has completely been forgotten when it comes to Brecht the “classic” because what is associated with the concept of class seems to be too old fashioned, static, limited, and even identitarian to be of productive value to contemporary discussions or artistic practice. And while traditionally there has been a lot of comment and analysis on the issue of class and class politics in the context of Brecht studies, most of them date back to before 1989 and the downfall – not of the Egoist Johann Fatzer – but of state socialism.

Looking further then and beyond the specialized field of Brecht studies, it becomes clear that this strange forgetting of class is not a singular phenomenon. On the contrary, it describes a general discursive trend of the present and recent decades which can also be observed in quite different contexts. To quote the African-American, black author and activist bell hooks: “Racism and sexism can be exploited in the interests of class power. Yet no one wants to talk about class.”² While this observation is of course polemical and made with regards to the specific US/American contexts she has herself engaged and taken part in, to a German Brecht scholar like myself it also seems to be a good description of the contemporary mainstream discussion and reception of Brecht: “the uncool subject is class. It’s the subject that makes us all tense, nervous, uncertain about where we stand.”³

From a historical point of view, this strange “forgetting” of class can be associated with post-1989 political developments and the associated crisis not only of the so-called socialist states but also of orthodox theoretical Marxist discourses. When, during this time, Étienne Balibar published his article “From Class Struggle to Struggle without Classes?” he correctly

1 For a detailed study of the concept of political difference, I suggest a publication by Oliver Marchart. See: Oliver Marchart. *Die politische Differenz. Zum Denken des Politischen bei Nancy, Lefort, Badiou, Laclau und Agamben*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010. Exemplary and still critically productive readings of Brecht as an author of *the political* can be found in Hans-Thies Lehmann. See: Hans-Thies Lehmann. *Das Politische Schreiben. Essays zu Theater und Texten*. Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2002.
2 bell hooks. *where we stand. class matters*. New York – Abingdon: Routledge, 2000, p. VII.
3 *Ibidem*, p. VVII.

observed that “[a]t least in ‘developed’ capitalist countries, class struggle in its original simplicity has left the stage. In practice, classes themselves are less and less *visible*.”⁴ Balibar’s text and his remarks can be understood as an echo of the general crisis of representation and, therefore, the visibility of class and class struggle as canonical elements of Marxist theory and practice during the 1980s and 90s.

While not being in a hegemonic position per se, traditional Marxist discourses can be seen as relatively dominant with regard to the discussions focusing on Brecht and his works before 1989. As an example of this now mostly historical, more orthodox view on class as a Marxist political concept, it makes sense to quote Ernst Schumacher’s 1968 contribution to the *Brecht-Dialogue*, an annual event in Berlin focusing on Brecht and related topics, in which the GDR-based theatre critic and Brecht scholar wrote:

Brecht never did let go his decision to make art, in this specific case, theatre for the most progressive part of the people, for the organised workers and the organised peasants, as well as the politically conscious and decisive intelligence [or: intelligentsia]. He did not want run-of-the-mill-theatre but a class theatre.⁵

He also adds that Brecht’s decision and work for or with the working class is exemplary for the engaged intellectual or artist and the then new East German socialist state.⁶ Schumacher’s construction of Brecht’s politicalness follows a representational logic of class that does not look at or take part in class formation or the institution of class but addresses only those who are already organized, engaged and therefore instituted. Yet, his use of the word class theatre has an unintended double meaning as it implicitly poses the question: What if the theatre of class representation hints at the theatrical dimension of class beyond theatre? What if class and class politics are not only a matter of representation?

Nevertheless Schumacher’s construction of Brecht’s theatre as a political institution ignores and does not pose these possible questions, instead opting for a theatre of politics that defines itself via a logic of class that is organized by predetermined places and positions. In his studies the French philosopher Jacques Rancière has called this form of politics *police* and contrasts it with what he calls *politics*: a disruption of the order of the police (what other contemporary discourses call “the political”). In this sense I argue that Schumacher’s class theatre is in fact not political but describes

4 Étienne Balibar. From class struggle to struggle without class?. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*. 1991, volume 14, issue 1, p. 8.
5 Ernst Schumacher. Beitrag zum Brecht-Dialog 1968. In: Ernst Schumacher. *Schriften zur darstellenden Kunst*. Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1978, p. 190. If not stated otherwise, the author of the English translation is Michael Wehren.
6 Compare: *Ibidem*, p. 191. “Brecht’s exemplary decision for the working class, his exemplary work for it, his exemplary work with the working class.”

the organized, located, and identified space of class in a way that is closest to what Rancière describes as police:

The police is, essentially, the law, generally implicit, that defines a party's share or lack of it. But to define this, you first must define the configuration of the perceptible in which one or the other is inscribed. The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of way of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise.⁷

From this perspective the *class-theatre* Schumacher talks about and presents as exemplary can be read as a representative theatrical structure as well as a representative political structure with fixed positions, identities, aims, and relationships. In this theatre of politics everyone is supposed to take their pre-determined positions and identify with the already theoretically and practically instituted collectives. The theatre of class depicted here knows no alternatives.

During recent decades, class-based perspectives like the one presented here have been heavily criticized by structuralist and poststructuralist thinkers – also in the context of Brecht studies. On the one hand, the political and aesthetical criticism aimed at this representative understanding of politics and theatre which was inspired by close readings of Brecht's texts, as well as by theorists such as Judith Butler, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, and others, is part of the larger discourse about the limits of traditional historical materialism and Marxist political concepts like class and class struggle. On the other hand, it also highlights the complex problems and potentials of Brecht's works which invite theoretical, aesthetical, and political approaches that go beyond the limited conceptual framework of not only representative theatre but also of the representative politics of class and class struggle. To quote Balibar's 1988 publication *Race, Nation, Class*: "The present 'crisis' is a crisis of the specific forms of representation and determinate practices of class struggle"⁸ – and therefore of class, we might add.

While the political and theoretical concept of class as well as class-centered interpretations of Brecht's works faced a fundamental crisis after 1989 (and in many cases even before) it is interesting to note that in the context of recent debates about intersectionality concepts of class and classism

have been re-discussed and theoretically revisited. In this context of the still ongoing debates about the relations, crossings, and interwovenness of categories like gender and race, we can observe a critical re-entry, re-evaluation, and re-articulation of the concepts of class and, as an associated concept, classism. These newer debates focus not only on questions of representation and the in/visibility of class, they also discuss the constitution of class as a process within power relations and the materiality of class with regards to different forms of practices and forms of knowledge. To quote bell hooks again, whose work itself functions as an intersection of the discussion of race, gender, and class:

It only took me a short while to understand that class was more than just a question of money, that it shaped values, attitudes, social relations, and the biases that informed the way knowledge would be given and received.⁹

And with regards to the educational system hooks adds:

Loudness, anger, emotional outbursts, and even something as seemingly innocent as unrestrained laughter were deemed unacceptable, vulgar disruptions of classroom social order. These traits were also associated with being a member of the lower classes. If one was not from a privileged class group, adopting a demeanor similar to that of the group could help one to advance. It is still necessary for students to assimilate bourgeois values in order to be deemed acceptable.¹⁰

hooks' example from the context of the educational system highlights that class and classist discrimination are not only economical categories but include and influence a wide formal range of behavioral and social aspects that not only influences schools and universities but also the field of academic Brecht studies. Like discussions of gender and race newer discourses about class point out the fact that the institutions and discursive practices are not outside of these powerful modes of social reproduction but are part of them. It is also important to note that class, like Pierre Bourdieu's habitus, manifests through the body and forms the body which is its medium. Last but not least, hooks' example shows quite clearly that classist discrimination is a question of resources and asymmetrical power relations. It influences forms of legitimate and illegitimate habitus-production, styles of thinking and behavior, as well as discursive practices. For example, it is not only about what is learned or discussed, but also how it is.

7 Jacques Rancière. *Disagreement. Politics and Philosophy*. Translated by Julie Rose. Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 29.

8 Étienne Balibar. *Race, Nation, Class. Ambiguous Identities*. Translated by Chris Turner. London – New York: Verso, 1991.

9 b. hooks. *where we stand*, p. 178.

10 bell hooks. *Confronting Class in the Classroom*. In: bell hooks. *Teaching to Transgress. Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 178.

The critical questioning of normalised (and therefore invisible) classist practices points out how class is not only reproduced but how class hierarchies are also, and at the same time, normalized. To quote Andreas Kemper and Heike Weinbach, who have written the first German publication focusing on classism as a critical category:

Classism unites the old forms of the criticism of material poverty and political exclusion which were part of the workers' movement with a critique of the non-recognition and degradation of cultures and lives of workers, the unemployed, and poor people.¹¹

They add that “the term classism is not to be understood as a culturalistic term which is only focusing on the questions of recognition. Yet, until now class oppression has been focused too much on economic class exploitation.”¹² In this sense newer contributions to class and classism draw from a widened conceptual framework which is not only associated with but also fundamentally inspired by intersectional discourses and their discussions of the interconnectedness of race, gender, and other categories of difference.

The Institution of the Class Subject

From the perspective of this article and its author, the re-entry of class on the theoretical and activist stage does not only imply critically focusing on classist structures and practices but also points out the institution of class as a political, social, and aesthetic process and project. Class, like institution, is not to be seen as a fixed ontological or social reality but is subject to, as well as a result and medium of, different practices, performative power relations, institutions, discourses, and the subjects which engage with and by them. To quote Adam Przeworski: “Classes are not given uniquely by any objective positions because they constitute effects of struggles, and these struggles are not determined uniquely by the relations of production.”¹³ Following this argument in his studies John Frow has built on this perspective of class and concluded that “ideological and political struggles constitute a process, not of class *representation* (that is, representation of pre-given interests) but of class *formation* (including the formation of class interests).”¹⁴ It is this aspect of political, but also aesthetical and theatrical, struggles that is closely connected to the question of institution as a practice. In this context it is important to note that the concept of institution always bears a double meaning: firstly, and as a noun, it refers to a partially fixed, material social reality like a school, a political party, a union, or a government agency. Secondly, as a verb, it means the process

11 Andreas Kemper – Heine Weinbach. *Klassismus. Eine Einführung*. Münster: Unrast-Verlag, 2016, p. 17.

12 *Ibidem*, p. 30.

13 Adam Przeworski. *Capitalism and Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 66.

14 John Frow. *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 104.



B. Brecht: *The Threepenny Opera*, directed by Ján Roháč, Východočeské Theatre, Pardubice, premiere 9. 2. 1957. Photo Jaromír Svoboda. © Arts and Theatre Institute Archive.



B. Brecht: *The Threepenny Opera*, directed by E. F. Burian, D 34 Theatre, Prague, premiere 21. 9. 1956. Photo Vilém Sochůrek. © Arts and Theatre Institute Archive.

of institution (to institute). With regards to the institution of class, this differentiation allows for a critical look at the process of the institution of the class subject and the accompanying process of class formation in Brecht's works as a political project that goes beyond the police logic of identification and representation.

The following selected and cursory examples do not try to work through all the questions related to class and classism in Brecht's works, but are more like preliminary sketches. They try, instead, to re-access the question of the institution and formation of class in some of Brecht's earlier works and thereby aim at a critical re-reading and a possible re-politicization of canonical works. In doing so I more or less have consciously decided not to focus on Brecht's social upbringing, his habitus, or his more theoretical and philosophical statements about class. The following three examples take a look at three different ways Brecht engages with class, classism, and the institution of class.

Especially in Brecht's early work it is obvious that class and classism play a dominant role: a role that also comments on the construction of the pure antagonism of the bourgeoisie and proletarians. For example, in Brecht and Weill's major mainstream hit *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), the major part of the cast consists of figures who are not only poor but who inhabit a shadowy in-between-space of society that Karl Marx famously described as the *lumpenproletariat* or rubble proletariat. This *lumpenproletariat* is described by Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* as an enemy of the working class and the workers' movement. He notes that it consists of elements of the masses which are in no way part of the self-conscious collective class subject of the proletariat:

On the pretext of founding a benevolent society, the lumpen proletariat of Paris had been organized into secret sections, each section led by Bonapartist agents, with a Bonapartist general at the head of the whole. Alongside decayed roués with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, *lazzaroni*, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, *maquereaux* [pimps], brothel keepers, porters, literati, organ grinders, ragpickers, knife grinders, tinkers, beggars — in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French call *la bohème*; from this kindred element Bonaparte formed the core of the Society of December 10. A "benevolent society" — insofar as, like Bonaparte, all its members felt the need of benefiting themselves at the expense of the laboring nation.¹⁵

15 Karl Marx. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch05.htm>. Accessed 2020-03-04.

Marx's text not only lists the elements he wants to exclude from the self-conscious class of the proletariat but does so in an almost Rabelaisian way, which communicates the affective and aesthetic intensities and powers of the multitude he writes about by mimetically echoing its "hither" and "thither." As Jeffrey Mahlheim has shown in his study *Revolution and Repetition*, wherever the *lumpenproletariat* appears in the symbolic order of the text it materializes as "a common heterogeneity in what we would call the Marxian phantasmatic [...] the *lumpen dejecta* of the class struggle."¹⁶ It is this "vile" multitude of "questionable" subjects in all their heterogeneity that enters the stage in *The Threepenny Opera*.

From a contemporary classism-sensitive perspective, in plays like *The Threepenny Opera* Brecht's stage presents a "class" of subjects that is as excluded from the politics of the workers' movement as it is from the economy of the bourgeois state. Traditionally there has been a lot of discussion about the relationship of bourgeois and subproletarian subjects in *The Threepenny Opera* which has been understood as a critique of bourgeois ideology. What has been less intensely discussed is the possible reproduction of classist discrimination by the bourgeois apparatus that puts the "exotic asocials" on stage. Seen from this perspective epic acting techniques like the showing of the showing but also the allegorical dimension of the play as a fable of bourgeois society can be read as echoes of the artistic, political, as well as ethical problem of how to present the bourgeois and proletarian other(s) on a bourgeois stage with mostly bourgeois actors. In transferring Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's argument that while representing subalterns "the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent"¹⁷ to the bourgeois stage we can argue that the appearance of the product of classist discrimination on stage can only occur via a theatrical actress or actor who makes her- or himself transparent, so that the marginalized and exoticized social other may appear. It is precisely this question of the transparent representation of class in a classist context that Brecht's storytelling and epic acting techniques work against and counteract. In framing the figures of the opera as allegories of the bourgeois economy and society the supposed nature of class theatre becomes subjected to an alienation effect, while the epic technique of acting hints at the political and aesthetic fact that bourgeois actors are representing subjects of another class. To put it differently: Not only does *The Threepenny Opera* make the other of bourgeois theatre and the working class visible — it does so while posing and exposing the question of who is playing and who is representing whom.

16 Jeffrey Mehlman. *Revolution and Repetition. Marx – Hugo – Balzac*. Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1977, p. 38.

17 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Can the Subaltern Speak?. In: Rosalind C. Morris (ed.). *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*. New York – Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 243.

The irreducible problem of, to quote Spivak again, the transparent representation of the other might also be one of the reasons why in *Downfall of the Egoist Johann Fatzer*, the unfinished Brecht play written between 1926 and 1930, the “lowest folk”¹⁸ appear through the eyes and the narration of the protagonist Fatzer and not directly on stage:

So what season is it
Now? Spring! It may take
A while yet. But I've got my
Eyes open and I've seen
The dawning of a new era.
With these people
There's something new afoot
You see people walking round such as
You've not seen before, it's
On account of
Everything that's down below
Is rising up
Where once
There was one person and then another one person
Now there's the masses
The masses-man
And everyone and everything clings
Together
And they won't go nicely back into their houses[.]¹⁹

Fatzer's vision of the people is not a vision of only the revolutionary masses but of the subproletarian multitude occupying the urban space. But what comes up from below and has not been seen before does not simply appear on the stage of representation. Fatzer does not become a transparent medium of the multitude or the *lumpenproletariat*. Instead Fatzer reports on his gaze and marks himself clearly as a medium of vision and narration.

Both examples – *The Threepenny Opera* as well as *Fatzer* – expose and deal with the theatrical side of what Ernst Schumacher – with a completely different intention – called *class theatre*. Both pose questions about the

18 Bertolt Brecht. Fatzer. In: Tom Kohn – Charlotte Ryland (eds.), *Brecht and the Writer's Workshop. Fatzer and Other Dramatic Projects*. New York: Bloomsburg, 2019, p. 85. One could also translate Brecht's original text as “the lowest part of the people.”

19 *Ibidem*, p. 103. In addition to this newly published translation I have done a more “literal” and rougher sounding translation which I include because it puts other elements of Brecht's text into the forefront / “a new time begins and / with: What time is / Now? Spring! It can / Take a while. But I had the / Eyes open and I have seen that / A new time begins and / With the people / Something and what has never been / And you can see people walking around, who / You've never seen before, that / Comes / Because everything that is below / Comes up / Where there used to be / One human and another / Now there is the mass, a / Masshuman and everything stays / Together / And does not go into the houses[.]” Compare: Bertolt Brecht. Fatzer. In: Bertolt Brecht. *Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe. Stücke 10. Stückfragmente und Stückprojekte. Teil 1*. Berlin – Weimar – Frankfurt am Main: Aufbau – Suhrkamp, 1997, pp. 409–410.

ambivalent institution and institutions of class while trying to position themselves politically and aesthetically with regard to the classist practices connected to them. But, as I would like to show with my last example, the political and theatrical issue of the institution of class is not only actualized in the context of bourgeois institutions. This becomes apparent if we take a short but closer look at Brecht and Eisler's learning play *The Measures Taken* (premiered in 1930). It focused on revolutionary communist behavioral doctrines in the context of global class war and featured singers from 300 organised singing choirs which were part of the workers' movement. The plot, which is re-enacted by four communist agitators in front of a control chorus, focuses on the revolutionary actions of a communist group in China. One of them, the so-called YOUNG COMRADE, goes through a number of difficult situations leading to problems which finally make the collective decide to shoot him after they have asked him for his consent. Even in the context of more contemporary discussions, *The Measures Taken* is one of Brecht's most intensely discussed plays and is still sometimes used as an example of the so called “totalitarian” as well as “merciless” communist class politics.²⁰

Yet, from the perspective of the institution of class, the learning play shows a surprisingly different side that I would like to highlight with one example, namely scene number four which is called “Justice.” In this scene the Young Comrade tries to agitate the workers of a textile factory and to convince them to strike. The 1931 version of the scene reads like this:

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

Come out comrades! Risk
The penny that isn't a penny
Your lodging with its leaking roof
And your job that you will lose tomorrow without fail!
Come out into the streets! Fight!
The time for waiting is past!
Help yourselves, and you will help us, too: practice solidarity!

THE YOUNG COMRADE: Give up whatever you own, comrades!
You have nothing!

THE CONTROL CHORUS:

Come out comrades, face the weapons
And insist on your wages!
If you realize you have nothing to lose
Then their police will be defenseless!

20 For a collection of still relevant and very different perspectives on *The Measures Taken* compare: Inge Gellert – Gerd Koch – Florian Vaßen (eds.), *Massnahmen. Bertolt Brechts/Hanns Eislers Lehrstück DIE MASSNAHME. Kontroverse, Perspektive, Praxis*. Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 1998.

Come out into the streets! Fight!
 The time for waiting is past!
 Help yourselves, you will help us, too: practice:
 Solidarity!

THE TEXTILE WORKERS: When the factories close, we go home;
 our wages have been lowered; we don't know what to do; so we
 continue working.²¹

In this scene the conscious, collective class-subject represented by the control chorus addresses the textile workers who have not yet formed a collective political identity with the power to act in the name of party and class. As an institution of class itself the chorus also institutes the subjects it addresses while the young comrade simply assists the collective in instructing the textile workers on coming out and confronting their enemy. The collective addressing of the class subject is articulated from a sovereign position of collective power embodied by a self-conscious class of industry workers who sing together in the form of the control chorus.

It is aesthetically and politically interesting to compare this late-1931 version of the scene to the earlier 1930 version:

THE CONTROL CHORUS
Song of the textile workers

Today, again there was
 Less money in the wage packet
 If we leave the weaving looms
 Others will occupy our place
 We cannot leave.

THE YOUNG COMRADE
 Strike! The wage is too low. Leave your weaving looms! Stand
 in front of the gates and let nobody occupy your weaving looms.

THE CONTROL CHORUS
 If we stand in front of the gates and
 Let nobody occupy our weaving looms
 The Soldiers will come and shoot at us
 We cannot stand in front of the gates.

21 Bertolt Brecht. *The Measures Taken. Lehrstück*. Translated by Carl R. Mueller. In: Bertolt Brecht. *The Measures Taken and Other Lehrstücke*. Edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2001, p. 19.

THE YOUNG COMRADE
 Strike! The wage is too low! Stand in the gates and fight
 with the soldiers!

THE CONTROL CHORUS
 Who starves first? Who
 Stands in front of the rifles first? Who
 Begins? Who
 Is allowed to eat in the evening?²²

While the historically later version excludes vulnerability and individual as well as collective mortality in the name of revolutionary, affective discipline it is precisely the affects connected to them which are high-lighted in the earlier version. Here the control chorus performs no control at all – instead the members of the chorus perform a speech of a not yet instituted class-subject, whose questions point at mortality, vulnerability, and fear. By doing this, the earlier version re-confronts the already instituted class subjects of the workers movement who constitute the control chorus with that which has been excluded in the process of institution and in the name of a sovereign political class-subject. The re-staging of the process of institution by those already instituted holds the power and potential to revisit the process of representational work which forms the collective subject and to re-associate the singers of the control chorus with the vulnerabilities, mortality, affects, and fears excluded or overcome in the process of class constitution. In this way, and by this theatrical politics of collectively exposed affects, *The Measures Taken* poses the serious and very contemporary question of how to politically and theatrically articulate and make productive vulnerabilities, dependencies, and weaknesses beyond the paradigm of the instituted phantasm of individual as well as collective sovereignty and the exclusions it produces. By re-visiting the process of the Marxist institution of class and collective Brecht and Eisler's learning play confronts the choir performers with the other of the sovereign subject and makes an affective re-association with their rejected other possible. Because of this, *The Measures Taken*, like the theatrical insistence of the *lumpenproletariat*, can be understood as a questioning of the limits and the representation of class and class struggle.

To read Brecht's works from a critical perspective of class and classism opens up the possibility to explore them not only as representations of class and class politics but also as documents of the process of class institution and as media of the conflicts associated with this process. *The Threepenny Opera* reflects and critically engages with the politics as well as ethics and techniques of acting in a classist institution while the fragment *Fatzer*

22 Bertolt Brecht. Die Maßnahme (1930). In: Bertolt Brecht. *Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe. Stücke 3*. Berlin – Weimar – Frankfurt am Main: Aufbau – Suhrkamp, p. 84.

explores the *lumpenproletariat* in an even less representative way via Fatzer's narration. Last but not least, *The Measures Taken* can be read as a re-staging and re-enactment of the process of class formation via political struggle that also reassociates already politically instituted subjects and collectives with vulnerabilities and affects which at least imply the possibility of another possible form of institution. From this perspective, Brecht's reworking of the scene after the premiere can also be understood as an act of politically instituting the text itself. In *The Threepenny Opera* and *Fatzer*, as well as between the different versions of *The Measures Taken*, one can actually see the struggle of class formation and institution at work – not only as a topic but also in the artistic practice.

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Abstract

This article focuses on the re-entry and re-framing of the questions of class and classism in the context of contemporary discussions about intersectionality and the works of Bertolt Brecht. Starting with the observation that since the 1990s traditional Marxist categories like class have been less prominent in art and academic discourse than more contemporary concepts like “the political,” I argue that a renewed understanding of class and classism is productive also in the context of Brecht studies. After discussing selected approaches to the concepts of class and classism, the article focuses on the processes of the political as well as aesthetic institution of class in Brecht's learning play *The Measures Taken*. In an analysis of a paradigmatic choir scene, I demonstrate that the exposed repetition of the process of class formation or *the institution of class* can be seen as a critical intervention and a re-association with that which has been rejected in and by it in the name of the collective.

Key words: Bertolt Brecht, *The Measures Taken*, *Fatzer*, *Threepenny Opera*, Class, Classism, Institution, Politics of affect, Politics of vulnerability, Intersectionality, Learning plays

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“Positions
of Trust”.

Drafting
Gender/Class